

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

“Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that He was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God

“At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, ‘In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, He who through faith is righteous shall live.’ There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.”

(Luther describing how he came to the truth of Justification By Faith.)

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MEDITATION

Persevering Unto The Crown

Rev. H. Veldman

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

Rev. 3:11

In the letters to the churches of Asia Minor, recorded in Rev. 2 and 3, the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia are characterized by three things. First, these churches are not rebuked by the Savior. The other churches are rebuked and admonished to repent. Secondly, both churches are small and weak. This refers, of course, to material poverty; and that they are little means that they are little in numerical strength. And, thirdly, both churches are spiritually strong. Of Smyrna the Saviour declares that they are

rich. They are rich, of course, spiritually. And of the church at Philadelphia we read that they have kept the word of His patience.

Where do we now stand as Protestant Reformed Churches as we celebrate and have celebrated this year our fiftieth anniversary? Does this characterize us? Are we busily engaged in holding fast what we have? As churches and also as individuals? Are we holding on to the truth, with grim determination and

tenacity; is it being proclaimed and taught among us, not only practically but also doctrinally and distinctively, to the utmost of our ability and capacity? The admonition is urgent: hold fast which thou hast.

* * * * *

This crown is a crown of victory. There is also another word in the original Greek which is translated "crown." This other crown is a royal crown, a diadem, the symbol of royal dominion. This word, e.g., appears in Rev. 13:1. In this text, however, a crown of victory is meant, a prize which one obtains when he is victorious. Victory and struggle, battle and affliction, glory and shame characterize the Christian and the church of God in the midst of the world. We must hold fast, that no man take our crown. In this text the word crown appears without any further description. However, in 2 Tim. 4:8 we read of this crown as a crown of righteousness; in Rev. 2:10 the Saviour speaks of it as a crown of life; and in 1 Pet. 5:4 we read of it as a crown of glory.

It is striking that the word crown appears here in the singular. The Saviour addresses in this scripture the church at Philadelphia. This, of course, applies to the church of God of all ages. For that church of all ages a crown of righteousness, life and glory has been laid away, the full and perfect and complete manifestation of all the riches of the grace and glory of the living God in Jesus Christ. He is the fulness of the glory of the living God, and the church is the reflection of that fulness of glory in Christ Jesus. This is the crown of victory laid away for the one church of God of all ages. Nevertheless, in that fulness of glory each child of God will receive his own particular crown. This explains why we read, in the singular, of *him* that overcometh in verse 12 of this chapter. Every child of God must fight personally, persevere unto the end, and finally receive his own crown, his own place in that mighty chorus, his own divinely appointed place in that building of God, his own particular place in glory. Indeed, to the church of God of all ages, and to each child of God in particular is addressed the admonition: hold fast which thou hast.

We must persevere unto the obtaining of the crown. We must not understand this, of course, in the Pelagian sense. He speaks of a crown that is laid away for God's people, God's child. But this crown is laid away for those who believe, who hold fast which they have. And this, of course, is true. But the Pelagian presents this obtaining of the crown as dependent upon our persevering unto the end. How wicked is this view! It is contrary to this text. The Saviour here is addressing the church at Philadelphia. And when

He speaks of "thy crown," He refers to the crown which belongs to that church and to the church of all ages. Besides, it is so contrary to all of Scripture. May this one passage suffice — Rom. 9:16: "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." God has willed the glory, but also the way that leads to that glory; He has willed the crown but also the struggle to the crown, inasmuch as it is given unto us, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for His sake.

Indeed, we must persevere. We are moral-rational beings. Our difference with the Pelagian is exactly that we maintain that the outcome is solely dependent upon God's divine and sovereign grace. And our difference with the false mystic is exactly that we maintain that we are no stocks and blocks, but that the grace of God, almighty in its power, does not simply carry us into glory, as in a pullman sleeper, but that it operates through us, setting our hearts and minds on fire for the cause of God and of His Christ. Indeed, we must persevere, fight unto the end, hold fast what we have.

* * * * *

To obtain this crown we must hold fast. We must hold fast — to what? Verse 8 is important: "And hast kept My word, and hast not denied My Name." The church at Philadelphia had kept Christ's word. This is the word of truth, the word of the gospel. This is the doctrinal aspect of our calling, the Scriptures as they center in Christ and in God as the God of our salvation. This means, for us, the truth as we profess it as Protestant Reformed Churches. O, Protestant Reformed doctrine is not a certain Protestant Reformed pet conception or theory. Protestant Reformed doctrine is, as we read it in our Baptism Form, the complete and perfect doctrine of salvation, the truth as taught in the infallible Scriptures. Very important, too, is this — that we have not denied His Name. This is the practical aspect of our calling. Not to deny Christ's Name means that we confess it; this means that we not only know the truth, but also practice it, are living examples of being saved by grace.

Verse 10, too, is of great significance. There we read of having kept the word of Christ's patience. This "word of Christ's patience" is surely the same word whereof we read in verse 8. This word of Christ's patience is the word of Christ as it exhorts us to patience. Patience presupposes suffering and affliction and persecution. If we maintain Christ's word of truth and do not deny His Name, affliction and suffering will invariably be our lot. And therefore Christ's word of patience is also always a word that exhorts us unto patience, the willing and joyful bear-

ing of our affliction because of Christ and for Christ's sake, knowing that to suffer for the sake of Christ is a privilege of grace, inasmuch as it is in His behalf, in His interest, in the sense that He will be glorified through it all. We suffer, not to show how much we can do, but to reveal the power and wonder of His grace.

Negatively, Christ, according to Rev. 2 and 3, has also something else to say to His church. The churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia escape rebuke. The other five churches must all repent, and are exhorted to do so. Do we, as Protestant Reformed Churches, dare to appropriate unto ourselves the beautiful pictures of the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia? Have we maintained our first love; are we strong in discipline; do our hearts and minds burn with zeal and are we on fire for the cause of the Lord and His word? Do we practice what we believe; do we love doctrine and its distinctive preaching; do we study and prepare ourselves for our society meetings, and are we faithful in attending them? Do we fall short? Let us, then, turn from evil and unto the Lord.

Positively, hold fast which we have. As is evident from verse 12, this admonition surely comes to each of us personally. Hold fast to pure doctrine; love it, study and know it, maintain it, and reject all heresies. Hold fast to the practice of it; do not deny Christ's Name; confess it; practice what you know to be the truth. Doctrine and life are inseparable. Keep your garments clean and unspotted in the midst of the world; seek not the world, neither the things that are in the world; be strangers and pilgrims in the earth.

Hold fast which we have also as churches. This admonition is also addressed to the church, to its officebearers and its entire membership. We must maintain sound doctrine and the pure preaching of the Word, always emitting a clear sound. We must be true watchmen upon the walls of Zion; be vigilant and true in discipline; never become lax. The wolves outside the gate are dangerous but, inside the gate, they are devastating. May our catechetical instruction and all our societies be characterized by the Word of our God; hold fast, hold on "for dear life"; hold on tenaciously; never let go, keep what we have. Be sure that we ever retain our vigilance, in the home and in the church and in the school.

And, how necessary it is that we heed this exhortation of the Word of God! We must never permit the enemy to take our crown. O, he does not want this crown, but he would deprive us of it. How important it is to maintain the pure doctrine as it is according to the Scriptures; how necessary is the truth of divinely free and sovereign grace! How important it is that we

practice it, that we are in the way of the Lord, that our sights are trained upon that City of our God as we are running the race, and stretching, reaching out to that crown of everlasting life and victory!

* * * * *

Behold, I come quickly! What a glorious, blessed incitement this is! Who is coming? Indeed, this is Jesus, of Whom we read in verse 7 that He is holy and true, that He has the key of David. This is Jesus, the glorified Head of His church, Who suffered and died and rose again, Who holds the keys of His kingdom in His hand, controlling and directing His church and also all things.

When will He come? He surely comes when we die, then to take us unto Himself. This is clearly implied in Rev. 2:10. But He also comes at the end of time, the end of this world. In that day He will make all things new.

How does He come? Notice, please: I come, or I am coming. Christ is coming, throughout the ages of the New Dispensation.

He is coming, inasmuch as He is working all things unto the realization of His kingdom.

He is coming, through the gospel, saving His own, and He is coming through wars and pestilences and famines and earthquakes.

He is coming through all things.

And, He is coming quickly.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is in a hurry; He is constantly hurrying, coming at a constantly accelerated pace, because He wants all His own to be where He is, in everlasting glory and heavenly immortality. Are we eager for Him to come quickly?

What a blessed incitement and encouragement this is! Indeed, bitter is the struggle within us and all around us! How bitter is the struggle against sin within us! And then there are the enemies of darkness confronting us! How hopeless is our lot! All the resources and man-power are on the side of the enemy, of those who would take our crown!

However, behold! Behold, look and see! There are wars and rumours of wars, earthquakes and tidal waves, persecutions and famines and pestilences. They are all signs of His coming. Do we hear them; do we hear Him, the rumblings of His coming? Behold, take courage, lift up your heads, be comforted! Your struggle will soon be over, the battle fought, and then the crown will be given you, in everlasting life and glory.

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

EDITORIALS

Our Australasian Tour (3)

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

We are now ready to furnish some details concerning the New Zealand section of our tour.

After a couple days' rest in the charming Fiji Islands, Mrs. Hoeksema and I arrived in Auckland, New Zealand on the evening of Wednesday, June 18. No one knows, unless he has experienced it, how good it is to arrive in a foreign country, pass through immigration, and then see a familiar and friendly face waiting just beyond the desk of the immigration officer. Everywhere on our tour we had this experience; and if it had not been for this, it would have been extremely difficult to make our way in these foreign lands. At Auckland our good friends, Mr. and Mrs. William van Rij, were waiting to greet us. Mr. van Rij is production manager for General Foods in New Zealand; and he managed to be in Auckland on business at the time of our stay in this area. His home is in Christchurch, on the South Island. (Please refer to the map which appeared in the October 1 issue if you wish to note the location of the various cities mentioned from now on.) There were a few friends with the van Rij's; and we soon became acquainted with them, too. Until this time, they had been only names to me — mentioned in correspondence; now we connect faces with these names.

