

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

One cannot help noticing the striking fact that in those days — a flourishing period of Reformed theology! — when the doctrine of predestination was questioned and assailed, the Reformed churches had recourse to the composition of a creed that reaffirmed and even buttressed (if this is possible) the Canons. Today, in the face of similar attacks, Reformed churches surrender the historic creeds, especially the Canons, so as to bring their confession into line with the unbelief of the heretics. Ours is not one of the most flourishing periods of Reformed theology.

See “Hyper-Calvinism” and the Call of the Gospel — page 804.

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## Led as a Lamb to the Slaughter

Rev. C. Hanko

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.*

Isaiah 53:7.

I remember well, how I stood in silent awe watching that soul-stirring incident, so common, yet so evocative.

It was in a slaughter house in the Midwest, where a goat, quite significantly referred to as “Judas”,

proudly led a small flock of sheep up the ramp to their slaughter. They were rounded up in a narrow pen, and one of them, though hoisted up by her hind leg, still offered no resistance. Helplessly she dangled for a moment, — if only she would kick, or bleat, or fight back. Then the knife was plunged into her



throat with a quick thrust. Even though her life blood was gushing out, the victim only shuddered and died, without as much as opening her mouth in complaint.

This is another one of those things that happen in parables. Already I was traveling in my thoughts into the past to that lonely hill called Calvary. I stood, as it were, next to the prophet Isaiah viewing the cross where the Prince of Glory died. Transfixed, I cried out in anguish of soul, "We all like sheep are gone astray." I, too, (how often?), have walked in my own sinful way. And the Lamb of God went to the slaughter for my iniquity!

We often ask ourselves, especially during the passion weeks — What was the outstanding feature of Jesus' walk and ministry among us?

We are aware that He was a great preacher and teacher, such as the world has never known nor ever shall know. Christ was given the tongue of the learned. Common people and children gladly listened to Him. Thousands came from far and wide to sit at His feet for hours at a time, while He unfolded to them the law and the prophets. Particularly Jesus spoke of a kingdom that would far exceed the riches and glories of Solomon's realm. He assured His audiences that the kingdom of God was at hand — in fact, was already present within them. All the promises spoken by the prophets were about to be realized in Him. Those who heard Him could not help but ask: Is not this the Christ spoken of by God through the prophets? And He sealed His testimony with signs and wonders that astounded friend and foe alike. Jesus was indeed a great Prophet sent of God.

He was sympathetic, thoroughly understanding our needs, always ready to help. Children climbed on His knee to be embraced by Him. Men and women came from afar to bring to Him their troubles. The Lord knew the right word for the weary. He sent sinners away with the blessed assurance of divine forgiveness. Rightfully Jesus could say, "Learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls." Not as if He intended to improve the social conditions of mankind or to make this a better world, but rather to point us heavenward to His glorious kingdom to come. If we would seek a name for this meekness, we would call Him our merciful Highpriest.

At the same time, He came with an authority that demanded respect. Buyers and sellers fled from the temple at the very word of His command. Scribes and rulers cowered before His well-deserved tongue lashings. Devils could not refuse to obey Him. By the word of His power lepers were cleansed, the blind saw, the deaf heard, the dead were raised, sinners were forgiven. In all His lowliness and simplicity Christ had the power and authority of a King, Who

came in the name of Jehovah.

He was all that, and even more. He was the Man of Sorrows, with pain written upon His face. Beneath His smile there lingered a hidden grief. Even when He enthusiastically spoke of the future glories of His kingdom, His voice carried strains of deep sorrow. The prophet Isaiah expressed it so well when he said, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

Indeed, He was oppressed. From the time that His mother laid Him as a Babe in the manger in that lowly cattle stall, the pressure of His poverty never left Him. Foxes have their lair, birds nestle warmly in the trees, but the Son of Man was without a comfortable pillow on which to rest His weary head. Even as a Boy, when He talked with the lawyers in the temple, the burden of His calling weighed heavily upon Him. When the Lord began His public ministry in Jerusalem by driving out the thieves from Father's Domain, the disciples already saw that the zeal of God's House was devouring Him. Throughout His public ministry He experienced a soul anguish so great that finally in Gethsemane great drops of blood were pressed out upon His forehead. He was not exaggerating when He said that His soul was so filled with sorrow that it nearly killed Him.

He was afflicted. Herod sought to destroy Jesus the moment He came into this world. His enemies never grew weary of harassing Him and seeking to kill Him. Our Lord was hunted like a beast of the forest. His own brothers did not believe in Him until after He died. Judas betrayed Him. The rulers bound Him with ropes and led Him away like a criminal. His enemies mocked Him, spit upon Him, scourged Him, and condemned Him to die innocently the painful, shameful, accursed death of the cross. His earthly career ended with His body suspended on a few spikes, a spectacle, an outcast of God and of man.

We shall never be able to fathom the depths of Jesus' suffering unless we see that God laid this burden upon Him. God caused Christ to walk under the dense cloud of holy, divine wrath throughout His entire life on earth. That cloud pressed in upon His weary soul in ever increasing intensity as He carried out His mission. Jesus' sorrow was a deadly sorrow that could end only in death. During the last bitter hours of suffering, all the horrors of total forsakenness swept over Him. The Lord gave His own interpretation of it in that amazing outcry that ascended, as it were, out of the depths of the abyss, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

We see more clearly now than ever, that He was wounded, not for His, but for *our* transgressions. He



was bruised, not for any offense that He committed, but for *our* iniquities.

As important as this is for our understanding of Christ's suffering, it still does not fully characterize that suffering as we must know it.

Ah, yes, this is it, as Isaiah had so clearly foretold, "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth."

\* \* \* \* \*

But is it not true that the Lord actually spoke much?

It belonged to His calling to preach the gospel to the weary and to instruct His disciples in the things of His kingdom. He took great delight in instructing the people whenever the opportunity offered itself. Even during the moments of His intense suffering He was not completely silent. It only amazes us that He spoke as much as He did.

At the last Supper Jesus showed His deep concern for His disciples by addressing them with many words of comfort. In the garden He prayed with them and for them. He warned them of the impending dangers when their faith would be shaken beyond belief. During His trial He readily arose to the occasion whenever His Father's glory or His own position as the Christ was challenged. On the cross He spoke seven times, and that while He suffered the anguishes of death and hell.

Yet the outstanding feature of the Lord's ministry was the fact that He never offered resistance nor raised a word of complaint. He did not cry nor cause His voice to be heard on the street. The Suffering Servant of Jehovah came to bear the sins of His people and to bear them away. He set His face like a flint, saying, "Though My God slay Me, yet will I trust in Him."

Christ's silence baffled His enemies. Annas was foiled when he sought to draw out some word that could be used against Him. Caiaphas impatiently asked, "Answerest Thou nothing?" Superstitious Herod never had a comfortable day after He was confronted with the silent Sufferer.

When the Savior was reproached, He reproached not again. He refused to retaliate when His enemies and former friends heaped mockings and false accusations upon Him. He offered no resistance when they surrounded Him like a pack of hungry wolves to devour Him. It was exactly that silence that His disciples could not understand. It does not seem human, or even natural not to strike back when one is hurt. Our first reaction to pain is that we cry out. Our first impulse is to beat off our attackers in self-defense. Meek submission to any unjust treatment never

appeals to us. The lion with his angry snarl is much more to our liking than the defenseless lamb. John fled. Peter denied Him. All His disciples were offended by Him. Jesus was a stranger to His brethren and an alien in His mother's house. There was no reason to desire Him, except for the deep-seated conviction that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

At the same time there was an inexplicable majesty in His silence. When Jesus had convinced the band of soldiers that came to take Him prisoner in the garden that their clubs and swords were useless against Him, He calmly surrendered Himself into their hands. The Lord held His head high as the slayers led Him to the slaughter. He was master of the situation throughout His trial, leaving Annas exasperated, Caiaphas stripped of his hypocrisy, Pilate with blood stained hands that no water could cleanse. He placed the whole world before the question, "What do *you* do with the Christ, the only begotten Son of the living God." The cross of Jesus Christ made separation, even as the Word of the cross today is a savor of life unto life and a savor of death unto death. There were those who left that cross of the Silent Sufferer beating their breasts. There were also those whom I want to join in the humble confession, "My Lord and my God." It was His confidence that He was pleasing to the Father as the obedient Servant, it was the certain hope of glory that gave Him that majestic power even when He allowed Himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter. He was bringing the sacrifice for sin, for the sin of all His people, for our sins, who are privileged to believe in Him. He was leading many sons to glory as the Captain of our salvation, Victor through death.

A chariot was traveling down the road that leads to Gaza. The rider was pondering over the Scripture passage that lay before him: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearers, so he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth."

Philip came to him, ready to interpret this Word of God for him. While the evangelist was preaching Jesus, a wonder took place. Philip said: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized." The Ethiopian eunuch answered: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts 8:37)

Amazing love! Amazing love of God that gave His only Son to die for the sins of His people. Amazing love of the Son to lay down His life for His sheep. Amazing love revealed in boundless grace that He should gather me as one of His sheep into the fold!

My Jesus. My Lord.



## EDITORIALS

## Editor's Notes

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

*Summer Pulpit Supply.* Perhaps it seems early for this announcement; but I heard a robin this morning, which means that spring cannot be far off and that summer is soon to follow. Besides, remember that the early bird gets the worm! At any rate, Prof. Decker asked me to call the attention of consistories to the fact that pulpit supply requests for the summer will be handled on a "first come, first served" basis. Those desiring vacation supply from the seminary should contact Prof. R. Decker, 2230 Cranbrook, N.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49505. Home phone: (616) 451-3303.

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*Question Box.* To those who have written to Question Box — and some of you have every right to be impatient — I beg your indulgence. The press of my work has prevented me from answering you, and I do not like to give off-the-cuff answers. Soon I will have a week of spring vacation from school, and I hope at that time to answer some questions.

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*Mr. or Ms. Anonymous.* It seems necessary periodically to remind you of my policy concerning anonymous notes or letters. Before I read any communication, I always look for a signature. If the signature is missing, the communication goes forthwith into File 13, commonly known as the wastebasket. The principle? If it isn't worth signing, it isn't worth reading. Simple, eh?

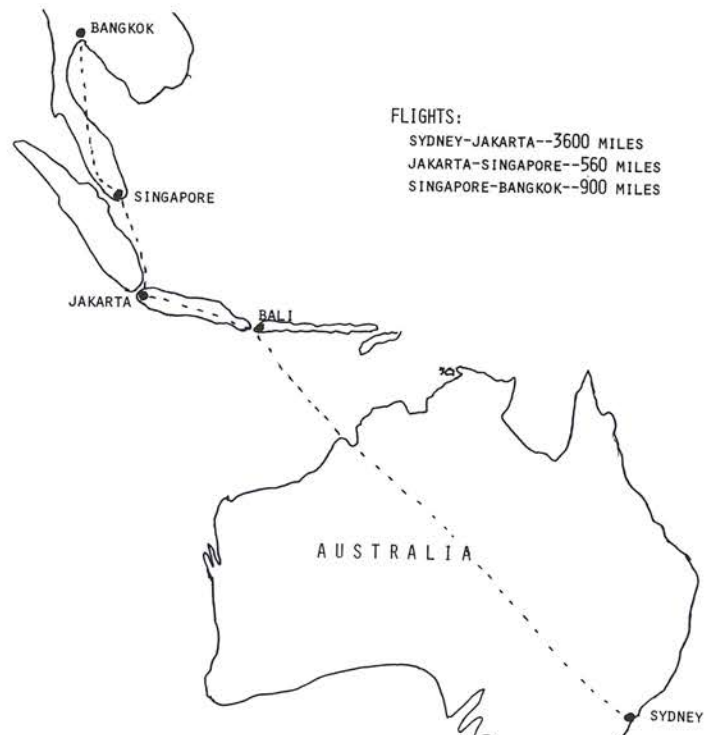
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*Publications.* I have been informed that before long there will be available a brand new catalogue of RFPA publications. Watch for it! By this time we have built up quite a library of Protestant Reformed literature. Do you take advantage of it? And there is more coming! Besides some new printings of books whose stock was low, there will soon be an RFPA reprint of *The Five Points of Calvinism*. Also in preparation is a Lenten Anthology which will contain all of the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema's passion books, most of which have long been out of print and hard to get.

## Our Australasian Tour (11)

The change of scene from Sydney, Australia, to Jakarta, Indonesia, staggers the imagination; and both from a physical and a psychological point of view we were hardly prepared for such a change. At this point in our tour all three of us were totally bone-weary. Add to this a long, monotonous flight of some nine hours' duration in a not very comfortable plane, with only an occasional glimpse through the over-cast of the vast inland wastes of Australia, and a three-hour time change, and you can understand somewhat our feelings when we arrived at the Jakarta airport late Saturday afternoon, to be greeted by an entirely new scene.

Our plane made only one stop, at Bali, a famous resort city, where most of our fellow passengers disembarked. From the descriptions given us, Bali might have been a nice place for a couple of days' rest. We, of course, were ignorant of what would greet us in Jakarta; and it certainly did not encourage us when the stewardesses on the plane expressed surprise that we were going on to Jakarta, rather than stopping at Bali. Nevertheless, to Jakarta we went.





Immediately upon our arrival at the airport the changes to which I referred struck us with their full force. For one thing, we were now in a tropical climate; and while some warmth was indeed welcome after the chill of the winter season in New Zealand and Australia, the change to the heat and stifling humidity of Jakarta was almost too much, so that we welcomed the refuge of our air-conditioned hotel rooms. But more than anything else, we were in a totally different culture. The culture of Indonesia is very definitely oriental. The people are, of course, different in appearance. The language — or, I should say, languages — were foreign to us. The social and economic structure is altogether different, virtually defying description. Religiously speaking, we were no more in a nominally Christian country. And, as we shall see, even the Christian church, in so far as we came into contact with it, was very different from that to which we are accustomed.

Before I continue with my description, I should perhaps explain how it came about that we went to Indonesia. Neither Indonesia nor Singapore (our next stop) was originally on our schedule. The chief purpose of our tour from the outset had been to visit New Zealand and Australia. But our New Zealand friend, brother Bill van Rij, had made various contacts in both of these places in the course of his business trips. And he had recommended to our Contact Committee that we include Indonesia and Singapore on our itinerary. When we learned that we could include these stops at relatively little additional expense, and could then return home via Europe, our Committee decided to heed Mr. van Rij's advice. With respect to Indonesia, an additional consideration was the fact that we would be able to make an on-the-scene inquiry into the success of and the response to the literature distribution project of our Foreign Missions Committee in Indonesia. Thus it was that on Saturday, July 19, we found ourselves in this strange scene.

Already at the airport the scene was one of teeming (and steaming) masses of humanity — most of them speaking a language which we did not understand, and only very few of them able to communicate at all well in our language. We began to wonder how we would ever find our hosts in that confused scene, or how they would ever find us. They had no pictures of us, nor we of them; in fact, we were not even certain as to the identity of the person or persons who would meet us at the airport. However, as our hosts later told us, they were looking for a rather peculiar party: one American lady with two American gentlemen, both of whom, so they thought, must look rather distinguished. At any rate, we were glad to be found soon after we passed through customs by Mrs. Pauline Mangindaan and a young

evangelist of the church, Cornelius Kuswanto. We left Mrs. Hoeksema with our newly found friends; and Rev. Hanko and I made our way through the crowds of people in a vain attempt to find the airline office and confirm our reservations to Singapore for the following Monday. Then we had our first ride in Mr. Kuswanto's jalopy, which, in spite of its ancient vintage and its non-cooperative first gear, somehow furnished us dependable transportation whenever it was needed.

We had been warned a bit by Mr. and Mrs. van Rij as to what we should expect in Indonesia, and we had also been given a few *do's* and *don'ts*. We soon learned that the van Rij's had not exaggerated. In the warm weather Rev. Hanko naturally had the window open on his side of the car, and he was resting his arm on the sill. When we came to a stop in the busy traffic, he was quickly warned not to drape his arm on the window-sill of the car door, lest someone should snatch the wristwatch from his arm. And Mrs. Hoeksema was warned to clutch her purse closely to her, to prevent anyone's snatching it. We were even warned that sometimes the eyeglasses are pulled from your face while you are walking on the streets. Hence, we were duly cautious about our belongings during our brief stay in Jakarta.

The city of Jakarta is a city of extremes. There are the extremely rich, who have beautiful and well kept homes; there are also millions of poor, living in poverty such as you and I cannot imagine. The city, we were told, was planned for some 2½ million people; but officially, there are supposed to be about 5½ million inhabitants, while unofficially there are undoubtedly many more. Traffic conditions are unbelievably disorderly, noisy, and smoky; it seemed to us as though the most successful way of getting through the traffic was to follow the strategy of playing a constant game of "chicken" — that is, if one succeeded in getting through the traffic at all.

The poverty and the filth, due in part to the overcrowded conditions of the city, are worse than can be described without pictures. Rev. Hanko volunteered that he had not seen the equal of it when he was in Jamaica. Part of the problem lies in the fact that many people come from the surrounding countryside in the hope of finding some employment and earning some small living in the city. However, there is no housing for these people. Hence, there are thousands of people living in little squatters' shanties — shelters which can hardly qualify as shanties, constructed mostly of cardboard. You can find these shanties in any available spot along a main road, between the front property line of the houses, which is usually protected by a strong fence with barbed wire and a locked gate, and the edge of the road. Of course, there are no utilities of any kind, and no water, and



no plumbing. One of the worst such areas is along a large, open sewer-canal, which runs through the middle of the city. Along the banks of this canal are hundreds of these little cardboard shanties. The foul, stinking water of that canal is their toilet, but it also serves as the place where they brush their teeth and bathe. The stench of the canal is overpowering, and we could smell it even at the church building, which was some distance away. Periodically these areas are cleaned up, and the shanties are dismantled; but the materials from which they are made are simply stacked up, for the people will be back the next day to rebuild their shanty village. One can well understand that there are diseases to be caught from the very air which one breathes; the puzzle to us was that people could live this way at all. Do not forget, however, that there are also the very rich and the moderately rich in a city like this. We were almost ashamed, after seeing sights like that just described, to go back to our luxury hotel, which was equal to the finest in our own country. Yet there is another side to the picture. We were told, for example, that while the Indonesian people are very artistic and creative people – and we have samples of this artistic ability among our souvenirs – yet they do not know how to take care of things or are not interested in taking care of things after they have made them. We were also told that it is difficult to run a business on a European basis of punctuality and orderliness, for the simple reason that many of the people, after they have earned a couple of dollars, are quite satisfied and simply leave their work. We were also told that some kind of “payola” or bribery is necessary frequently to accomplish anything in the business world. Where the truth lies with respect to all these matters we certainly could not discern in the short time we were there. But the above description of some facets of Indonesian culture and society will give you somewhat of an idea as to what we encountered.

O, yes, I must mention the food. The one outstanding impression of Indonesian food with which I was left was the fact, not merely that it was different, but that it is so highly spiced that one really cannot taste the true flavor of what he is eating. For politeness’ sake, and also partly out of curiosity, we partook of the Indonesian food which was served us for Sunday noon dinner at the church which we visited – although I must admit that it was with a high degree of skepticism that we even sat down to dinner. And I well recall that one of the fish dishes served us was so highly spiced that it burned all the way down, and that surely one would not have been able to tell whether the fish was fresh or rotten. And when one went down the street in the evening past many of the street restaurants, the air literally reeked of curry. But I suppose one must remember the

proverb: “There is no disputing about tastes.” Nevertheless, I much preferred the American-style food which was available at our hotel.

It was not my purpose, however, to tell you only about our strange experiences in a strange culture and society. This is only background information. Our purpose was to visit the church which had the following name above its entrance: “Geredja Santapan Rohani Indonesia.” We were told that the American name of this church was the Spiritual Life Church.

In our contact with this church there awaited us experiences which I am sure none of us, in his wildest imagination, ever expected to have. Let me try to tell you a little about this church.