Our gracious hosts in Auckland were Mr. and Mrs. John Starrenburg. Again, this couple and their three lovely children were total strangers to us; but they gave us the "red carpet" treatment and made us feel thoroughly at home during the few days we spent with them. This, too, happened repeatedly on our tour. And it was a real advantage for us that we might enter the homes of various people. Not only is this much superior to the loneliness of a motel room, but it also furnished an excellent opportunity to become acquainted with the people, with their way of life, and with the church situation and spiritual conditions in the various communities which we visited. And let me add immediately, lest I forget, that we are very thankful for all the hospitality extended to us along the way and for the friendships which were established. Many of the names of our New Zealand friends keep popping up in our conversations from time to time, and we shall not forget them.

Auckland is a large and rather beautiful city, with access to the Pacific Ocean on the east and to the Tasman Sea on the west. And while it is a harbor city, it did not impress us as having some of the unattractive characteristics common to port cities. It is clean, spacious, and probably not as busy as an American city of comparable size. Our contacts were all in suburban (satellite) areas, however, and we did not get the opportunity to see a great deal of the city proper.

Our meetings in this area — and this was characteristic of our entire tour — were of three types. We held so-called cottage meetings. These were meetings held in someone's home, with 15 to 20 people in attendance on the average. These meetings were informal in character. Usually we would be asked to introduce a pertinent subject (and the choice of subject was most often left to the people being visited), and this would be followed up by questions and informal discussion. Meetings of this kind often lasted three or more hours. There were also public lectures, usually followed by a brief question-period. And, wherever we had the opportunity, we preached on the Lord's day. For us, as representatives of our churches, this presented many new situations. Except for some acquaintance with us through our literature, we were strangers to the people we were visiting. They had to become acquainted with us, therefore. But we were also at a disadvantage: for the people were strangers to us. We did not know their specific interests; we did not know their degree of understanding of the Reformed faith and their capacity and receptivity. And while we had been rather thoroughly briefed by friend van Rij as to the main interests and the general areas for discussion, and in some cases had even received a list of questions and suggestions as to subjects for discussion, we more or less had to feel our way and try to gauge our audiences even while we were speaking and discussing. In some instances we did not learn the actual subject for discussion until we arrived at the meeting and asked the people point-blank what they desired. This involved a measure of extemporaneous speaking, and sometimes involved a great deal of reaching back into one's memory and drawing on one's backlog of knowledge

and experience. Once in a while it gave rise also to totally unexpected questions, as when in Tasmania we were suddenly confronted by a question about supra- and infralapsarianism. All in all, however, we found this method to be highly successful. We could, of course, have made our tour with a fixed list of subjects for lectures and talks, and allowed people to choose from that list. But with the method which we followed we were able to speak directly to the needs and interests of the people and to treat subjects in which they themselves expressed an interest. One might think that this restricted us severely, and that it did not always furnish us the opportunity to say things which we thought were in need of being said. This, however, was not the case. For there is no area of doctrine or life which is not related to our rich Reformed heritage and on which we do not have something to say from our specific Protestant Reformed stance. We had abundant opportunity to bring our Reformed viewpoint to bear, therefore; and I am sure that those who heard us will also bear witness to this.

Our very first meeting in New Zealand was a cottage meeting on Thursday, June 19, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. A.R. Storm in Howick. There were about 20 people present; most of them were from Reformed churches in the area. After introductions all around, we sang and prayed together. And what do you think was the very first subject on which I was asked to talk in New Zealand? Thousands of miles from the homeland and the home churches, I was asked to give an introduction concerning the origin and stand of our Protestant Reformed Churches. Amazing! And yet, on second thought, it was not so amazing: these people were in effect asking the good questions, "Who are you, and what do you stand for?" This, of course, very naturally furnished an opportunity to speak about the Three Points and about common grace, and to emphasize the truth of sovereign, particular grace. There were many intelligent questions and much Scripture-centered discussion on this subject. There was a very good spirit manifested throughout the meeting, and there was also no little degree of agreement expressed. Well, that was a good beginning; and at the end of that evening we could only feel elated and thankful to God for this opportunity to speak of things which are close to our heart in that meeting so far from home. If you had asked me when I entered the ministry — no, even if you had asked me five years ago whether something like this would ever come to pass, I would have responded that the very thought was repugnant!

Friday, June 20, we travelled by auto with the van Rijs to Rotorua, some 150 to 200 miles southeast of Auckland. This was a delightful trip through the

countryside of northern New Zealand. The lush green paddocks, dotted with thousands of sheep or large herds of Black Angus cattle, spread out over the hilly terrain — all this was very picturesque. Needless to say, the trip also gave us a good opportunity to become reacquainted with the van Rijs; there was no shortage of conversation. Along the way we also had opportunity to discuss our plans for the remainder of the New Zealand tour and to be briefed with respect to various local situations. Hamilton, New Zealand, is about the mid-point on this trip; both on the way to Rotorua and on our return we stopped for some personal visits in that city where the van Rijs formerly resided. Rotorua is one of New Zealand's tourist attractions, partly because it is a thermal region, reminding one strongly in sight and smell of the geyser area in Yellowstone National Park, and partly because there is a Maori village there. The Maoris are said to have been the earliest settlers of New Zealand; they seem to have been of Polynesian origin. They still have their own distinct culture to a large extent; and they have never been fully assimilated into New Zealand society. Mr. and Mrs. Derek Bound were our hosts in Rotorua. Our meeting in Rotorua was held in the Lutheran Church. I was asked to lecture on "The Need for Confessions in the '70s," a subject which again gave me the opportunity to stress our Reformed heritage and to emphasize our calling in the light of the fact that creeds not only serve to unite but also bring separation and division. There was a small audience of 13 present, and they came from all backgrounds — Free Presbyterian, Orthodox Presbyterian, Reformed, Particular Baptist, and Lutheran. At this same meeting Mrs. Hoeksema was asked to give a short talk on covenantal education — something on which she had not planned at all! This, by the way, happened more often during our tour. When those whom we visited discovered that Mrs. Hoeksema is a veteran teacher and the author of a book on child training, they wanted to hear more about Christian education from a Reformed point of view. Mrs. Hoeksema had accompanied me on the trip "for the ride," so to speak; but this turned out to be one of the bonuses of the tour. The auditorium where we met that evening was almost unbearably cold. Hence, our discussion period was held to a minimum; and after the meeting several of us adjourned to the Bounds' living room for coffee and more discussion. At Rotorua we had the opportunity to meet the Rev. Jack Mitchell of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church at Whakatane. Here we also met a couple of people with friends and relatives in the Grand Rapids area.

By the evening of Saturday, June 21, we were back in the Auckland area. My second driving lesson in New Zealand (they drive on the left and in right-hand drive cars) was on a dark, windy, rainy evening and

on a rather narrow, winding, unfamiliar highway; very exciting! However, we arrived safely at the manse of the Rev. George McKenzie in Manurewa (another satellite of Auckland). Mr. McKenzie is pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Manurewa. We had tea (supper) with the McKenzies, and Mr. McKenzie briefed me concerning the order of worship at the OP Church, where I was scheduled to preach on Sunday morning, and concerning plans for the lecture scheduled for Sunday afternoon. By the time we returned to our hosts on Saturday evening, we were ready for some rest and quiet, as well as a little opportunity to collect our thoughts and to prepare for Sunday's labors.

Sunday morning brought a new experience. This was the first time I ministered the Word outside our Protestant Reformed pulpits. What should I preach on? What would be the receptivity of the audience? Would I be able to preach to these people of God as to our own people? As I told the congregation that morning, I decided to preach as clearly as possible, trusting that if I delivered to them the Word of God, they would understand and receive it. And this proved to be true. I took as my text Isaiah 3:10, 11; and while I did not preach as long as in our services at home, I had ample opportunity to expound the text and to draw the antithetical line so plainly expressed in this passage. There was an attentive audience of 40 to 50 people present. Pastor McKenzie led the service. The singing was from the Scottish Psalter. The meeting place was a classroom of the Clendon Park School. After the service many of the congregation expressed their appreciation for the sermon; and we met many new acquaintances and engaged in conversation for a long time. After dinner with the McKenzies, we made our way to the Intermediate School at Papatoetoe (try to pronounce that Maori name!), where I lectured to an audience of 23 on "The Reformation Faith In Crisis." Opportunity was given for questions afterward; and there were several pertinent questions from this audience composed of Reformed, Presbyterian, Brethren, and Orthodox Presbyterian people. By the way, one of the questions which came up repeatedly at our meetings was that

concerning Bible versions and translations. This seems to be an important practical question to many people in New Zealand. The people were very receptive to my remarks on this subject; and I believe that there is room for more of our literature on this subject in New Zealand. Some of our *Standard Bearer* reprints on this subject could profitably be distributed there.

Our first Sunday in New Zealand was rounded out by a cottage meeting in the evening at the home of the Starrenburgs in Mt. Wellington (another satellite of Auckland). This time the subject was Christian Education; and rather unexpectedly it fell to Mrs. Hoeksema, because of her background as a teacher, to introduce the subject. Needless to say, I couldn't keep my mouth shut long. We had a very good discussion that extended to almost midnight. There is almost no Christian education in New Zealand. There is opportunity for some religious instruction in the public schools, but this amounts to little. There is a real need for Christian schools among Reformed and Presbyterian people there.

During the day on Monday, June 23, we had an opportunity to see downtown Auckland, do a bit of shopping, and make some airline reservations for the next part of our tour. In the evening we had a cottage meeting at Mangere (still another Auckland suburb) at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Suurmond. Present were 21 people, of whom 16 were men. Most of the people were from one of the Reformed churches of the area. "The Need for Confessions" was the subject for the evening. There were many questions and much discussion about the need for doctrinal instruction along confessional lines in pulpit and catechism class. And again there were questions about Bible translations and about Christian education.

Thus ended the first section of our New Zealand visit. Tuesday morning bright and early we headed for the airport, after we said our goodbyes to the Starrenburgs. By 8 o'clock Mr. and Mrs. van Rij were airborne on their way back to Christchurch; and ten minutes later Mrs. Hoeksema and I were in the plane going to Napier, southeast of Auckland. But the rest of our New Zealand story must wait until the next issue.