The constituency of this congregation, we were told, is 95 per cent a people of Chinese nationality living in Indonesia. I must mention, however, that all of our information about the church was gained from the people themselves. Their language is the language of Indonesia. Mr. Kuswanto seemed to understand English well, but spoke it rather poorly and was frequently at a loss to express himself in our language. Mrs. Mangindaan communicated with us partly in very broken English, but mostly in rapid Dutch, but Dutch which was also not free from adulteration. Mrs. Mangindaan appeared to be a rather capable woman. She was the architect of the church building, which was a well built structure, though in the open-air Indonesian style. This reminds me of another facet of this church which we were surprised to encounter, namely, that Mrs. Mangindaan was one of two deaconesses of the congregation whom we met and who appeared to take a leading part in the life of the church. As far as this church is concerned, it had no connection with the former presence of the Dutch in Indonesia and with the Gereformeerde Kerk. When we tried to find out something about the origin and the position of this church, we were informed that this church did not have its roots in Europe and in the Reformation of the 16th Century, but rather traced its origin via China to India, where the Apostle Thomas is traditionally supposed to have worked. We were unable to find out more about this, perhaps partly because one of their elders, who might have been better able to communicate with us, was at that time attending the ICCA conference in Africa. That was elder Charles Sudargo, with whom we had originally been put in touch by Mr. van Rij. We were impressed, however, by the busy schedule of activities at the church on Sunday. We had no way of knowing, of course, what was being said at some of the meetings. In fact, because of the language barrier we did not even know what was said at the services, apart from our sermons; and we could not even check up on the accuracy of



the translations of our sermons. But the church appeared to be very active. Not only were there two services in the morning, but there was also a large Sunday school. And when we returned for the evening meeting, there were already various activities — among them, junior and senior choir practice — which still had to be concluded before our meeting

began. Here, as elsewhere, more especially because we really did not know what situation we would face upon our arrival, we had made it very clear in advance that we were willing to speak the Word in this congregation only on the condition that we were to be left entirely free.

## Clasping a Viper to the Bosom (1)

### *A Word of Introduction*

It is an appalling fact that throughout the world, wherever the Reformed faith has been transplanted from the Netherlands to any significant degree, that characteristic doctrine of the Reformed faith, sovereign predestination, has fallen upon evil times. Appalling this is, in the first place, because this doctrine is of such importance that without adhering to it no church can properly claim the name *Reformed*. Appalling it is, in the second place, because this doctrine occupies a strategic place in the structure of the Reformed faith: principally, if the doctrine of sovereign predestination suffers demise, no other important doctrine can be rightly maintained, i.e., in a Reformed sense. And appalling it is, in the third place, because this denial, for all its seriousness, seems to create so little concern. In various places there is concern about departures from the Reformed faith and about liberal tendencies. There is a great measure of concern, for example, about the doctrine of Holy Scripture — and rightly so. But one seldom notices much concern about this denial of sovereign predestination. This, I say, is appalling! For a church to embrace this error is like clasping a viper, a deadly viper, to one's bosom: it will surely be fatal! How appalling, then, to see a church or a segment of a church concerned about other ills, but paying little or no attention to that deadly viper! That can be like paying attention to a minor head cold when one is in danger of death from snake's venom.

It is with the purpose of sounding a note of warning and of calling attention to this mortal danger, both for ourselves and others, that this and following editorials in this series are written. I intend to express myself frankly and concretely. Some will undoubtedly take offense at this, I can predict. So be it. Express myself I must and will.

It is generally recognized, I believe, that as far as Reformed churches are concerned, this denial of sovereign predestination began in the Netherlands. The chief, but not the sole, architect of this denial has been Dr. G.C. Berkouwer, whose learned writings have had world-wide influence. The point of attack

upon this doctrine, as has frequently been the case, was the doctrine of sovereign, unconditional reprobation. For about a half dozen years now that doctrine, as set forth in Canons I, 6 and 15, has been officially dead. The GKN officially declared that a gravamen against the doctrine was correct and that the doctrine set forth by the Canons is not in harmony with the Scriptural givens. To attack Canons I, 6 and 15 is officially fair game in the Netherlands. But as I have so often stressed before, if there is no sovereign reprobation, there cannot possibly be any sovereign election. The Reformed doctrine of sovereign predestination is a doctrine of *praedestinatio gemina*, i.e., twin predestination.

I do not intend at present to write about the situation in the Netherlands; that would require too many articles and would entail too long a delay in giving attention to the situation elsewhere. I only mention the Netherlands because it is the viper's nest out of which this denial of sovereign predestination originated and spread to other centers of the Reformed churches. Our intention is to take note of the situation in Australasia, in South Africa, and in our own country. We will begin with Australasia.

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In spite of the attempt, or claimed attempt, by some in Australasia to live their own ecclesiastical life in isolation from the doctrinal trends in other lands, especially the Netherlands, this has simply proved to be impossible. Not only do I claim that this is, indeed, impossible in today's world. For theological isolationism is as impossible as is isolationism in international relationships in the small world in which we live today. But I also claim that it is not healthful. To ignore theological developments elsewhere, especially elsewhere in the Reformed community, is foolish; it is like the proverbial ostrich putting his head in the sand when there is danger threatening. But apart from that, it is simply impossible in this age of thorough communication by means of books and magazines and theological journals. And especially in the case of Australasia, which had such close ethnic and ecclesiastical ties with the Netherlands this has been impos-



sible. One could hardly expect that when theological professors were imported, for example, into Geelong from the Netherlands and from the U.S.A., there would come with those imported professors no imported ideas and no imported controversial issues and — no imported heresies! And so the thick stone walls of the old mansion in which the Reformed Theological College of Geelong is housed have not proved impregnable to heresies from abroad. And the denial of sovereign predestination was among those heresies.

Reference might be made in this connection to the Runia matter of several years ago. Do not forget that his views concerning sovereign predestination, and especially concerning reprobation, were one of the important issues in that history. The *Standard Bearer* commented at length on that matter and warned, at the time, of the seriousness of the issues for the Reformed denominations of Australia and New Zealand. And in a certain sense it was at that time, by their failure to act against Dr. Runia, that the churches already clasped a deadly viper to their bosom, that viper being the denial of sovereign predestination. Perhaps it did not seem so at the time: for it appeared as though the churches avoided the issue through the departure of Dr. Runia for the Netherlands, and there were undoubtedly a good many who heaved a sigh of relief when he left. But the failure to face up to the issues decisively was a crucial mistake. And one evidence of the fact that it was a crucial mistake is the fact that the very same errors confronted the churches only a short time later in the teachings of Dr. S. Woudstra at the Reformed Theological College at Geelong. And this time there was no avoiding a decision.

And what was the decision? True, Dr. Woudstra was dismissed from Geelong. But not only have the churches been kept ignorant of the reasons; that is bad enough! However, it is also a fact that the same Reformed Church of Australia which through its representatives declared that they did not want Dr. Woudstra training their students for the ministry have, through one of their classes, Classis Victoria, received him into the ministry. And mark you well, Dr. Woudstra had not purged himself of the errors for which he had been dismissed from Geelong!

And thereby the churches clasped a viper to their bosom!

Understand clearly, I am not referring to Dr. Woudstra as a viper. The issue is not one of Dr. Woudstra's person. I am referring to his heretical view of sovereign predestination, and especially of sovereign reprobation. That is the viper!

For do not forget: it is a fact that Dr. Woudstra's errant views concerning sovereign predestination

constituted one of the reasons for his dismissal from Geelong.

This is according to student testimony, which reported that he took the position that the reprobate were not destined from all eternity, and that non-salvation cannot be traced back to a decree of God. This same student testimony attributed to Dr. Woudstra such statements as, "We cannot say that election was an arbitrary decree before the foundation of the world," and, "Election does not prevent the salvation of others," and, "Man has tied God's hands if he refuses the grace offered." Or take note of this reported statement: "Election in Christ reveals the same working of God as in the election of Israel. They were not all Israel who were of Israel. Some were not saved — yet they were elect." On Romans 9:13 he is reported to have said, "If we understood it as many do, we would say that Esau had legitimate ground for questioning God for his damnation."

Moreover, it is a fact that it was views such as these (essentially the same as the views of Dr. Runia) which led the representatives of the Reformed Church of Australia to recommend that Dr. Woudstra be dismissed.

But what happened?

Dr. Woudstra received a call to Hobart, Tasmania. And Classis Victoria, after examining Dr. Woudstra, approved his admission into the ministry of the very churches which had dismissed him. How this was accomplished is a mystery to me. Either the questions asked Dr. Woudstra were so designed that his errors were not exposed; or the Classis forthrightly accepted him, errors and all. My guess is that the former was the method.

But one thing is certain: Dr. Woudstra did not change between his dismissal from Geelong and his admittance to the ministry in the Reformed Church of Hobart.

Nor is it true that his errors were such that they would not affect the preaching. It is doubtful whether there are ever any such errors; but that certainly was not the case here.

For not long after his dismissal from Geelong Dr. Woudstra preached a sermon on, of all subjects, election! His text was Ephesians 1: 3, 4. And in that sermon, delivered in the Reformed Church of Geelong, the Reformed doctrine of election is undermined and the same errors for which he was dismissed from Geelong occur in the pulpit!

To this we shall call attention in our next article, the Lord willing.



## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

# Letter to Timothy

Dear Timothy,

In the last letter I wrote to you we were talking about the importance of fostering in the minds of the people of God a proper attitude towards the Scriptures. I think I ended that letter with saying that this must be done especially by means of faithful and careful exegesis of Scripture. This holds true whether you are expounding the Word on the pulpit on Sunday, teaching the children in Catechism, bringing the Word of God to the sick and suffering, the aged and dying, or calling the wayward to repentance and confession of sin.

Since I last wrote you, however, you sent me another letter in which you have questions concerning the practical application of the preaching. Whether we can get at these questions in this letter remains to be seen. We had probably better finish the discussion we began last time before we get into this new subject.

I'm not exactly sure how best to get at this matter of exegesis. Perhaps the best way to get at it is from the practical point of view of the minister's own experience. I do this because the impression must not be left with you that I think you did not learn your lessons well in exegesis class in school and that you have not learned more concerning this work in the time you have spent in the ministry. I don't want to begin again a course in exegesis.

Nevertheless, when I look back on my own ministry and when I can get together sufficient courage to take a look at some of the old sermons I preached after I had been in the ministry for a while, I discover that there was a period when, as far as exegetical work was concerned, I slipped a bit. The exegesis is not up to par. There is a noticeable slack-off in the quality. There is no longer the evidence of growth which there should have been. And, as I recall it, it took a conscious awareness of this, an honest evaluation of my work, and a renewed determination to get back on the right track.

I make these confessions because I suspect that my experience in this respect is not really all that unusual. I suspect, in fact, that this may be an experience which is generally shared by all those who have been in the ministry for a while.

What the reasons for this may be are perhaps not so easily discovered. Perhaps there is partly the fact that ministers tend to get busier and busier with all the demands made on their time and with all the extra work that gets shoved on them. And the result can easily be that exegesis doesn't get done the way it should. It is one place where we can do some cutting of corners. Another reason may be that we tend to think, after a bit, that we have become skilled exegetes, and that, in inverse proportion to our growing skills, the time we think we need to spend on this work declines. I might point out already at this point that if exegesis were nothing but an intellectual exercise, this might conceivably be true. But because exegesis is also a spiritual exercise in the sense that it is the means by which we learn what the Holy Spirit is saying, this is not very true at all. Another reason may be that we simply become careless with the Word. In our close association with it, we become familiar with it in the wrong sense of the word so that the adage holds also in this respect: "Familiarity breeds contempt." If this is the case, this is serious business and a sin to be repented of. But I suppose each minister has his own devils to fight and, therefore, his own particular reasons why thoroughness and carefulness of exegesis takes a nose-dive after he has been in the ministry awhile.

I talked with my pastor the other day about this matter and wondered aloud to him whether it might not be a good idea to hold some kind of exegesis-seminars in Seminary during the summer weeks. After ministers have been in the pastoral ministry awhile they might find it profitable to spend a few days with some of their colleagues — not so much to take a refresher course in exegesis — although this might be the practical result of the course, but to get together with their fellow ministers to do some exegetical work and discuss together the difficulties and problems which they encounter and with which particularly they have to struggle in their exegetical work. It would give them the opportunity to study again the whole matter of exegesis from the perspective of actual practical experience rather than from the more theoretical perspective of your Seminary days. But I suppose there are practical problems which would make something like this difficult to arrange.



I am not pressing for a particular method of preaching, either. I say this because, as you know, it is increasingly common in our day for ministers to preach on a rather lengthy section of Scripture, and to treat this section in such a way that the minister simply goes from one phrase or clause to the next as he proceeds through the chapter and makes a few remarks by way of exposition and interpretation. And indeed, not all expository preachers follow the method which we generally follow in which a minister takes a relatively short passage, exegetes the material thoroughly, and arranges the material logically in a proper outline.

But the point is that exegesis lies at the bottom of all your work. As far as the preaching is concerned, I have discovered, as no doubt you have, that exegesis is always hard work. Although in a certain sense it gets easier — in the sense of gaining a greater understanding of the concepts used in Scripture, increasing in an awareness of what to look for in a text, what questions to ask, how to relate the concepts and ideas in a text, nevertheless, in another sense, this work is just as hard after thirty years in the ministry as it was the day you started. And it is just as hard because the work is a spiritual exercise of faith. It is work which requires one to come to Scripture as *God's Word* to learn what the Spirit has to say to the Churches. And this is never easy and never becomes any easier. This work can never be done simply by turning to the commentaries to see what they have to say on a given passage. Nor can it be done by getting a general and rather vague idea of what the text teaches without getting down to the details — then to make a sermon which develops rather synthetically the general idea gathered from the text. Nor can this be done by way of a hasty perusal of the text and a hasty throwing together of some thoughts which you ran across in your reading or which come to mind as you hurriedly throw together an outline. Even the pressures of lack of time are never an excuse for this kind of work. You are above all a minister of the Word. And the ministry of the Word implies diligent and careful exegesis. It may take you two days to prepare a sermon when you are first in the ministry. It ought to take you two days to prepare a sermon even after you have been in the ministry for twenty-five years. There are times, I know, (funeral services come, Christian holidays which require extra sermons are required by the Church Order) when this is impossible; but, in general, this is a goal to set before you — and a goal which ought to be attained most of the time in your ministry.

There are all kinds of things that one can do to make his exegesis rich and proper. He can study the many related passages which are found in the Word of God. He can search out examples of the truth his text

teaches from the historical sections of Scripture. He can pay closer attention to the meaning of words in their etymology, their use in Scripture, etc. He can pay stricter attention to the relation between his text and the whole context of the book in which his passage is found. In all these areas there is always room for more study. But above all, he must be *spiritual* about his approach. There has to be time in his sermon making for that Word of God to sink into the depths of his soul so that it becomes a part of Him. This is, no doubt, emphasized by the Hebrew word for “prophet.” You recall that the noun comes from a verb which means, “to boil over.” If a prophet (and you are one) “boils over” with the Word of God, he is filled with that Word. But he is not filled with that Word in a mechanical way — in the way a pan on the stove is filled with water; he is filled with that Word as a preacher with a heart, a mind, and a will. His heart is full. His mind is full. His will is full. It is so full that he is all but bursting with that Word. He simply must get to the pulpit as quickly as possible, for he can scarcely keep that Word inside of him. It must be spoken. It must be brought to the people of God. The hand of God, through that Word, is upon him. To reach this point takes time and study, patient labor and spiritual exercises of faith.

But it emphatically must be the Word. When that Word comes ‘gushing’ out, it must be the very Word of God. And when it is, there is nothing which will impress your hearers quite so much with the importance of that Word as your own preaching of it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

But this same principle holds true for all your work. Preparation for Catechism will not be sufficient if it is only a quick review of the particular Bible story which has to be taught, or if it is a hasty perusal of the pertinent chapter in Hoeksema’s “Dogmatics”. Catechism teaching has also to be exegetical. It must be a discovery of what God is saying to the lambs of the flock. It must be expository. Quite obviously, this is going to be done in a way quite different from the way a sermon is preached. But the principle holds true. And this principle holds for all your ministry. It is well to follow this same expository method when you go to visit the sick, the mourning, the suffering, the people of God in the throes of temptation, fiercely attacked by Satan. You must take up that Word of God and expound it for God’s people. You must, in the truest sense of the Word, exegete it. This takes preparation. Obviously, such preparation is not always possible. You might be called to the hospital in the dead of night in an emergency. Or you might be forced to turn to other passages of Scripture when the true nature of the problem becomes evident to you after you have talked for awhile with your sheep. But if you do your “homework” when you are



supposed to do it and when you have opportunity to do it, then the times when you have no such opportunity will readily take care of themselves.

Your method of exposition may be quite different. You may indeed read a rather lengthy passage and simply make some explanatory remarks as you go along. But the point is that you are still a minister; and a minister is an exegete.

To accomplish this, you have to take time out

from time to time to give your work some honest evaluation and to take a sharp and critical look at your exegetical labors so that there will be occasion to remind yourself of your calling and to rededicate yourself to your task as preacher and exegete.

We shall try next time to get at the questions you asked about practical preaching.

Fraternally in Christ,  
H. Hanko

## TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

# “Hyper-Calvinism” and the Call of the Gospel (17)

*Rev. David Engelsma*

Although the reprobate “are made partakers of external vocation,” Turretin denies that they are called “with the design and intention on God’s part, that they should become partakers of salvation.” There are two reasons why they are called externally by God in the preaching of the gospel, neither of which is a sincere desire of God that they be saved. The first is that the reprobate “are mingled with the elect,” so that “the Call cannot be addressed to men indiscriminately without the reprobate as well as the elect sharing in it” (p. 385). The second is God’s purpose that “the call of the reprobate accomplish their conviction and inexcusability” (p. 385).

Turretin gives six grounds for the denial by Reformed orthodoxy that God calls the reprobate with the purpose that they partake of salvation: 1. “God cannot in calling intend the salvation of those whom He reprobated from eternity...”; 2. “God does not intend faith in the reprobate, therefore neither salvation which cannot be attained without faith”; 3. “Christ in the calling of the reprobate Jews testifies that He had as His proposed end their inexcusability” (Turretin here quotes John 9:39 and John 15:22); 4. “they who are called with the

intention of salvation, are called *according to purpose*,” but only the elect are called thus, according to Romans 8:28ff., not the reprobate; 5. Salvation according to the intention of God is promised only to the weary and heavy laden (Matt. 11:28), the thirsty (Is. 55:1), and the believing and penitent (Acts 2:38), i.e., the elect, not the reprobate; 6. God’s promise is indeed that all who believe shall be saved, but God knows that the reprobate will never have faith, “nay, He, Who alone can give, has decreed to withhold (faith) from them.” Therefore, it is “absurd to say that He calls the reprobate with the intention that they should be saved” (pp. 386, 387).

Just as is done by the advocates of the well-meant offer today, those in Turretin’s day who defended a sincere intention of God to save all objected that, if God does not intend the salvation of all who are called in the gospel, God acts hypocritically and falsely. God is not truthful in calling a man to believe on Christ, if He does not sincerely desire that man’s salvation. The charge is made that those who deny a sincere desire of God to save every man who hears the gospel contradict the teaching of the Canons, that “as many as are called by the gospel are seriously called” (III, IV, 8).



Turretin rejects this charge: "Although God does not intend the salvation of the reprobate by calling them, still He acts most seriously and sincerely, nor can any hypocrisy and deception be charged against Him" (p. 387). The call to the reprobate is serious, "because He seriously and most truly shows them the alone and most certain way of salvation, seriously exhorts them to follow it, and most sincerely promises salvation to all those who do follow it" (p. 387). The call is not hypocritical, or "feigned," to use the language of the Canons, even though God has decreed that those called shall not believe and shall not be saved, because the call to them is a command, and "in such a command He wills to unfold His right and man's duty" (p. 390). "For a serious call does not require that there should be an intention and purpose drawing him, but only that there should be a constant will of commanding duty, and bestowing the blessing upon him who performs it, which God most seriously wills" (p. 388).