Open Your Eyes!

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

We are creatures of habit. This is true in almost every area of our lives. In fact, if it were not true, life would be well-nigh impossible.

It is also true in our public worship. And this is good, subject to two limitations. In the first place, our habits must be *good* habits. And, in the second

place, our habits must not become mere formalities, *empty* habits. Thus, for example, to honor the Lord with our lips, while our heart is far from Him, is an abomination to Jehovah.

In our churches, it is my conviction, we engage in a bad habit which, with a little effort, could easily be corrected. And, I believe, it would improve our public worship if we would correct that bad habit. I cannot say precisely when and why I came to this conclusion. Partly, it was occasioned by study of a passage of Scripture related to the subject. Partly, perhaps, it came about as a result of the fact that I have been sitting in the pew rather frequently in recent months and, as a result, have done some thinking about our order of worship and our acts of worship. Partly, too, my thoughts were triggered by a sermon by one of my colleagues on worshipping God in Spirit and in truth. But the occasion is, after all, not so very important.

I am referring to the fact that in our services we all, minister and congregation, have the habit of closing our eyes at the moment of the salutation and the moment of the benediction, at the beginning and at the conclusion of our services respectively. For the benefit of our readers who may follow a different order of worship, let me explain. In our congregations the service begins with the vatum, "Our help is in the name of Jehovah, Who hath made heaven and earth." Then the minister addresses the congregation, "Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ." Thereupon, he raises his hands in a symbolic gesture of blessing and pronounces the salutation, "Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ our Lord, through the operation of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Sometimes a variant Scriptural salutation is used, as, for example, from the first part of Revelation 1. At the time of this salutation we have for unnumbered years had the habit that both the minister and the congregation close their eyes as if in prayer. At the conclusion of the service, following the doxology, the Scriptural benediction is pronounced in a similar manner, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen." And again both minister and congregation close their eyes.

This, I claim, is a bad habit. It is both unnecessary and empty. But worse than that, it simply does not make sense. In fact, this phase of our worship exactly *loses* part of its sense through the fact that we close our eyes.

Let me explain.

In the first place, let me explain that these elements of our worship are not in the nature of a prayer, nor in the nature of a pious wish. I have an idea that we often consider the salutation and bene-

diction to be prayers; and probably this has occasioned our closing our eyes, as we usually do in prayer. But they are not prayers — not in our services. In some churches they are given the form of prayers. And a seminary student, who speaks a word of edification, may indeed employ the language of these blessings in the form of an opening and a closing prayer. But they are not prayers. This is plain from the fact that the minister does not introduce them by "We pray . . ." It is also plain from the fact that he addresses the congregation, not God. It is also plain from the fact that he says "you," not "us." Neither, however, are they mere wishes, much in the same way as you may bid farewell to a friend and wish him the Lord's blessing. No, in these parts of our worship the minister makes an authoritative pronouncement as the ambassador of Christ and in the name of Christ. And through that pronouncement the blessing of Christ indeed comes upon the congregation that is addressed, even as Christ Himself speaks through the preaching of the Word.

If we understand this, it will already be sufficient reason to keep our eyes open during these phases of our worship.

But there is more.

We must be Scriptural in our worship. And then we must remember that the salutation and benediction used by the minister are borrowed directly from Scripture and that they occur in various epistles in one form or another. But these epistles were historically occasioned letters to various congregations. They were addressed to and read in the churches. And surely, there is no reason to imagine that when such letters were read in the churches, the congregation bowed their heads and closed their eyes at the greeting and the benediction portions of those letters. No, that would not make sense. They were being addressed with the apostolic salutation and benediction.

Still more.

There is no sense, either for minister or congregation, in the symbolic gesture of blessing if the congregation close their eyes. Surely, we do not believe there is some magical operation in those uplifted hands! But then why, pray tell, should the minister raise his hands in blessing upon a congregation which — if they all religiously close their eyes — does not even see those uplifted hands? That simply does not make sense, either for the minister or for the congregation.

Hence, I propose that we should break that habit. By "we" I mean both ministers and congregations. Open your eyes, preacher: you are addressing Christ's congregation. Open your eyes, congregation: Christ's minister is speaking to you in word and in symbolic

gesture. No, your eyes should not wander and you should not be looking around to see who is in church and who is not present. On the contrary, all eyes should be straight forward, glued upon the minister of Christ who with symbolically raised hands is pronouncing the blessing of God upon the church.

Though it may seem strange at first, by reason of its differentness, I assure you that these solemn moments of our worship will become more significant if we substitute this good habit for the bad one.

I speak from experience — both in the pulpit and in the pew. And my pastor has also made this change.

Welcome Edmonton

Prof. H. Hanko

The *Standard Bearer* received some material from our newly organized congregation in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada which includes a program of the organizational meeting held September 25, 1975, a letter from the Consistory of Edmonton addressed to all the Protestant Reformed Churches in Classis West (but which was also distributed in some of our congregations in Classis East,) and a bulletin of the first Sunday worship services.

The *Standard Bearer* wishes to make recognition of this great event in the lives of God's people in Edmonton and in the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches. After all, with the organization of this new congregation, our Churches have "gone international"; and our Churches now extend from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the northern parts of Canada to the balmy tropical sunshine of Southern California.

The organizational meeting was held under the supervision of the Consistory of our Lynden congregation and was conducted by Rev. G. Lanting and Rev. B. Woudenberg. On the inside of the program the following is found:

The origin of the First Protestant Reformed Church at Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, is to be found in a Bible study class which met for about two years under the instruction of Rev. Bernard Woudenberg of Lynden, Washington, U.S.A.

It was in the spring of 1973 that a number of people in Edmonton became deeply concerned with the growing liberalism of their church life. At that time, Mr. and Mrs. F. Tolsma came to visit in Lynden, and to meet with Rev. Woudenberg who offered to come to Edmonton and do what he could to help them. This he did, and the result was the organization of a regular Bible study class meeting every two weeks for the following two years. Each time Rev. Woudenberg would fly up by plane from Lynden and lead the class, which studied in detail the five points of Calvinism and the Belgic Confession of faith.

It was during the summer of 1975, when Rev. Woudenberg was unable to meet for about two months, that the members of the class came to the conclusion that they should seek a more stable form

of organization as a congregation among the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. When Rev. Woudenberg returned, they consulted with him, and afterward with a committee from his consistory as well as one from the Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches. It was their advice that the group of believers should send a letter of request to Classis West of their denomination to request such organization. This was done on September 3, 1975, and the Classis authorized them to be organized under the direction of the consistory of Lynden Protestant Reformed Church together with Rev. George Lanting of Loveland, Colorado. The meeting has been set for this evening, September 25, 1975, in the Crestwood Presbyterian Church at Edmonton.

It is with thankfulness to God that we would express our gratitude for the two wonderful years of study and fellowship in the Word under the leadership of Rev. B. Woudenberg, and our prayer is that having begun in this way of truth, the King of the Church will keep us and our children faithful unto it for many years until He comes to receive us unto Himself.

From the bulletin enclosed we learn that Rev. Lanting began immediately to preach on the Heidelberg Catechism; that Catechism classes were organized, and that the Bi-weekly Study Group was continued.

Reading the material enclosed, one cannot help but be impressed that this small group of fourteen confessing members and eighteen children began their history as a Protestant Reformed Church with great joy in their hearts and with abundant gratitude to our covenant God.

And so we, the Staff of the *Standard Bearer* extend to you of our newest congregation a heartiest welcome into our fellowship. You so often express in your letters your desire for the prayers of your sister congregations; be assured of these prayers, and may the God of all grace, and our Lord Jesus Christ, through the operation of His Holy Spirit lead you into the riches of the truth of the gospel and join you with us and with all God's people in the bonds of love and truth.

ALL AROUND US

The Offer In The Preaching

Rev. H. Veldman

In the periodical *De Waarheidsvriend* (The Friend of the Truth), June 5, 1975, page 271, the official organ of the *Hervormde* or State Church of the Netherlands, is an article which discusses the offer in the preaching of the gospel. We will quote briefly. The writer realizes what a struggle it has been to maintain God's sovereignty and to honor the responsibility of man. It grieves him, however, when the well-meaning offer is denied. Why? He writes as follows, and we translate:

But also the salvation of man is at issue. How many people have doubted until their last gasp whether they might claim the promises of God because it was not sure that these promises were meant for them, whether God also meant them with the offer of His grace. How many people there are also today who, because of this, are in spiritual want, consciously or unconsciously.

What shall we say? Of course, there is nothing new

in this attack upon those who deny the offer of the gospel. We do not understand how anyone can be in want unconsciously. We fear that the writer ascribes this doubt to the sinner's failure to accept this offer because he does not know whether it is meant for him. However, we assure him (and we, too, reject this presentation of the gospel as an offer) that if the gospel be preached in all its fullness, that there is rest for the weary, bread and water for the hungry and thirsty, that this word of God is sure and that it never fails, that the weary will surely find rest and the hungry and thirsty will surely eat and drink. However, if my salvation depends upon my acceptance of an offer, then the salvation of a sinner certainly becomes very uncertain and then doubts will surely plague and torment him. Anything that is dependent upon the choice of a sinner can never lead to certainty.

Professor Kuitert And The Woman In Office

In *Waarheid en Eenheid* (Truth and Unity), a periodical of those who are disturbed in the Netherlands because of conditions in the Reformed Church, appears an article with the above heading in the issue of June 21, 1975, page 4. We quote and translate:

An interviewer asks:

A much used objection is: whoever begins by placing Genesis upon an uncertain basis (*op losse schroeven*), must surely end with the resurrection (we assume this means that this truth, too, will become uncertain H.V.).

Prof. Kuitert answers:

The error in this reasoning appears to me that people think that something is certain because it is written in the bible. I think we must begin with this. However, we do not believe in the biblical announcement because the bible says it, but because we have heard it in its content because we have experienced it as the word of God. Something is not certain because it is recorded in the bible and therefore it does not become uncertain when you say: we can no longer go along with it in this way. As example, I would name

the reformed synod, which allows the woman in office. However you may interpret it, in the New Testament this is not only inconceivable, but it is even emphatically contradicted in certain epistles. When nevertheless the synod does allow the woman in office, then it certainly does not place the gospel upon an uncertain basis? I would not know why. Unless one naturally anchors such a faith in a view concerning the bible. Then I would answer: the last anchor of your faith surely does not lie in a certain view of the bible? Your faith is anchored in God Himself Who, in the final analysis, addresses man. From where otherwise comes your final assurance? To say it with the old psalm versification: I have myself heard it out of His mouth.