Turretin turns the tables on the objectors. Not Reformed orthodoxy, but those who maintain an intention of God to save all, while at the same time professing the decree of reprobation, are guilty of ascribing hypocrisy and deception to God. For God to indicate to a man in the gospel that He sincerely desires to save him, when, in fact, God has eternally decreed that man's damnation, is insincere, deceptive behavior.<sup>1</sup> "The opinion which we oppose is far more strongly pressed with the same difficulty; For on this hypothesis, God is made most seriously to desire and intend the salvation of men, provided they have faith, which yet He knows they have not, and cannot have of themselves, and which He Himself decreed from eternity by an irrevocable decree not to give, Who alone can; It is easy to decide whether this can be consistent with the sincerity of God; for by this very thing, God is represented as testifying that He wills and does not will at the same time their salvation, because He does not will that without which it cannot be obtained, as if any one would say, that he wills man to live, but yet nilled that he should breathe" (p. 130).

In conclusion, Turretin assures Reformed pastors that there is no substance to the dire predictions of the opponents that, without the doctrine of a sincere desire of God to save all men, lively, free, urgent preaching must decline. It is as if this representative of the Reformed faith in the 17th century could hear

the "offerment" of the 20th century pronouncing their woes over those who insist that God's grace in the preaching is particular: "They cannot do mission work"; "they are unable to call everyone to repentance"; "they can only preach to the elect."

Without hesitation, Turretin asserts that the ministry of the gospel exists only for the sake of the elect: "for their (the elect's —DE) sake alone the ministry of the gospel was instituted, to collect the church, and increase the mystical body of Christ, Eph. 4:12, and, they being taken out of the world, preaching would no longer be necessary. . . ." (p. 385). This conviction, however, in no way hampers unfettered preaching: "Although the intention of Pastors calling ought to be conformed to the intention of God, by Whom they are sent to call men; in this that they are bound from the order of God to invite all their hearers promiscuously to repentance and faith, as the alone way of salvation, and on condition of these to salvation; and that they ought to intend nothing else than the gathering of the Church, or the salvation of the elect, in bringing about which they are co-workers with God: Still in this they also differ, that the omniscient God distinctly knows among gospel hearers, who are the elect, and who the reprobate. The former alone He wills to save individually, the latter not. Ministers, however, being destitute of such knowledge, do not know to whose salvation their ministry will contribute, not being able to distinguish between the elect and the reprobate, charitably hoping well for all, not daring to decide concerning the reprobation of any one. Thus, they address all the called promiscuously and indiscriminately even by God's appointment, still intending the salvation of no others than the elect, like God. So that they do nothing in this ministry, which does not answer both to the command and intention of God. . . ." (p. 389).

This would be enough to show that 17th century Reformed thought condemned the universal grace of the free offer theory. But there is more. Condemnation of the doctrine of universal grace in the call of the gospel and confession of particular grace did not remain confined to the writings of the theologians, but were expressed in a confession of faith: the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* (Helvetic, or Swiss, Consensus Formula).

As is evident in our quotations, Turretin was not tilting at windmills when he opposed the doctrine of universal grace in the call of the gospel. Men within the Reformed camp were proclaiming this doctrine ("patrons of universal grace," Turretin called them). Just a few years after the Synod of Dordt and just a few years after the National Synod of the Reformed Church in France adopted the Canons of Dordt and bound all ministers and elders to defend them,

<sup>1</sup>Similarly, God's sincerity is open to the most searching criticism, if He proclaims to a man that He loves Him, has given Christ to die for his sins, and well-meaningly offers him salvation, sincerely desiring to save him, but refuses sovereignly to regenerate that man and give him faith, presumably according to His own will. Exactly this is the "sincerity" of the god of Harold Dekker's scheme of universal redemptive love and universal atonement.



theologians at the Reformed seminary in Saumur, France, began to attack the doctrine of sovereign grace, so recently explained and defended by the Dutch Synod. The chief offender was Moyse Amyraut (or Moses Amyraldus). Amyraut taught that God has ordained all men unto salvation; that Christ died for all men; and that God offers Christ to all men, on the condition of faith, with a sincere intention to save them all. Grace, according to Amyraut, is universal. The cloak under which Amyraut thought to smuggle this Arminian contraband into the Reformed churches was his profession of double predestination. However, he construed predestination as *following upon* the decree of universal salvation through universal atonement — all of which is dependent on man's acceptance or rejection of the offered grace — so that Amyraut's predestination was nothing other than the old Roman and Arminian doctrine of *conditional* predestination in new dress.

From the mountains of Geneva, Francis Turretin descried the enemy. With Lucas Gernler of Basle, he requested John Henry Heidegger of Zurich to compose a creed for the Swiss churches that would condemn the Saumur theology and pointedly affirm the decisions of Dordt, and helped Heidegger to write the creed. The result was the Helvetic Consensus Formula of 1675, "the last doctrinal Confession of the Reformed Church of Switzerland."<sup>2</sup> This confession was "agreed upon by the ecclesiastical and civil authorities of Zurich, Basle, and Geneva, and adopted in other Reformed cantons as a binding rule of public teaching for ministers and professors."<sup>3</sup>

A fascinating document, the Helvetic Consensus Formula confesses the verbal inspiration of Scripture, particularly the Old Testament, "not only in its consonants, but in its vowels — either the vowel points themselves, or at least the power of the points"; the imputation of Adam's sin; the federal Headship of Christ for the elect in the new covenant; limited atonement; and the covenant of works. It concludes with a decree "that we not only hand down sincerely in accordance with the Divine Word, the especial necessity of the sanctification of the Lord's Day, but also impressively inculcate it and importunately urge its observation." But our sole concern is its teaching regarding God's grace in the call of the gospel:

<sup>2</sup>For a description of this creed and the theological controversy that gave rise to it, cf. Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, Vol 1, pp. 477ff. Typically, Schaff calls it "a defense of the scholastic (*sic!*) Calvinism of the Synod of Dort." But it is, even on Schaff's reckoning, a defense of Dordt. It is "not so much intended to be a new confession of faith, as an explanatory appendix to the former Confessions. . . ." (p. 486). Unfortunately, Schaff does not give the creed itself, only a very brief summary.

<sup>3</sup>Schaff, pp. 485, 486

Canon VI "Wherefore we can not give suffrage to the opinion of those who teach: (1) that God, moved by philanthropy, or a special love for the fallen human race, to previous election, did, in a kind of conditioned willing — willingness — first moving of pity, as they call it — inefficacious desire — purpose the salvation of all and each, at least, conditionally, i.e., if they would believe; (2) that He appointed Christ Mediator for all and each of the fallen; and (3) that, at length, certain ones whom He regarded, not simply as sinners in the first Adam, but as redeemed in the second Adam, He elected, i.e., He determined to graciously bestow on these, in time, the saving gift of faith; and in this sole act Election properly so called is complete. For these and all other kindred teachings are in no wise insignificant deviations from the form of sound words respecting Divine Election; because the Scriptures do not extend unto all and each God's purpose of showing mercy to man, but restrict it to the elect alone, the reprobate being excluded, even by name, as Esau, whom God hated with an eternal hatred (Rom 9:10-13).

The same Holy Scriptures testify that the counsel and the will of God change not, but stand immovable, and God in the heavens *doeth* whatsoever he will (Ps. 115:3; Is. 46:10); for God is infinitely removed from all that human imperfection which characterizes inefficacious affections and desires, rashness, repentance, and change of purpose. . . ."

Canon XVII "The call unto salvation was suited to its *due time* (I Tim. 2:6); since by God's will it was at one time more restricted, at another, more extended and general, but never absolutely universal. For, indeed, in the Old Testament God showed His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel; He dealt not so with any nation (Ps. 147:19,20). In the New Testament, peace being made in the blood of Christ and the inner wall of partition broken down, God so extended the limits of Gospel preaching and the external call, that there is no longer any difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him (Rom. 9:12). But not even thus is the call universal; for Christ testifies that many are called (Matt. 20:16), not all; and when Paul and Timothy essayed to go into Bithynia to preach the Gospel, the Spirit suffered them not (Acts 16:7); and there have been and there are today, as experience testifies, innumerable myriads of men to whom Christ is not known even by rumor."

Canon XIX "Likewise the external call itself, which is made by the preaching of the Gospel, is on the part of God also, who calls, earnest and sincere. For in His Word He unfolds earnestly and most truly, not, indeed, His secret intention respecting the salvation or destruction of each individual, but what belongs to our duty, and what remains for us if we do or neglect this duty. Clearly it is the will of God who calls, that they who are called come to Him and not neglect so great salvation, and so He promises eternal life also in good earnest, to those who come to Him



by faith; for, as the Apostle declares, 'it is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He can not deny Himself.' Nor in regard to those who do not obey the call is this will inefficacious; for God always attains that which He intends in His will, even the demonstration of duty, and following this, either the salvation of the elect who do their duty, or the inexcusableness of the rest who neglect the duty set before them. Surely the spiritual man in no way secures the internal purpose of God to produce faith along with the externally proffered, or written Word of God. Moreover, because God approved every verity which flows from His counsel, therefore it is rightly said to be His will, that all who see the Son and believe on Him may have everlasting life (John 6:40). Although these 'all' are the elect alone, and God formed no plan of universal salvation without any selection of persons, and Christ therefore died not for every one but for the elect only who were given to Him; yet He intends this in any case to be universally true, which follows from His special and definite purpose. But that, by God's will, the elect alone believe in the external call thus universally proffered, while the reprobate are hardened, proceeds solely from the discriminating grace of God: election by the same grace to them that believe; but their own native wickedness to the reprobate who remain in sin, and after their hardness and impenitent heart treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God (Rom. 2:5)."

Canon XX "Accordingly we have no doubt that they err who hold that the call unto salvation is disclosed not by the preaching of the Gospel solely, but

even by the works of nature and Providence without any further proclamation; adding, that the call unto salvation is so indefinite and universal that there is no mortal who is not, at least objectively, as they say, sufficiently called either mediately, namely, in that God will further bestow the light of grace on him who rightly uses the light of nature, or immediately, unto Christ and salvation; and finally denying that the external call can be said to be serious and true, or the candor and sincerity of God be defended, without asserting the absolute universality of grace. For such doctrines are contrary to the Holy Scriptures. . . ."

Canon XXI "They who are called unto salvation through the preaching of the Gospel can neither believe nor obey the call, unless they are raised up out of spiritual death by that very power whereby God commanded the light to shine out of darkness, and God shines into their hearts with the soul-swallowing grace of His Spirit. . . ."

This language is clear and sharp on the doctrine of the call of the gospel and the grace of God in the call, especially Canon XIX and the last part of Canon XX, needing no explanation.

This is Turretin.

This is the Swiss churches of the 17th century.

And this is another reason why the noisy claim that the well-meant offer represents the position of the Reformed churches and theologians of the past does not so easily put us to ignominious flight. We too have read, and our finding is: particular, sovereign grace.

(next: Kuyper)

## CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies this fall in either the pre-seminary or seminary department of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches are requested to contact the Theological School Committee, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418.

### Pre-seminary Department:

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

### Seminary Department:

Permission to pursue the Theological course in the seminary shall be granted by the Synod, upon recommendation of the Theological School Com-

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

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

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

Richard H. Teitsma, Secretary



## IN HIS FEAR

# The Jewel of Contentment

Rev. D. H. Kuiper

A father who seems to be locked into a low-paying, dead end job that holds little attraction for him and promises few financial rewards. . . . A mother who rises early and retires late, crowding every waking hour with cooking, cleaning, washing, and changing of diapers, often without proper appreciation. . . . A pastor whose church does not grow and whose sermons seem to fall on deaf ears. . . . A young person who cannot seem to find the right young lady, or is never asked by the right young man. . . . Just a few examples which demonstrate the urgent need for the child of God of every age to apply himself to the learning of the grace of contentment.

We hope in the next few months to examine various jewels of Christian virtue which belong to the crown of life that we wear as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps the most important of these virtues, and the most difficult to obtain, is that of contentment. As a virtue it sparkles more brightly than all the rest, and therefore its presence or its absence is the most readily noticeable. That contentment stands as the chief virtue becomes obvious when we consider that contentment is actually the inner perfection of the law. The tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet. . . .," is a slightly different kind of a commandment in that it does not govern some new area or relationship of life, but it states something concerning all of the law. It emphasizes that the entire law of God is not a code of external precepts, but is an inner matter of the heart. Positively worded, the tenth commandment calls us to walk in daily contentment. Thus, when a person is content he is in the proper spiritual disposition to keep all of the perfect law of liberty; otherwise not.

### AN UNUSUAL WORD

The original word for the grace of contentment is a word that at first glance gives pause. It is a word of two parts: the one is the reflexive pronoun meaning self, and the other means to suffice, to be sufficient. The compound word has the literal meaning of being self-sufficient or independent. Contentment involves independence. How can that be? If one thing is clear from Holy Scripture it is that man is *not* self-sufficient or independent, but he needs God every

moment for life, movement, for being itself. That is a fundamental difference between God and man. God has perfect freedom and independence so that He never requires anything; within Himself He finds all that He can ever desire. But manness or creaturehood means that we rely upon Someone outside of ourselves for everything needful! Even to think for a moment that we are independent is to commit the sin of high pride and conceit. In fact it is alone when we acknowledge our total dependence upon God that we can be content!

In his *Lexicon of the New Testament*, Thayer points in the helpful direction when he includes among several meanings for contentment, "independent of external circumstances." Contentment can only mean, therefore, that the inner life of a man is entirely independent of the external circumstances of his life. To put this most important concept another way, a man is content when he contains within himself a certain strength that will enable him not to have to find support without. And in that sense only is he self-sufficient.

This is all to say that how we look at things, how we feel, what we experience in life, is not to be conditioned by the outward things of this present time. If our spiritual attitude is at the mercy of external events, then we are without rudder or anchor, tossed about by every wind and wave. Too often how or what we feel inwardly is dictated by such things as health or illness, prosperity or poverty, success or failure, friendship or loneliness, the lack or the presence of trials and hardships. If things go our way, we feel good, happy, content. But when these outward circumstances are altered so that our lot is rough or unpleasant, we feel much different; our outlook is changed and we are ready to speak critically of God. This is all backwards.

Contentment is that virtue which allows the inner life of the child of God to stay beyond the staining touch of outward things. We all have such an inner life of the soul beneath the surface where others cannot see. Belonging to this inner life is the *mind*, our power of reasoning and remembering. If we are content, with our minds we know that all things are well with us. And this conviction, this knowing, is not



conditioned by anything outward in our life, but is completely independent of these changing circumstances. Also belonging to the inner life of a man is the *will*. When contentment is present our will tells us that we do not want things any different than they are! This means we do not have any needs. And thus the *soul* has peace; the mind knows and the will is satisfied, so the soul has perfect tranquility.

### SIGNIFICANT PASSAGES

With regard to what, specifically, are we to demonstrate contentment? The contexts in which the word is found reveal that there are three situations or areas in which contentment is required, but in which we are the most prone to be discontent. And these three occurrences really cover all of life. 1.) Hebrews 13:5, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Here contentment, the opposite of covetousness, is required in respect to earthly things, possessions, money. The reason given in the text is that God will never leave or forsake us. You have very little worldly goods? You have no luxury or pleasure? Let us make it very extreme: you say you have only enough to get through one day at a time? Even then there is absolutely no excuse for covetousness, for God will never forsake but will provide faithfully each day's needs. When the mind knows that, when the will would have it no other way than to live out of God's hand each day, then the soul can rest and say, It is well!

2.) Phil. 4:11, "...for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." The context makes plain that contentment is also required in the midst of afflictions, trials, and infirmities. When Paul wrote these words, he was in a Roman jail cell; his state was that of a prisoner waiting for the executioner to tap at the door. Near the end of his life the apostle here looks back over labors, stripes, imprisonments, dangers, beatings, stoning, shipwrecks, and perils. Surely if ever a man had reason to wish he were someone else, or to wish he were somewhere else, it was Paul. And now he sits in a cell and speaks to us of contentment! What a tremendous virtue it must be if it is able to keep the soul of the saint safe from the clutches of our outward state so we do not fall into the sins of rebellion and criticism. Does any one of us dare to say that the apostle speaks a bit too ideally, but does not know the rigors of daily life?

3.) Matthew 25:14-30, the parable of the talents. Although the word contentment does not occur in this parable, the idea of contentment is certainly the main thrust of the passage. The master who went into a far country gave to his servant various amounts of

money: five, two, and one talent. These talents do not refer to abilities or special gifts one might possess (music or art), but they refer to an office of labor and trust. This is clear from the facts that the master gave to each one *according* to his ability, and was able to take the talent from them again. So it was the calling of each one, while the master was absent for a time, to labor faithfully in that particular position. Two of them were content to do this and were rewarded with entrance into the master's joy. The third servant, completely devoid of contentment, was not satisfied to labor in a position he thought to be below his dignity. Rather he angrily buries the single talent in the ground. He refuses to labor! He will not work in a position of such unimportance. And he is driven out after being dispossessed of that which he had. Thus the point is that we are to be content with the place in which God has put us in His kingdom. It is not only ministers and teachers who have kingdom work to do! Every child of God labors in the kingdom, and it is of supreme importance that he demonstrate contentment as he does so!

### BASIS OF CONTENTMENT

It follows from the fact that contentment is an inner independence from outward circumstances that it must have a solid basis. And this solid basis is first of all the truth that everything that happens to us in this life is not the result of fickle fate or blind destiny, but is the result of the controlling hand of our heavenly Father. All of our life from our conception to our death, has been determined before the worlds were. And according to that determination it actually has come to pass. If a hair cannot fall from our heads without the will of our heavenly Father, what do you think *can* happen to us? There is nothing that ever happens without the will of God, without His bringing it to pass.

Since it is true, however, that the circumstances of every man's life are ordained by God, the wicked as well as the righteous, we must know that our way has been determined by God *in love*. We cannot rest in the mere doctrine of providence, but in the greater truth that God, through His providence, in Jesus Christ, directs all things unto the salvation and benefit of His people. Circumstances are not just there, they are not merely determined, but they are unfailingly good for God's children. This conviction of the mind, this satisfaction of the will, this confidence of the soul allow contentment to flourish and grow. Then a person is saved from the snare of covetousness and rebellion, for then he is able to say, It doesn't make any difference what happens to me, nothing can ever harm me or separate me from the love of God in Christ!

So there is really nothing new, is there? If the



restatement of the above truth does not thrill us, or seems not to be an adequate answer in the season of our discontent, it has to mean that we have not really learned contentment. As we suggested earlier, this virtue does not immediately spring full-blossomed from the soul; it is very difficult to possess. It must be learned. So states Paul while sitting in his final cell. There had been times when the apostle did not have this wonderful contentment, times when he criticized God and despaired of the wisdom of God's ways. But the point is, he learned! Near the end of his life he looks back, and he is given a glimpse of the wonderful way God had dealt with him. He includes his present afflictions which are but for a moment, he recalls the gifts the saints at Philippi had sent to him; but his

conclusion is, I have no want! Paul has reached God's purpose for him in this life! Storms of life cannot reach him within, where he really lives. For within there is contentment that is based on the unfailing Word and promise of God!

Have we learned? Are we learning? What kind of disciples are we, as we walk after Christ? Do the truths of Scripture strike us at the level of our inner life so that we are built up in this independence? In the way of unceasing prayer and Bible study, this jewel shall shine in our crowns to the praise of God in heaven. How did David put it? The Lord is my Shepherd, I want nothing.

## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# Friends

*Rev. J. Kortering*

Friends! The very word has a cherished ring.

What a difference they make in a person's life.

Without a friend, life can be so miserable, so alone, so lost in the vast sea of humanity. It's terrible to be a non-entity. With a friend the strangest place is a challenge, the busiest city a haven, the tragedy of life eased, the fun shared.

By friends we have in mind other kids, outside the family circle, that you like to be with. In the narrowest sense, any person that means something to you is a friend. From this point of view your parents might be considered your dearest friends. They are the most important stabilizing force in your life. They are the ones you can always count on. When you are exuberant with youthful enthusiasm you can be sure they are interested and want to hear you out. No less, when you are down in the mouth and petulant because life has dealt you a rough blow, yes, Mom and Dad want to take a little of your load then too. You can use them as the toughest sounding board, they'll listen to your arguments, you can lash out at them, you can cry on their shoulder, they won't crack. In a real sense they are your strongest friends.

But they are *parents*. And parents can't be in the same category as friends which you enjoy being with outside the home. We're thinking about these friends.