We agree with the following criticism of this view of Prof. Kuitert as it appears in this same periodical and follows immediately upon it:

We now make the following observations. Prof. Kuitert asserts that the woman in office is expressly contradicted in the N.T. I believe he is completely correct, as far as the teaching office is concerned. From this it is abundantly clear that already for a

long time the evil is increasing in our churches, and that the question of woman officebearers, yes or no, must finally be answered with the question: how do you actually approach the Bible? What is this for me? God's infallible Word or not? If not, then I would no longer speak over any text of the Bible. Yes, but so Prof. Kuitert declares at the end: 'I have myself heard it out of His mouth.' I would thereupon ask: How then?

A special revelation? Inner enlightenment? A very

strange assertion in the mouth of Prof. Kuitert. Must we now establish that the rationalism of Kuitert and fanaticism lie very close to each other?

And we would add the following. Of course, we do not believe something only because it is in the Bible. The Holy Spirit must surely work this faith in our hearts. But, we may certainly not believe something that is contradicted by the Bible. God does not speak in us apart from the divine and infallible Scriptures.

How To Read The Bible

Lester De Koster, editor of the *Banner*, has written a booklet entitled: *How To Read The Bible*. We read the following on page 20:

For example, God knows whether His creation was done quickly, say in six days of twenty-four hours each, or over long periods of time. Some men are curious to know. Much time and argument is spent trying to decide between creationism and evolutionism. God knows. But His Word does not bother to settle the issue.

So, there you have it. In this booklet we are in-

structed how to read the Bible. God knows whether He has created the heavens and the earth in six days or in six periods. But, the Lord has not told us. The Word of God does not bother to settle the issue. I assume this means that you may read the Bible as you please. However, the Bible does bother to settle this issue. I refer our readers to Gen. 1, Ps. 33:6, 9, Heb. 11:3, the fourth commandment, Exodus 20: 8-11, and many other passages. I remind the editor of the *Banner* of the Scriptural truth that this is understood only by faith.

Fear Of Schism In Missouri Synod

In *Christian News*, of Monday, July 21, 1975, appears the following which bears upon this subject:

ANAHEIM, Calif. (RNS) — Theological conservatives of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod set the stage for what is feared will be a wide split in the denomination when they passed a resolution demanding that if any district president cannot in conscience abide by regulations concerning ordination, he should resign.

The resolution passed after extended debate by a vote of 626-466. It was directed specifically at eight district presidents who have ordained uncertified graduates of Seminex (the seminary of the moderates or those who advocated a liberal interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, H.V.), in violation of the Synod's by-laws.

Immediately after the action, eight district presidents who were the targets of the resolution read a statement saying that they would remain in their offices unless the people of the districts themselves say they should leave. They declared that their call to the office is divine in nature and not subject to legislative action of the denomination's national meeting.

The presidents preside over eight districts that have a total of 586,638 of the 2.8 million baptized members of the denomination. "Moderates," who

generally back the dissident district presidents in their stand, have estimated that as many as 25 per cent of the Church membership will bolt the denomination, probably within a year.

A staff spokesman for Dr. Jacob A.O. Preus, president of the Synod, believes that fewer than 50 congregations will withdraw from the denomination because deep-seated loyalties to the Church will preclude a wholesale walkout. The mood of the 1,120 delegates seemed resigned to the fact that some kind of split is now inevitable.

A key passage in Resolution 5-02 said that if a district president "cannot in good conscience uphold the constitution and bylaws of the Synod, which he has sworn to do at the time of his installation, and cannot refrain from ordaining or authorizing the ordination of candidates for the holy ministry who have not received endorsement for ordination through the duly authorized Synodical process, then the said district president, for the peace and the good order of the Synod, shall resign from the office of district president."

Another provision declared that if such district presidents do not resign "they shall be commended to the pastoral care and discipline of the Synodical president, assisted by the Council of Presidents, for the solution of this matter."

A final provision said that if pastoral care and discipline have failed to secure from each district president involved his compliance with the resolution or he refuses to resign, "the Synodical president, after consultation with the Council of Presidents, shall inform the said district at least 60 days before the beginning of the next regularly scheduled district convention, that a vacancy exists in the office of said district president, and that the said district is to elect a successor for the unexpired term in harmony with this resolution and according to said district's procedures."

In connection with the above quotation, our com-

ments will be brief. We will not comment on the ecclesiastical procedure set forth in this quotation. Our comments will concern these splits and schisms. Splits and schisms are always painful. It hurts when brethren with whom we have been associated in the battle for the truth deviate from and reject the fundamentals of the Word of God. However, one thing is sure: it is better for a church to part with those who err than to retain them in the fellowship of the church. The glory of God and the purity of the church demand this. It is better for these "wolves" to be outside the fold of the sheep than within the fold.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

"Hyper-Calvinism" and the Call of the Gospel (13)

Rev. David Engelsma

Herman Hoeksema has been instrumental in the development of the Reformed faith. The area of his outstanding contribution is the doctrine of the covenant: what the covenant is; the sovereignly gracious nature of the establishment and maintenance of the covenant; the inclusion of the children of believers in the covenant; the Biblical basis of infant baptism; and related truths.¹ The prominence of the doctrine of the covenant in Scripture and its significance for the Reformed faith are widely recognized.

The doctrine of the covenant is found in Calvin and the Reformed creeds, but in somewhat embryonic form. Through the years, Reformed theology has grappled with the question: What is the covenant? Sounder views and less sound views have been propounded. In time, a view of the covenant gained currency in Presbyterian and Reformed circles that jeopardized the sovereignty of God and the gospel of grace. It began to be accepted that the covenant is a pact, entered into mutually by God and men, dependent on conditions fulfilled by both parties, and serving as the means by which the covenant people acquire salvation. Notes in jarring discord with the sweet music of the Reformed faith began to be struck in the Reformed churches — a dependent God; the decisiveness of man's will in salvation; the extension of God's grace to a wider circle than the elect; the failure of this grace in many cases;

and the achievement of final salvation through divine and human cooperation.

The better Reformed theologians heard the dissonance and manifested uneasiness with the covenant conception that passed for truth in the Reformed sphere. But it was Hoeksema who subjected that conception of the covenant to rigorous scrutiny in the light of Scripture; who rejected it, root and branch, as in fundamental conflict with the Reformed faith; and who, not without the aid of certain predecessors and some contemporaries, set forth, in preaching and writing, a "new" doctrine of the covenant. Hoeksema viewed the covenant as the living relationship of friendship between God and His people in Christ; as "unilaterally" established and maintained by God alone in free and sovereign grace; as a gift bestowed upon the elect in Christ and them only; and as itself the highest good for man both in time and eternity.

There are evidences today, outside the Protestant Reformed Churches, that this view of the covenant

¹Hoeksema's conception of the covenant is set forth in his books, *Reformed Dogmatics* (p. 152; pp. 214-226; pp. 285-336) and *The Triple Knowledge*, Vol. 2 (pp. 504-553), in a pamphlet, "God's Tabernacle with Men." For his view of the inclusion of the children of believers in the covenant and the basis of their inclusion, cf. his *Believers and their Seed* and the pamphlet, "The Biblical Ground for the Baptism of Infants." All of these are available from the Reformed Free Publishing Association.

represents real development of Reformed doctrine. Berkouwer, who has very little good to say of Hoeksema as a Reformed theologian in his dogmatics, has recently questioned whether the notion of the "covenant of works" has a rightful place in Reformed theology, although he does not mention Hoeksema's longstanding and well-known repudiation of the covenant of works.²

Here and there, men are also voicing dissatisfaction with the conception of the covenant as a mutual compact or agreement of God and men and are moving towards a doctrine of the covenant that approximates Hoeksema's bond of love and friendship. The Presbyterian theologian, John Murray, in a work called *The Covenant of Grace*, has criticized the teaching that the idea of a mutual compact, or agreement, constitutes the essence of the divine covenant. Instead, Murray suggests that the covenant of grace is a "sovereign administration of grace and of promise." The essence of the covenant is: "relationship with God in that which is the crown and goal of the whole process of religion, namely, union and communion with God . . ." ³

The non-reformed theologian, Jakob Jocz, writes along the same lines. Jocz has made a fresh, significant study of the Biblical doctrine of the covenant.⁴ Even though the book is ravaged by un-Reformed teachings, including many concessions to higher criticism, it sets forth a doctrine of the covenant strikingly different from that embraced by many Reformed theologians in the past, namely, a conditional pact entered into mutually by God and men. Jocz asserts that the concept of the covenant is so important that it is the "unifying principle" of the entire Bible. "Covenantal theology is at the root of biblical thinking" (p. 9). He criticizes the notion that the covenant is an agreement between God and men. In close connection with this, he denies that the covenant is conditional. Rather, the covenant is "the conditionless and . . . irrevocable will of God to be present to His people" (p. 43). The "root-idea" of the covenant is made plain in the tabernacle in Israel: "communion between the Holy One and man," which is "the essential Old Testament message about God" (pp. 47, 48). Jocz argues that the covenant is unilateral. He quotes Weber with approval: "the covenant in the Old Testament setting is 'essentially determined by one side' and . . . it is God who acts as initiator. It is therefore not a 'contract' in the usual sense, 'implying two partners, but an arrangement made solely by the one who determines it.'" He speaks of "the one-sided nature of the covenant relationship," and says that this is "decisive for a theological understanding of the Bible" (pp. 30, 31).

I interject this little discussion of doctrinal development into our study of the call of the gospel for

two reasons. The first is that the teaching of the offer of the gospel is bound up with the doctrine of the covenant as a conditional pact between God and men. Wherever men defend the offer, you will find them also defending a conditional covenant, i.e., a covenant dependent on man. Our repudiation of the offer must be considered against the background of the doctrine of the covenant developed by Hoeksema.