## WHAT IS A FRIEND

The Bible does speak in quite some detail about friends. We need only recall the precious friendship that David had with Jonathan. Of this we read in I Sam. 20:41, 42, "And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times; and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, the Lord watch between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed forever. And he arose and departed; and Jonathan went into the city."

The friendship had to withstand the fiercest trials, for Saul hated David and did his best to destroy him. Nevertheless, it endured and when David learned of the death of Saul and his son Jonathan, David said, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan, very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

That was quite something for David to say.

In addition to this example of friendship, we can point out that the Scripture delineates at least four qualities of true friendship.



First, companionship. A friend is one with whom we like to be in moments of joy and sorrow. An example of this is found in Luke 15:6 where we read of the shepherd who lost one of the sheep, but went out to search for it and when he found it he, "cometh home, and calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."

Secondly, protection. A friend will do anything, go any place, give anything necessary for the well being of a person. Jesus mentioned this concerning Himself, "Greater love hath no man than this that a man will lay down His life for His friends," John 15:13. Such love between friends will bring out the best in anyone, even to die for him.

Thirdly, loyalty. A friend won't turn his back when the going gets rough. Trials separate true friends from imposters. Sometimes kids may like you because you are a free spender, they go along for a free ride, you're great with the hand outs. But when the going gets rough, they disappear into thin air. Not so a friend, "A friend loveth at *all times*," Prov. 17:17. Similarly, "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother," Prov. 18:24.

Finally, honest correction. A friend will not flatter for the sake of being accepted and certainly not deceive someone to make him think that he is something which he really isn't. A friend will correct and offer suggestions for improvement. The closer the friendship, the more honest it becomes. "Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful," Prov. 27:5,6. Those wounds may hurt when they are the truth, but they always bring out the best in a person.

### THE INFLUENCE OF A FRIEND

It stands to reason that friends have a great deal of influence on your life. This is true for all of us, it is especially true while you are young. The pressures of being accepted by your friends is greatest then. What your friends think, means a great deal to you.

Your clothing is pretty much dictated by styles that are worn by your friends. Washed off jeans may not be particularly attractive as far as color is concerned; but if your friends think they are great, you are sure to think it too. They may be so tight you practically split the seams; but comfort isn't the thing, baggy jeans are out!

A particular guy may seem to be a pretty nice fellow to you until some of the gals do an impersonation of him at a slumber party; after that you wouldn't look twice at him. The same holds true for you guys. You may think a certain gal holds something special; but if your buddies think otherwise,

you won't ask her out for a date. Maybe that's why there is little "in" dating within church and school. The pressures of others force you to look elsewhere.

If you happen to attend a school where the majority of the kids attend movies, and even have "good movies" advertised in their church, the pressure to attend movies is much greater. Your friends talk about the show they saw the other night, they constantly discuss the late movie on t.v., they rehearse the comedy act they watched, etc. You want to be able to contribute something meaningful and be accepted on their terms. So you let them influence you to watch questionable television programs, attend movies on the sneak, listen to certain kinds of music on the radio, etc. Friends have that kind of power over our lives.

### GOOD FRIENDS

The question that we face here is this, what *kind* of friends do we have?

Since friends are so important to us and also so influential, it is logical that we be pretty selective as to what friends we choose. After all, everyone can't be our friend. Friends are not forced upon us either. We encourage other kids to look our way; we also go out of our way to find others that we can enjoy. Friendships are cultivated and worked at. What kind of young people are you seeking to include in your life?

This takes on double importance for us as Christians. In a sense even the unbeliever recognizes the importance of friends. He knows there are those who get freaked out with drugs, get kicks out of life in ways that are dangerous. They are into crime, violence, sex, and other things that are far out. Rather than get messed up with these things, they think of more acceptable forms of behavior. Some emphasize culture, brotherhood, love for one's neighbor, and choose friends that help them develop along these lines.

The Christian has a more definite idea than that. We are interested in friendships that have more than good human values and are expressed within the socially acceptable forms of behavior. A Christian seeks friends that are godly and will help him express His Christian faith.

Our deepest friendship is with God. Of Abraham we read, "And Abraham was called a *friend of God*," James 2:23. Jesus said, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you," John 15:14. A friend on this level is one to whom God reveals His love and draws into the inner chamber and reveals the secrets of His own heart. Jesus did this in a measure to Judas and called him a friend, Matt. 26:50. He had shown to Judas as well as the others, all the will of His



Heavenly Father. God speaks to us His Word and gives us the faith to believe it. Within the sphere of God's Word we are drawn close to God as He draws near to us. Such a friendship is heavenly and triumphs over every human relationship. All things on earth must help to make that friendship more precious.

Hence, our earthly friends must not be unbelievers or careless Christians who would undermine our friendship with God. Rather, we must seek friends who will enhance and strengthen our faith. God says, "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God," James 4:4. The reason is obvious. If we like to be in company with people that blaspheme God and openly sin against God, we cannot really say that we are a friend of God. There is a spiritual separation between God and His people on the one hand, and the world of the wicked on the other. How Satan would like to destroy our faith and tempt us to sin under the guise of a friend. Be alert to this.

We must be selective in making friends. They influence us in so many ways. We want to be faithful to our God, we fear the awful consequence of sin and would rather walk humbly and honestly with our God each day. To help us do this, good friends are essential. They will not tempt us to sin, rather they will also recognize the importance of godly living. If your friends see the need of prayer, recognize the truths of the Bible, are acquainted with godly living, fight daily to overcome temptation, resist the devil, strive earnestly to contend for the faith, you will also enjoy with them these spiritual virtues. Their influence will be good.

Do you put forth effort to have good friends around you? Yes, we need friends. Life is terrible without them. More important, however, we need *good* friends.

### BE A FRIEND

Even the Bible recognizes that to have friends you must be a friend. We read of this in Prov. 18:24, "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly."

There is a moral to this. Our Christian calling is not only that we select good friends, it goes farther than that. It includes this: we must ourselves be good friends to others.

We must also ask ourselves, what kind of friend am I?

Am I a true friend to others. Am I a good influence on them? Do I show forth Christian virtues so that I draw to myself the right kind of kids? If we like to show off, if we think its real cool to be the life of the party, to tell off-colored jokes, to be brash about sex, to live it up with drinks, to freely attend movies, etc., then we ourselves are the wrong kind of friends. This is a double shame, especially when we are born in the sphere of the covenant and should consider it our duty to be an example of godliness. Paul said to young Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity," I Tim. 4:12.

Seek out good friends.

And be a good friend.

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## FROM HOLY WRIT

# Exposition of Hebrews 13:17

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

The Hebrew believers are admonished in this verse to be good sheep of Christ in relationship to the undershepherds whom He sends to feed and tend them! They are now the church which is outside of the gate of the city of the earthly Jerusalem. They are the church, who have gone outside of the gate, bearing Christ's reproach.

But here outside of the gate the church needs shepherd-leaders whom the Lord of the church him-

self appoints, saying "feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17) These shepherds are to be watchful of the needs of the sheep; they must care for their souls. They are watchmen on the walls of Zion, and they are accountable to the Lord of the Church for their spiritual stewardship "as those who must give account." And the members of the flock of God have the holy calling to submit to those who go before them with the ministry of the Word.



## THE WATCHMEN IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST (Hebrews 13:17)

The text does not speak directly of “watchmen”; rather the text speaks of your leaders. The KJV translates “Those who have the rule over you.” These are not self-appointed rulers, usurpers of power, who lord it over the flock of God, as cruel thieves and robbers. (John 10:1-5) For such thieves and robbers do not enter into the fold by the door but climb in over the wall, to rob and to kill. These do not go in and out before the flock finding green pastures for the sheep in the divine Scriptures. They are all sleeping dogs that do not bark at the approaching of the lurking enemies; they love to eat and slumber. (Isaiah 56:10,11) They are blind watchmen and ignorant of the needs of the flock. However, the text speaks of leaders, who “watch for your souls.” And as such good watchmen they rule over the flock of God. For they have a God-given authority and calling to feed the flock of God over which the Holy Ghost has appointed them. (Acts 20:28) This flock God has purchased with His own blood. One day Christ will present the church to God as a spotless bride, without any blemishes of sin and guilt and shame. This church is the apple of God’s eye.

The “rulers” in the church are undershepherds of Christ, Who is the chief Shepherd. (I Peter 5:4) They are true underlings, under-rowers of Christ. (I Cor. 4:1) As such they are stewards of the mysteries of God. And it is sought in stewards that they be found faithful. That is the chief requirement which is sought in them. They must be faithful to their master to whom they are accountable. (I Cor. 4:4) For let it not be forgotten that Christ is the great preacher in the church. He died and arose again and sits at God’s right hand, and “he came and preached peace to those who are far and to those who are near.” (Ephesians 2:17) And when he sends preachers in the church and rulers these are some of the “gifts” which are graced upon the church by the risen Christ, Who is exceedingly high above all things, that He might fill all things. Hence, he gave to the church first apostles, then prophets and evangelists and shepherds and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:8-16)

Now the Hebrew believers are admonished to recognize these office-bearers in the seriousness of their office and work which was assigned to them by the Lord Himself. Sad to say, ever since the Hebrews were admonished it has been necessary to impress this truth upon the hearts of God’s children, early and late.

We should therefore also notice what is the lofty task of these watchmen appointed by the Lord over the flock of God!

## THEY CARE FOR YOUR SOULS (Hebrews 13:17)

In order to understand a bit more what is implied in real Biblical soul-care, it will be necessary to study a bit the Scriptural teaching concerning the “soul” of the redeemed christian. We are not primarily concerned about the soul of man in general, but our concern is about the souls of the regenerated people of God, the man of God. This is important for the proper understanding of the care which the undershepherds must give to the flock. It is care for the flock of God, the souls of the redeemed in Christ. Our concern must be that these “souls” shall not be bowed down with grief, fear, and terror, but that the souls shall be joyful in the Lord. Had the writer not desired to speak specifically of “soul-care,” he could simply have written of the watch “over *you*.” The writer intends that the ministers and elders know that their task is not simply a general care, but it is a care for the *souls* of the flock.