But the main reason for this excursus is to point out that an investigation of Reformed theology of the past, such as we propose with regard to the teaching of the offer of the gospel, must recognize the possibility, not only of a lack of clarity on a certain doctrine, but also of a lack of consistency. One must not be surprised to see contradictory elements struggling for supremacy, sometimes in the same, godly man. So near does the life-and-death struggle of the truth and the lie come to us. The Spirit of Christ leads the Church into all the truth, but only — as church history clearly shows — in the way of constant labor and battle. Examination of Reformed theology of the past, therefore, a going back to our sources, does not consist merely of compiling quotations from here and there. Satan, after all, can find quotations in Scripture itself to buttress his case. As Luther said, we must discriminate when we study the fathers: "the places where they speak from the Spirit should (be) picked out and held fast, and those where they savor of the flesh let go."

There has been real development in Reformed theology as regards the doctrine of the covenant, and this development has included the Reformed faith's saying "No" to views that clamored to be accepted from within the Reformed churches and its purging of views which for a time even gained some acceptance. It is similar as regards the doctrine of the call of the gospel.

None of this should be understood as a tacit admission that Reformed theology of the past can be made to prove whatever one wants it to prove, specifically now as regards the offer of the gospel. The thrust of Reformed theology is perfectly clear — so clear that a child can perceive it. Its genius is plainly opposed to the theology of the well-meant offer. Reformed theology of the past, from Calvin on, stands up to say "Amen" to the teaching that the preaching of the gospel is grace to the elect alone. It acknowledges this doctrine, as sharply and clearly formulated by Hoeksema, as its own well-born child and disowns the notion of the offer as illegitimate.

2-G.C. Berkouwer, *Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 206ff.

3-John Murray, *The Covenant of Grace* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1954), pp. 30ff.

4-Jakob Jocz, *The Covenant* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).

One other thing must be borne in mind as we turn to Reformed theology of past ages. We are concerned to discover whether Reformed theology teaches, or even favors, the doctrine that the preaching of the gospel expresses God's grace to all men; the doctrine that the preaching is motivated by a sincere desire in God to save all men; the doctrine that the success of grace depends upon the will of men; and the implied doctrine that Christ and His cross are for all men. This is what is meant by the well-meant gospel-offer in Reformed circles today.

It is of no consequence, therefore, that the *term*, "offer," appears in Calvin, in other Reformed theologians, and in such Reformed creeds as the Canons of Dordt and the Westminster Confession of Faith. The word, "offer," had originally a sound meaning: 'serious call, presentation of Christ.' We are fundamentally uninterested in warring over words. No, but we are interested to ask concerning the *doctrine* of the offer: is it Reformed?

(to be continued)

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Four Pictures

Rev. J. Kortering

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Ps. 119:105. How often we read these words and hardly give them a second thought. The Word of God is written down for us in the Bible, which in its totality makes up the Word of God. The Bible is precious to us. We don't have to be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine; we have the Word of God to guide us into the safety of the haven of rest. We need not dash our souls to pieces upon the jagged rocks of human lust and evil desire, but need only follow the beacon light of God's Word to steer clear of such dangers and be guided safely through troubled waters. When our life is filled with trials and cares and we cry out to Jehovah in our distress, we may be sure that the Word of God will direct us to the comfort of our redemption and loving care of our Heavenly Father Who controls the storms.

About this time of the year, we do well to reflect upon the significance of the great Reformation for us. By the Reformation, we refer to the events which God brought to pass in the lives of Martin Luther and John Calvin, along with others. It was an astounding event in the history of the church; it brought the children of God from the shackles of dead formalism into a vibrant and living faith.

The Word of God made all the difference.

Let's look at that story in the form of four pictures.

THE FIRST PICTURE

Its edges are frayed, it is yellow with age, being taken over 1700 years ago. The first thing that

catches our attention is that there is a man sitting on a throne. Its ornate luxury tells us that he is very rich. One thing is disturbing, his face. It reflects rage and hostility. We can hardly be expected to know his name, but we are told that it is Diocletian.

It won't take too long, while we study the picture more carefully, to discover why this king is so angry. Outside the window, we see on yonder hill a stake in the ground. It is not a marker to commemorate some heroic event of the past, rather it stands amidst a thick mat of wood chips soaked in oil. Its lonely vigil announces the fate of some poor soul who shall be bound to it while the flames of death shall consume him.

By now our attention is drawn to yet another part of the picture. Just inside the door of the great palace a group of soldiers surround an old man. Ruthlessly, they press him forward in the presence of his austere majesty. He trembles as his loose fitting cloak conceals the torture that has been his. His hands are bound and his head bowed low. Soon the silence is broken by the thundering voice of Diocletian. "Where is your Bible?" The tone of his voice indicates the torrent of rage contained within. Yes, this is the mighty emperor who hates God, has slain countless Christians. His hands are red with the blood of the godly. Some were burned at the stake, others torn by the lions, many rotted away in the dungeons.

The answer comes forth without wavering. "Your majesty, it is in my heart!"

The old man knew that the enemy might be able to uncover a Bible hidden amongst his meager posses-

sions and take it away. But, he also knew that if he committed the Word to memory so that it would abide in His heart, they could never take that away.

He knew the meaning of the words, "Thy word have I hid in my heart." Such a word is a lamp unto our feet and a light upon our pathway, even if that way leads through the valley of the shadow of death.

He went to the stake with the Word in his heart.

THE SECOND PICTURE

It, too, is very old, about 700 years to be exact. It also is a sad picture.

The center of this picture is a large church. It is very old and by the architecture we can tell that it is in southern France about the year 1200. We can tell that something strange is going on inside this church. There are no happy people entering for worship. Rather, we see soldiers carrying people upon their shoulders, some are old and feeble, others are just children. Some are kicking and putting up a fuss, others are submissive. All are sad faced; they seem to realize what lies ahead.

I hate to tell you to step up closer and look inside the windows: for it is a horrible spectacle. One can just hear the screams and cries of the tortured, the moans of the dying. Soldiers are standing ankle deep in blood; it is seeping into their shoes. On the altar, bodies of the dead are piled high. Soon the church cannot hold any more corpses, for by nightfall over 60,000 men, women, and children are dead by the edge of the sword.

Why this carnage?

Pope Hildebrand had issued a decree that no one could own a Bible. Only the priests could have one for their study. The people in this village were Waldenses, they had disobeyed the order of the pope. They had painstakingly copied by hand — sometimes it took a whole year — the Bible, so that they could read and commit much of it to memory. That Word they taught to their children, so that they, too, could know the God of salvation.

The words of Psalm 119:105 were precious to them, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my pathway." Only that light could swallow up the darkness. Without it they would rather die.

THE THIRD PICTURE

The next picture is relatively recent, being about 400 years old.

The attraction in this picture is not a palace, not a church, but a large hall. This is not a mob scene, it is very orderly. Two personages are the focus of attention.

The first is obviously a ruler, his dress and deportment indicates that he is a man of importance. He is not here to be entertained, he is here to function as a judge, this is a trial of great importance. He is Charles, ruler of Germany, surrounded by none other than the great and mighty of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, Mr. Eck.

Before him stands Martin Luther, thin, short of stature, robes, skull cap and all. His eyes are sharp and penetrating. His mean figure by no means indicates timidity. The picture tells a different story.

This moment is crucial for Luther. Many strange things have happened to him already. He had nailed the 95 theses on the door of Wittenburg. He had caused a storm of protest and violent theological discussion. The pope had already excommunicated him by means of the papal bull. The pope had also waved his political influence by requesting Charles to call this trial to determine whether Luther was a heretic or not; and if so, he was determined to have Charles put him to death.

Luther's life was at stake here.

The clever Eck begins to ask questions. Are these your writings? Do you recant, are you sorry for writing them? Are you willing to destroy them?

The answer of Luther sends chills down our spine.

"Since then your majesty and your lordship desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and without teeth. Unless I am convicted by the Scripture and plain reason — I do not accept the authority of popes and councils for they have contradicted each other; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant. For to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me."

This was the man that had struggled personally until God showed him the truth of justification through faith in Jesus Christ and not righteousness based upon our works. His comfort had been found not in the words of men, but the infallible Word of God. The floodgates of righteousness were opened unto him as he read, "The just shall live by faith." His fervor for the Word of God led him to translate it carefully into the language of the people. It didn't take very long and his fellow German, Gutenberg, invented movable type and the common people had their Bibles.

Yes, where else could he stand than upon the certain ground, "My conscience is captive to the Word of God!"

The light of that Word had illuminated the whole of his life.

THE FOURTH PICTURE

This one is very new, its edges are crisp and clean.

The center of this picture is a house. By its structure we can see that it is a house in suburbia America. The tree lined streets are enhanced by the presence of the dwelling.

What is important to us, however, is not the outside, but the inside. With our zoom lens, we are able to enlarge one room of this house to sizable proportions. This room is obviously someone's private abode. No, it is not spotless, the rumpled bedspread, the shirt hanging over the doorknob, the junk in one corner, tell us that someone *lives* in this room. It is not a museum; it is a bedroom, very special. Amidst the adequate furnishings we notice a desk in one corner. It, too, tells of neglected papers, piles of abandoned games, books, etc.

But look on.

There at that desk is a young student. Tonight he is working hard at his math. He has finished his English, and he has yet to tackle History. Amongst his books is a Bible. So commonplace he hardly gives it a second thought, yet so precious that he wouldn't think of studying without it. From time to time his textbooks make reference to this one great Book. His teachers ask penetrating and thought-provoking questions that force him to examine the texts of this Book carefully. He has memorized verses and

chapters in great quantity. You can give him chapter and verse, and he can find it readily. His Bible is part of his life.

And that's not all.

His Bible is at the table, at school, in church, in society.

Very seldom is there not a Bible available within an arm's reach.

Is this a picture of you?

You, too, have learned that, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light upon my pathway." What would our life be without our Bibles? How could we ever really know *the* answers without its authority. Where would we find direction without its guidance, comfort without its words of hope. The Bible is so much part of our life we almost take it for granted.

Now look back. Four pictures. Two are sad, one is a picture of courage, one is a happy scene. Between the sad ones and the happy one is the picture of courage.

That's what the Reformation must mean to us.

God used Martin Luther and John Calvin and others to give us our Bible, that we might have its lamp upon our feet.

Next time you reach for your Bible, think of these four pictures.

GUEST ARTICLE

The Reformation and the New Hermeneutics

Rev. W. Bekkering

The Reformation stands as a high point in the history of the Christian church because it served to free the Word of God out of the bondage of the Roman church. The Roman church had suppressed the Scripture to the extent that it was all but taken away from the masses of the common people. Only the clergy had access to the Bible and that was limited. The free study and interpretation of the Scripture was stifled because the church determined what the Word of God said and woe unto him who found in the Scripture what the church said was not there. The Roman

church through its unholy councils and overbearing tradition of the fathers imposed man's word upon the Word of God.

What a terrible time that was for the child of God who cried out for the comfort that comes through the clear exposition of the truth of the gospel of salvation through faith in Christ alone.

Imagine then the inexpressible joy of Martin Luther when God caused the light of the pure gospel to beam into the night of his uncertainty to work the

assurance of sins forgiven, which brings that peace that passeth understanding.

As children of the Reformation, we must never cease to be thankful for what God has wrought for His church through the Reformation and for what God continues to do for the church that continues in the way of the truth, the truth as it was rediscovered and reinterpreted through the true principles of interpretation, the chief of which is that the Scripture interprets the Scripture. God through the Reformation caused the church to see and confess: "We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe, unto salvation, is sufficiently taught therein. . . . For, since it is forbidden, to add unto or take away anything from the word of God, it doth thereby evidently appear, that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. Neither do we consider of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, for the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore, we reject with all our hearts, whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule, which the apostles have taught us, saying, Try the spirits whether they are of God. Likewise, if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house." (Belgic Confession, article VII) The church further believes "without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts, that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves. For the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling. (Belgic Confession, article V)

In the last few years something terrible has been happening in those churches that were born out of and long lived in appreciation of what God brought about in the Reformation. That terrible thing is the so-called new hermeneutic. That means a new way of interpreting the Word of God. The new hermeneutic is a pernicious and a deceitful error. It is pernicious because it leads the church back into the situation in which men, and not the Word itself, determine what the Word of God teaches. It is deceitful because it claims a love for the Word, adherence to the Word, and because it confesses that the Word is God's Word, but what it does *not* say is that the Word of God is absolutely infallible and entirely without error.

It is difficult to give a clear picture of exactly what the new hermeneutic is. In fact one cannot pinpoint

the new hermeneutic because there is no set standard of what it is. The new hermeneutic can, however, be recognized by certain elements that all or most of the adherents hold in common.

The new hermeneutic was born among the scholarly, the highly educated, the theologians. It arose out of a concern that the church have an influential role in shaping the world in which we live. It was motivated by the fear that the church was losing its influence and that it was no longer relevant. These men were concerned lest a sharp antithesis come between the church and the world so that the church be no longer in a position to address the world, and the world the church. That, you see, would be a cardinal sin, for then the church would be as salt that had lost its savor. Then the world would not be influenced when the church spoke with respect to the social problems of our day, such as racism, ecology, corruption in politics, etc. The church, after all, has a mandate to fulfill which is both cultural and evangelical. These scholars with deep social concern have weighed the church in the balances and have found her wanting.

Long has the church preached the gospel, but to no avail. In the first place, they say, the church has been entirely too internally oriented, that is, her message has been addressed too much to the church and not enough to the world. Secondly, the message of the church has been too bland — it is no wonder that the world gives no heed. The message of the church must be seasoned with the salt of social concern.

Something has to be changed! There has to be a reinterpretation of the task, the message, and the goal of the church. Doubt has to be cast upon the teaching of the Word of God which says that God has put enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman — between the world and the church. That may have held for the church in the Old Testament, but can hardly be relevant for the evangelical church of the 20th century. Room has to be made in the church for the teaching of the world concerning the origin of all things. There has to be a new interpretation of the old naive account of creation as set forth in the first few chapters of God's Word. That must not be understood literally, but as a teaching model that was only intended to teach the *what* but not the *how* of creation. The teaching of God's Word that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16), and Jesus' prayer in John 17:17, "thy word is truth," must not be interpreted to mean that the Scripture is infallible, without any error. That was all right for the old hermeneutic but the new hermeneutic must determine what the *content* of the truth is without being unduly concerned with the *form* of the truth. It may be stated that the Word of God is *in* the Scripture,

but not that the Scripture is the Word of God. It may not be said of the Scripture that it contains propositional truth, so that one can take a statement out of the Bible and say that it gives a concrete manifestation of a truth that God caused to be inscripturated. The Scripture, we are told by those who use the new hermeneutic, was never intended to be treated as a collection of propositional truths; Rather, we may say with respect to a statement from the Scripture that it is Moses' understanding of the truth or Matthew's interpretation of the truth or Paul's reaction to the truth but never the truth *per se*. You see, cultural and historical circumstances that surround a statement of the Bible determine how it is to be understood. The new hermeneutic insists that one give full due to the human side as well as the divine side of the Scripture.

We could go on and on to show how the new hermeneutic manifests itself in the churches, but let this serve to show the very seriousness of this error.

We ought to notice that there is really nothing new in the new hermeneutic. What we have at bottom is the question "Who is the standard of the truth — God or man?" More fundamental yet is the question, "Whose voice will man heed — the Lord's or the devil's?" The devil does not demand that his word be specifically acknowledged. It is satisfaction enough for him to see that God's Word is denied. The devil understands very well that to deny God's Word is principally to give heed to him. The devil is content to let man think that man is the standard of the truth.

Historically the devil was the first to use the "new hermeneutic" when he used the questioning approach to cast doubt on the veracity of God's Word in speaking to Eve, "Yea hath God said, . . . ?" The Roman church with a "new hermeneutic" took the Word of God from His people. More recently the 19th century unbelieving higher critics laid the ground work for the new hermeneutic. There is really nothing new in this hermeneutic, but we recognize the same old attempt on the part of the devil to rob God's people of the blessed assurance of His Word and to afflict them with the agony of uncertainty.

It is no joy for us to behold the new hermeneutic having its terrible effects in a church very close to us. The Christian Reformed Church is presently caught in the throes of this dreadful error. The roots have grown deeply into the whole life of the church, and the clear fruits are being manifest. When that church, year after year, takes decisions that fly in the face of

the clear teaching of the Word of God, there is something terribly wrong. The new hermeneutic is bearing its fruit. The Word of God is being removed from God's people so that finally only the theologians will be able to be "sure" what is God's Word in the Bible and what is not. God's people can sense that something is wrong when pulpits, affected by the new hermeneutic, send forth the sound of uncertainty with respect to the Scripture. The faith of God's people cries out for the rock-solid testimony of the truth. Let God's people who are ensnared in such circumstances flee to where the truth is proclaimed with certainty.

Whenever man or a group of men become the standard of the truth, then gone is *all* the blessed comfort of God's Word. As soon as one thinks he can find one error in the Bible he no longer believes in the holy Scripture, but in himself. If he accepted everything else as true, he would believe it, not because the Scripture says it, but because it agrees with his own reason or his own sentiments.

The Bible must not be believed just because that is the best logical presupposition, but because the Holy Spirit gives clear evidence in the Scripture that it is God's infallible Word, and He testifies in the heart of believers that His Word is truth.

As Protestant Reformed churches we must remember with gratitude what God has wrought in the Reformation and what He has continued to do for His church up until this day by preserving her in the way of the truth. We have the old hermeneutic, which principles were rediscovered and clarified through the Reformation. The old hermeneutic begins with the firm conviction that the Bible is inspired in all its parts, that it is God's Word and therefore it is infallible. The old hermeneutic holds that the Scripture is the only interpreter of the Scripture.

Let Christian scholarship be manifest in our midst not with high-flown theories of men, but in drawing out of the Word the treasures of the truth. That is true exegesis! That is the way of the Reformation.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Redlands Men's Society expresses sincere sympathy to one of its members, Mr. Arthur Griess, in the death of his father, MR. AUGUST GRIESS.

May our covenant God comfort the bereaved by His Word and Spirit. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." (Romans 14:8)

Rev. Marvin Kamps, Pres.
Larry Feenstra, Sec'y.

STUDIES IN ISAIAH

Kingdom And Capital Fallen (19)

Isaiah 3: 8-11

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

1. *Why Government Office is Refused.* "For Jerusalem is failed and Judah fallen, because their tongue and their deeds (are) against Jehovah, to embitter (insult) the eyes of His glory," (v. 8, Heb.). "For," expressing "the reason why the conscripted man refuses to accept the reins of public office" (E.J. Young). For the ruin (v. 3) of any nation, generally, it has only itself to thank, and that because of its profane and blasphemous offending of the holiness and glory of God. There is no exception with the nation whose God is the Lord. For Jerusalem and Judah failed and fell, to be destroyed by their own iniquities. They insulted the Lord's glorious eyes in that He had to look upon works of darkness. The world mocks God, sticks its tongue out at Him, and the more the lash of His severity it feels, the more it breaks out in insolent fury against Him. But God is not mocked, and His destruction of these ungodly people is righteous.

The ungodly break God's law, and they do so to purposely insult Him. Strangely, this is also true of the blasphemers who claim they do not believe there is any god. Then why do they wilfully intend to offend Him? Why do they go out of their way to show contempt for His authority? Why do federal, state and local authorities threaten the people, disrupt quiet communities and make every insane effort to destroy the family unit? Why, in this way, do they continue to beg God to destroy this nation with terrible judgments? Why do capital and country labor in the very fire to earn the unenviable, the horrible epitaph, "For the wrath of God is come upon them to the uttermost" (I Thes. 2:16)?

2. *What Brought on the Calamity.* "The cut of their faces testifies against them, and like Sodom they tell their sin; they do not hide (it). Woe to their soul! for they have rewarded to themselves evil" (v. 9, Heb.). Our nation makes no secret of its depravity, blatantly boasting its corruption and vileness by ways of the news and communications media, and by its constant mad carouse. The cut of their faces (the expression on the face) is stamped with shameless lewdness. Appearance testifies against them. Their

looks show what they are: open, hardened fornicators, adulterers and drunkards (I. Cor. 6:9). Their eyes speak plainly, are full of adultery, which cannot cease from sin (II Pet. 2:14). As Matthew Henry says, "they had a whore's forehead (Jer. 3:3) and could not blush (Jer. 6:15)" Like the Sodomites in the days of Lot, they brazenly tell their sin. They do not hide it, but bring it right out in the open. It appears on the front cover of *Time* magazine. The sin of Sodom represents utter abomination. Today it is a sin not only frequent and widespread, but tolerated by the general public, and has become so commonly accepted that it is everywhere praised and defended. More and more it is being pushed by TV. Hardly a maude covers the macerated mash.

This evil generation, bemused by so called "sensitivity training" (in the public schools, in the hospitals, in some churches, and, increasingly, on police forces) and blinded by lust, rushes heedlessly into feminism, effeminacy and everything base. So, in the end of it all, the wicked world system rewards itself with evil.

3. *What Classes of Men are Involved.* "Say ye (of the) righteous that (for them it is) good. For they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked! (for him it is) evil! For the reward of his hands shall be made to him" (vv. 10, 11, Heb.). Two classes of people divide the whole globe, the righteous and the wicked. These two have always been in conflict as they are absolutely antithetical to one another. For this reason there is always the battle of the two seeds, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent on-going. The flood destroyed the world of the ungodly, while Noah, safe in the ark, represented the righteous. The death angel ruined the nation of Egypt, while Israel was safe under the cover of the blood of the Passover. Here you have that sharp, distinct line between sin and grace, a line ineradicable. The flood came as a judgment because the sons of God and the daughters of men had blended the two sides of that line, to form a wicked alliance between the church and the world. That line is intended to maintain the distinction between the precious and the

vile to the end of the world. There is no borderland between righteous and wicked to so form a third neutral class. The difference is as clear and plain as that which divides death and life. It is impossible to be between death and life, where one would be not in either state. There are no "in betweenites," who are between sin and grace, not in sin, yet not out of it, not in grace yet not out of it. So one is either righteous or wicked. Writer and reader belong to the one class or to the other. As for the righteous, it shall be well with them. If any are not righteous, they are wicked, even though they may not think so, and it shall be ill with them.

The well-being of the righteous is a solid, undeniable fact. It is always well with the righteous. "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him" in prosperity, for in itself prosperity comes with many perilous temptations. It shall be well with him in persecution, an evil hard and sometimes almost impossible to bear. It is not merely well with the righteous at special times, but at any and all times, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, from the dawn of day to the dark of night. It is always well with the righteous, and never otherwise than well with him.

So, it *shall* be well with the righteous in the future. Sometimes he dreads the future, but without reason. It shall be well with him when the evil days draw nigh. It shall be well with him in the impending struggle. It shall be well, literally, good for the righteous, nothing but good, the text speaking of an absolute, unqualified good. The righteous may suffer in tumults, turmoils, conflicts, wars and when kingdom and capital have fallen. Armageddon shall occur when the Euphrates is dried up. The very elements shall melt with a fervent heat, but to the Christian it does not matter what shall happen in the castastrophic end of all things, for God has said it shall be well with the righteous.

When we say it is well with the righteous, we say it not as an educated guess, but we say it on divine authority. It may be nice or wonderful to have a physician tell us we are well. For some people it seems encouraging when a psychiatrist tells them all is well with them. We may arrive at our own conclusions, and think we are pretty safe to adjudge that all is well with us. But we need, and have, more than the fallible judgments of men. We have it on the authority of divine omniscience that with the righteous all is well. When God says all is well, let the devil, all his minions and the whole world say it is ill, we know whom to believe and whom we have believed. True faith remains unshaken, even should all

creatures contradict the Creator. We don't always see that it is always well with the righteous. Sometimes it looks very evil for him. But the authority of God and His Word is better than sight. It is not sight nor feeling, but divine authority which assures us it is at all times well with the righteous. It may not always be so with our bodies, but it is so with our souls, so that we may always sing, "It is well, it is *well* with my soul!"

There is only one other class of men, identified in "Woe to the *wicked*! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." It is ill with the wicked, always evil for him. No time is specified in the text. For the wicked it is ill for time and eternity, ill in fat years and in lean years, ill in prosperity (which for him is like the last meal of the condemned criminal), ill in adversity (which, on him, is like the first drops of the eternal fall-out of divine wrath). It is ill with the wicked on divine authority. When God says it is not good, but evil, which is always the portion of the wicked, then it must be woefully bad for him. Then it shall be ill with him in the future. With him it shall get worse and worse until the very worst shall occur, and he shall be cast out into the outer darkness. It is ill with the wicked in his entire human nature. His whole head is sick, heart faint, and from sole of foot to crown of head, it is ill with him. In health, his soul is ill. When his feet dance, his soul is condemned. When he sings his lewd, profane songs, he but more vibrates the sword of judgment hanging over his head. Man's word is like milk-weed on the breeze. God's word is like an avalanche. It is ill with the wicked in life, in death, and after death the judgment, and after judgment condemnation, and after condemnation the never-ending hell-fire and eternal torment.

It must be ill with the wicked, for "the Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." It must be evil for him, for he was in disobedience appointed to stumble over the Word (I Pet. 2:8). The wicked are out of joint with the world, out of step with God, and in opposition to the whole current of creation, which is ever moving toward God (Rom 11:36). It is ill with him because it can never be well with stubble before the fires of judgment, nor with the wax which boasts itself against the heat, nor with the gnat that fights the giant. It is ill with him because his life, work and joys hang by a thread, and when that thread is cut, as it must be, what will it be with him but as ill as can be? It is ill with the wicked because when his temporal end comes his eternity begins. His story may be told in two chapters, one of tinsel glitter, the other dark with never ending Stygian night.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Hebrews 13:8

Rev. G. Lubbers

JESUS CHRIST EVER THE SAME (Hebrews 13:8)

There is some difference of opinion concerning the relationship of this passage contextually. The one school of thought holds that the assertion concerning Jesus Christ is a basis and proof for what we read in verse 7 concerning the Word of God which was preached by the leaders in the church, the apostles and others. Really, these faithful servants preached Jesus Christ as being the same in all ages. This, of course, is undoubtedly true. Such was the faith which the apostles preached. They laid the foundation besides which no other foundation can be laid which is Jesus Christ. (I Cor. 3:11) It may, however, be questioned whether this text refers exclusively to the foregoing verse, or whether it can not also be meant as referring to what follows in the verses 9, 10, 11. It then is the basis for the teaching that we must not be made steadfast in our hearts by "meat" but rather by grace. We hold that this is then a general saying concerning God's covenant faithfulness in Christ Jesus in all ages. In Jesus Christ all God's promises are yea, and in Him amen to the glory of God the Father. (II Cor. 1:20, 21) For in this latter passage we have a reference to God, Who is the one establishing us and anointing us with Christ through the grace of the Holy Spirit. For the grace that establishes us is the "earnest," which is the Spirit of Christ.

The clarion note of this text, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever," is worthy of a bit of study and attention. We ought to notice the implication of these names which are placed so emphatically on the foreground. This is especially true here in the book of Hebrews. The name "Jesus" refers to the historical man who born from a woman and made under law. (Gal. 4:4, 5) He came to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. He came to save His people from their sins. (Matt. 1:21) He is God in the flesh, who will sit upon the throne of His father David forever. This Jesus is Jehovah-saves, the Mediator of the New Testament in His blood. He alone brings all His people into the rest of the eternal Sabbath. (Heb. 4:8) This Jesus is the *Christ*, the anointed one of God to be the chief Prophet, the only High Priest, and our

eternal King. This placing of these names emphatically on the foreground emphasizes the Son of God in the flesh in his Person and Office. It is the full gospel of grace in a nutshell.

Now of this Son of God, who is called Jesus, the Christ, it is stated that He is ever the "same"! This might refer to the eternity of His godhead, and truly the godhead cannot be separated from the predication that He is the "same" in all ages and times. However, here the viewpoint is the ever faithful and changeless manifestation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament dispensation this Jesus was the Christ of God. No one will ever understand the meaning of the shadows and types in the temple without seeing that Christ is the surety of their fulfillment. He who does not see Christ in the Old Testament Scriptures is not understanding these Scriptures. He cannot see any unity of doctrine in them. All such must needs end in "divers and strange" teachings. Such cannot see that the Christ of "today" is the same Christ as the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures. And again, such will never understand that this Christ is changeless even in the ages to come here on earth, and in the endless ages of the eternal state, when the tabernacle of God shall be with man. This is the Jesus that says to John on Patmos as the glorified Christ, "Fear not, I am the First and Last, the Alpha and the Omega," (Rev. 1:17). He is ever the same one, the I-Am-that-I-Am. We must cling to this one Jesus Christ, the Son of God in the flesh. To deny that Jesus Christ is ever the same is to fall away from the living God in the flesh. It is to become anti-christian.

THE BASIC ADMONITION AGAINST DIVERS AND STRANGE DOCTRINES (Hebrews 13:9-11)

The term in the Greek for "doctrines" is *didachais* and not *didaskaliais*. The latter term refers to the *content* of the teaching while the former refers to the *act* of teaching. It refers to those teachings which are rampant in the church by those who do not understand or believe the truth of the Gospel, but are merely the attempts of would-be teachers to confuse the hearers.

(Gal. 1:7) Such teachings are often as manifold and different as there are teachers. And those having itching ears will heap to themselves such teachers, now one and then another. They are "carried about" by such teachings and are far from the solid and only foundation: Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It is against such that the writer writes a strong prohibition: be not carried about with strange and divers doctrines.

That such doctrines are denominated "divers" is because these are of such a variegated and confusing nature. They are an attempt at preaching so that the "heart" is established, but none of these teachings brings us to the rest which Jesus gives. It does not bring us to the old and tried way of the temple-worship as this finds its fulfilment in the blood of the Cross. Perhaps the writer is here referring to the rising of the many errors of that day, which all are the way of "works of law" and not of "grace". Each of these errorists had his own private interpretation. Furthermore, such errors were not only divers, but they were also "strange". They did not carry the familiar sound of free and sovereign grace of God, Who loved and elected His people and sent His Son to save them. They were not the voice of the shepherd, but of thieves and robbers. (John 10:7, 8, 26) And now the sheep are warned against these foreign teachings which are not the law and the prophets, but the peeping and muttering of false teachers. For the teachings here referred to do not hold to the head Christ, but would change the "Christ" according to their own fancy and whim.

They zeroed in (these doctrines) on the question of "meats". It was a matter of what entered into the mouth which brought about salvation. Such were the teachings of the "traditions of the elders." These "meats" referred to the legalistic teachings in which the way of salvation was supposed to consist. The way into the most holy place with God was through what a man did with "meats". It dealt with what was Levitically clean and unclean. It is the lesson which Peter must so profoundly learn when a sheet from heaven is lowered to him three times by the Lord with the command: slay and eat. In this sheet were all manner of clean and unclean animals. All were made clean by the Lord. (Acts 10:9-18) Later Peter must once more be corrected by Paul at Antioch when Peter acts contrary to the Gospel by separating himself from the Christians of the Gentiles in the presence of the Jewish Christians. (Gal. 2:11-21) It was Jesus Who showed up and exposed the folly of the washings of the hands and meats when He taught that not that which enters into the man defiles the man, but that which proceedeth from his mouth as this comes forth from the heart. (Matt. 15:15-20)

THE HEART ESTABLISHED BY GRACE (Hebrews 13:9)

Jesus says to His disciples before he dies on the Cross of Calvary, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me," (John 14:1). It is an arresting fact that the writer to the Hebrews speaks of the "heart" here as that which must be established in the believers. For it is with the heart that man believes unto salvation. (Rom. 10:6-11) And of this heart into which the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit our text speaks. (Rom. 5:5) The letter to the Hebrews speaks repeatedly of the "heart". It is the great benefit and reality of the better covenant that the law is not written on tables of stone, but that it is written in the heart and in the mind. (Heb. 8:10) Unbelief is also a matter of the heart, "Let not your hearts be hardened." (Heb. 4:7-12) There must not be an evil heart of unbelief in the church, lest they fall away from the living God. (Heb. 3:12)

Now the text speaks of this heart and says that it must be established. This must refer to believing hearts which have been renewed by the Holy Ghost. Only such hearts can be established in the faith. And it is a good thing, a very beautiful (*kalos*) thing when the heart is established in a Christian, when he receives strength to stand on his believing feet, and with boldness draw nigh to God in Christ in the most holy place. What more beautiful thing, good thing, can there be. The Psalmist says, "But it is good for me to draw near unto God." (Psalm 73:28) Here we understand with the Psalmist and say, "For thou, LORD, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." (Psalm 86:5) That establishes the heart. For to be established means: firmness in the sense of having inner stability, solidity. The ultimate stability is that of God in history in all His fulfilment of His promises. He can be relied upon that His word will come to pass; it is proved true. To be established is therefore always a matter touching our faith and confidence in God.

Now the text teaches that this must not be, neither can this be a matter of using of "meats". In all the Old Testament dispensation many were occupied with meats. Generations of the people of God were walking in these "meats". It was a heavy burden for the children of the Old Covenant in their day. (Acts 15:10) It dealt with the warp and woof of Levitical cleanliness in Israel. But it was to no "profit". It could not really establish the heart then. It could only point to Jesus Christ yesterday, today, and forever the same! But in itself it could not cleanse but could only be a parabolic presentation of the Gospel till the time of Reformation when Christ would come the High Priest of better things. (Heb. 9:1-10) Why

then now be carried about with all these winds of doctrine from their own steadfastness in Christ?

Shall there be an establishment of the believing heart, then it must be by grace. The term *grace* we find in the book of Hebrews in many passages, and the term is very significant. The term refers to God's basic disposition to his people. Thus Christ tasted raw death for all his own "by the grace of God." This was the grace which was back of the good pleasure of God in bringing many sons to glory. This is the grace

which is such that the writer can speak of "what behooved God". For grace is prior to election. Paul speaks of the election of grace. (Rom. 12:1-5) If it is not thus, then election is not election and grace is not grace, but works. When the heart is established by grace, it is established by the power of God as this works in the true preaching of the Gospel. And, therefore, we must not be carried away by every teaching, the divers and strange teaching of heretics who corrupt the Gospel.

ANNUAL REPORT, R.F.P.A.

Dear Members and Friends of the Reformed Free Publishing Association:

Once again, in this 51st year of publishing *The Standard Bearer*, your board comes before you this evening with a resume of the activities connected with its publication during the past twelve months. With the help of our covenant God, who once again gave us faithful editors and writers, and with your generous contributions, we were able this year to expand our witness to those outside the sphere of our churches.

Our publishing total rose from 1500 copies per issue in 1973 to 1900 copies per issue in 1975; and more than two thirds of this total were sent to those outside the Protestant Reformed denomination. In comparison, as late as 1960, better than 85% of our subscription rolls were Protestant Reformed families. In 1974 we bound 125 volumes of *The Standard Bearer* and in 1975 we are increasing this to 200 volumes. A total of 170 new 12-month subscribers was added in 1975, plus 290 more 10-for-2 subscribers. Fifty-nine cancellations were received during the year. The board solicits *each* subscriber's help in expanding the witness of our *Standard Bearer* and asks that you send us names of friends who you feel should be reading it. Only \$2 for 6 months for new readers

During the year we mailed 635 free copies to the mailing list of the Illiana Chr. High School, which is in the Chicago area. Over 225 free copies were mailed to pastors in the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches, 220 free copies were mailed to postal patrons in the Forbes, N.D. area, and 1000 copies were mailed to members of the A.C.R.L. Free copies were also mailed to Australia and Tasmania. While the response to these endeavors does not always seem gratifying, the point to remember is that our God has given us the means and has made it possible for us to reach other church denominations and individuals who are interested in the truth as we proclaim it. This kind of

witnessing would also be a worthwhile project for our individual churches and societies to undertake, and the board earnestly solicits your requests for free copies for your mailing.

The Book Publication Committee has also been very active. To date, approximately 3000 copies of *Behold He Cometh* have been sold, and already 1900 copies of *God's Covenant Faithfulness* have been sold, out of a total printing of 3000. If you have not yet ordered your copy (or copies) we urge you to do so at once, as there will be no more available after the 3000 are sold.

Coming soon from the press are 4 more books;

1. *Marriage — The Mystery of Christ and the Church* by David Engelsma
2. *God's Eternal Good Pleasure* (25 sermons on Rom. 9, 10, 11) by Herman Hoeksema
3. *The Mysteries of the Kingdom* (a book on the parables) by Herman Hanko
4. A book of Lenten messages by Herman Hoeksema

In addition to his many other duties, our business manager, Mr. Henry Vander Wal, has taken upon himself all the work connected with handling, processing, and shipping book orders. We cannot thank him enough for all the time spent on behalf of *The Standard Bearer* and the Book Publication Committee.

Retiring this year are the brethren Roger King, Donald Knoper, and John Vander Woude. We wish to thank these men for the time spent on the Board of the R.F.P.A.

In conclusion, the Board of the R.F.P.A. and the staff continue to covet your prayers and support of this Kingdom work.

Don Knoper
Sec'y for the board

News From Our Churches

After accepting the job as News Editor for the *Standard Bearer* there has been a very noticeable increase in the mail delivered on Linwood St. In fact, we are considering a bid solicitation for an addition to our mailbox so that all the interesting material being sent can be accommodated.

In addition to the mail reports, a personal delivery of a rather disturbing report was received from a member of the Reformed Witness Hour Radio Committee. It seems our distinctively reformed radio program has been 'kicked off' the air by a radio station in New Jersey. WAWZ — FM in Zarephath, N.J., refused to continue our Reformed Witness Hour programs over their outlet as of September 9. The reason given for the program discontinuance by the WAWZ program director was: "This past Sunday evening (September 7) the speaker on the Reformed

Witness Hour made mention of 'Arminianism' in a negative manner and was heard to say that it was, in his opinion, a wrong and un-Biblical doctrine, or words to that effect." This is the first time in 35 years of continuous radio broadcasting that our Reformed Witness Hour has been banned from *any* radio station. No doubt it will not be the last time such refusals are received as the end of all things is at hand.

Rev. Joostens has kindly submitted a report on the October meeting of Classis East which will take the rest of the space allocated to this column. Therefore the rest of the items waiting in the 'news box' will have to wait for the next issue.

K.G.V.

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Classis East of our Churches met in regular session on Oct. 1, 1975 at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church. Each of our nine churches in Classis East was represented by two delegates. This session of Classis was short due to the fact that no new material appeared on the agenda and the matters treated were routine. Even though the session was brief, it afforded an opportunity for the officebearers to enjoy one another's fellowship. We have reason to thank our God that He causes our congregations to flourish in peace.

After opening devotions by the last president, Rev. H. Veldman took the reins of this classis. After the necessary classical procedures, the Chairman made the following committee appointments. Elders P. Faber and H. Schipper were to serve on the Finance Committee; Rev. Van Overloop, Rev. Den Hartog and Elder T. Huizinga on the Classical Appointment Committee; and elder G. Feenstra to thank the ladies for their catering.

After feasting on coffee and various baked goods

which the ladies had prepared, the committees were ready to give their reports. Classis granted Kalamazoo's request for pulpit supply by adopting the following schedule: Oct. 19 — Rev. R. Van Overloop; Oct. 26 — Rev. H. Veldman; Nov. 9 — Rev. M. Schipper; Nov. 16 — Rev. C. Hanko; Nov. 30 — Rev. M. Joostens; Dec. 7 — Rev. G. Van Baren; Dec. 21 — Rev. J. Heys; Dec. 28 — Rev. R. Van Overloop; Jan. 11 — Rev. H. Veldman. The classis also approved the expenditure of \$292.14 to cover the expenses of this classis. Elder Feenstra reported that he thanked the ladies doubly since they donated the refreshments.

After the questions of Art. 41 of the C.O. were asked and satisfactorily answered, the concept minutes were read and adopted and classis was adjourned. Classis East will meet next time, D.V., at Southeast Church on Jan. 7, 1976.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. M. Joostens, Assist. Stated Clerk