The care that is here intended is what we would call *spiritual-psychological* care, and not what is called *physical-pneumatical* care. The latter, one can give outside of the camp of the true Israel of God. No one will deny that one’s body is deeply affected by the turmoil of a troubled soul. David cries out in Psalm 32:3 “. . . my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long, for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” David’s body suffered much with the anguished conscience which needed to be sprinkled with the blood of sprinkling on the altar. That no one will deny, who reads the Scriptures and believes them. Nevertheless, David’s problem at bottom was spiritual, deeply, profoundly spiritual, and it affected his soul, his mind, will, and all his affections. It was a spiritual-psychological problem which needed the soul-care of the sound words of reproof that resounded in his ears from the lips of Nathan, the prophet, “Thou art the man!” (II Samuel 12:7) David needed the therapy of the Word of God which is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. (II Tim. 3:16) He is called to repentance so that he writes a Psalm in the Holy Spirit which becomes the song of all who sin as did David, who in deep contrition cry to the Lord for the healing of their souls in the forgiveness of sins. It was through the sound words (health affording words) that David once more has spiritual health, his soul is revived and is caused to experience that the High and Lofty One, Who inhabits eternity, Whose name is holy, dwells in the holy place, and with the humble and contrite of spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. (Isaiah 57:15) And David is given us as an example of the soul which needed care by a prophet-watchman in Zion. And this prophet understood his



calling as a watchman who cares for the souls as one who shall give account. Nathan's care was deeply spiritual-psychological. He knew how to address the king. It was true, spiritual-psychological soul-care, and it was used by the Lord as His means to bring about the fruit of righteousness. To God be the glory both for the means and the fruit!

Perhaps it can serve some purpose to enlarge upon this teaching of Scripture just a bit. We will call attention particularly, to two passages here in the book of Hebrews and elicit from them what we believe to be sound teaching on this subject.

We call attention, first of all, to Hebrews 6:19, where we read, "which hope we have as an *anchor or the soul*, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; whither the forerunner for us has entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." Now what, to our mind, is striking here is that the writer in this portion refers to the soul in its spiritual relationship to Christ and to the blood of sprinkling in the holy place before God. The soul must not be tossed to and fro with all kinds of fear and doubts. For in the context this is not simply the soul of mankind in general, the mass of the damned, but it refers to those "who have fled for refuge to take hold upon the hope set before us"! That hope is the perfect salvation in the day of Christ. And this hope is anchored for us within the vail of the heavenly temple, where we can come to the throne of grace. (Hebrews 4:15,16) This throws light on the question of what is meant by "soul." It is the soul of the redeemed saint, the children who walk in the footsteps of the faith of Abraham. The writer is addressing the sons of Abraham as they need to have assurance concerning the salvation as the "heirs of the promise." And we should notice that soul-care is connected with the "Immutability of God's counsel." We must be assured that, when our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, we shall surely be saved. God promised this salvation of old, and he confirmed with an oath. Now we have "two immutable things" by which we have consolation with

God. True soul-care needs to be caring for the soul, that it may have an "anchor within the holy place," and must see in Jesus' ascension the fulfilment of the promise. When the soul has this anchor high in the heavens, it may be a bit tempest tossed, but the anchor holds. And so the soul looks away from self to the promises of God. And all the pedagogy of the preaching and teaching of the watchmen must be such that it points away from self to the ever and abiding faithfulness of God.

Now it ill behooves us not to submit to such watchmen, rulers who care for our souls, as those who must give account.

The means which the watchmen use to care for our souls is the Word of God. This is underscored in Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is quick (living) and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and the intents of the heart." Here too the writer speaks of the "soul" and does this in connection with the "spirit" and the "heart" with its thoughts and intents which are judged by the Lord. Now it ought to be evident that that "soul-care" here is connected with the preaching of the Word, and also is a matter of "laboring to enter into the rest." Only when we labor to enter into the rest of God is our soul healthy in faith and love. And the Word of God is living and powerful and turns us inside out to ourselves. Yea, it pierces into our very bones and marrow. And, therefore, a good watchman will warn both the righteous and the wicked in the church of Christ. Thus was the mandate to Ezekiel 3:17, "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word of my mouth, and give them warning from me . . ." And the word that a watchman speaks in the name of the Lord pierces into the bones and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intent of the heart. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that the sheep of the flock submit to those who watch for their souls as they who must and shall give account in the day of Christ.

## Book Reviews

A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HISTORY?, Edited by George Marsden & Frank Roberts; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975; 201 pp., \$4.50 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.]

This book, in a series of essays by different authors, seeks to provide a "tentative" answer to the question posed in the title. It seeks to answer the

question by taking a mediating position between "overassurance" and "diffidence." The disagreement seems especially to be whether there is historical data upon which believer and unbeliever can agree. And, in connection with this, whether an objective interpretation and value judgment is possible, or whether we are reduced to an historical relativism in this respect.

Because the book is written by a number of dif-



ferent authors, the viewpoint is also different. George Marsden defines the reason for studying history as:

We who are Christians should teach and learn history so that we may better understand ourselves and our fellow men in relation to our own culture and to the world. Since the Christian's task is to live in this world and to witness to the love of God as manifested in Christ, it is essential for us to understand ourselves and the world as well as we possibly can.

This, taken by itself, is a wholly inadequate reason for studying history, but it follows from the general view of the authors, for they reject the traditional view of history as the unfolding of the counsel of God. Doing this, they can no longer find in history the revelation of God, and they no longer see in a study of history the benefit of growing in the knowledge of God in His works and ways. For this reason too, there is little in the book about the relation between history and sacred history and the relation between the Scriptures and the study of history.

In general, the conclusion of the book is that probably one must, in the teaching of history, make moral judgments about what transpires in history; but there is a caution sign raised in this connection, and an objective standard by which to judge what transpires in history is totally absent.

The book reflects current thinking about history in evangelical circles and is worth reading for this reason. But it is of little or no help (except by the way of antithesis) in an understanding of a Christian approach to the study of history. Nevertheless, those who teach history in our schools ought to read it, and those who are interested in this subject will find a great deal of food for thought.

**JESUS, THE STORY OF HIS LIFE**, by Walter Barnett; Nelson-Hall Inc., 325 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, Ill., 60606; 1976; 273 pp., \$6.95. [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.]

This book is a sort of retelling of the life of Jesus from the gospel narratives. Since it combines all the gospel narratives, it is also a sort of harmony of the gospels. The author describes the book in a chapter at the end entitled, "Note on the Composition of the book."

This book is not a fresh translation of the sources from the original Greek. It is simply a retelling of the story in modern American speech. Since the objective is to put that story as nearly as possible into the words Americans would use today, the result may occasionally seem like a rather free paraphrase of the sources, but great care has been taken to make certain that the meaning has not been misrepresented. . . .

It must be reemphasized that this book is not a fictionalized account of Jesus' life. Nothing imaginary

has been added to the New Testament information. Only what is fairly there has been reproduced here, with one exception. In the account of the imprisonment of John the Baptist an explanation taken from the works of the ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus is incorporated, because it is one item of information from a source contemporary with the gospels that is doubtless genuine and throws considerable light on the temper of Israel in Jesus' time.

There is also a section at the end on the historical setting of the gospels which is very worthwhile.

For those who are, as is true of most of our readers, brought up from childhood with instruction from the Scriptures themselves, this book is of little value. Most of us have learned to understand and love the King James Version, and the need for a modern "paraphrase" is not a need among us. There is also the danger that a paraphrase may be taken as the Scriptures themselves.

The book is also weakened by higher critical views of the author, by various omissions from the text, and by an incorrect chronology.

The book could be useful to those who are totally unacquainted with the gospels, but then only if it led them to read the gospels themselves.

**GRACE UPON GRACE**, Essays in honor of Lester J. Kuypers; Edited by James Cook; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1975; 154 pp., \$6.95. [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.]

Lester Kuypers was for a long time a professor of Old Testament at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. The essays in this book, dealing with various problems of Old Testament studies, were written in his honor. Most *Festschriften* are dull reading, and this one is no exception. It deals with such subjects as: "The (Un)changeability of God," "The Biblical View of Time," "Women and Masculine Theological Vocabulary in the Old Testament," "Exodus in the letter to the Hebrews." Some of the authors are: I. John Hesselink, Hendrikus Berkhof, James Muilenburg, G. Ernest Wright, J. Coert Rylaarsdam, and Marten H. Woudstra.

If nothing else, the book shows how far higher criticism has vitiated Biblical studies in Reformed circles. I would not be honored by these essays, but angered and embarrassed that Scripture can be treated so cavalierly. So should anyone who loves the Word of God.

## NOTICE

Due to our decision to add a fourth teacher to our Staff, the SOUTH HOLLAND PROTESTANT REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL is accepting applications for the position. Anyone interested should write or phone Mr. Menno Poortenga, 18425 Oakwood Ave., Lansing, Illinois 60438. Phone: (312) 474-0675.



## News From Our Churches

One of the most important decisions a congregation makes is extending a call to one of God's servants whom they would ask to serve as their pastor. One of the more important decisions a minister of the Word is called upon to make is whether to accept or reject such a call. Since Rev. M. Kamps of Redlands, California, declined the call extended to him by our Edmonton congregation, Edmonton formed a new trio of Rev. R. Miersma, Rev. R. Moore, and Rev. J. Kortering. From that trio, Rev. Moore has received their call.

Since Rev. Harbach accepted the call to become home missionary in the Houston, Texas, area, the congregation of our Kalamazoo, Michigan, church has been without a pastor. Recently, Kalamazoo has decided to sell their parsonage and look for another. They have not formed a new trio at this writing.

Hope Church in Walker, Michigan, is Rev. Harbach's calling church. Hope's bulletin, therefore, has informed the congregation about the work in Houston. The following report was printed in their January 25 bulletin: "The twofold effect of the preaching of the Word is always felt where the Word is preached. This is especially true on the mission field and even more so where our missionaries purely proclaim the Word. The Word preached by Rev. Harbach in Houston is, now more than ever before a savour of life unto life, to four faithful families and a few others. That the preaching is also a savour of death unto death is the reason why the group has become smaller. Pray for our missionary and his wife that he may be faithful in the preaching and for those who remain as one, professing a sincere love of our Lord."

An additional report on the work in Houston was found in the March 7 Hope bulletin as follows: "The work in Houston has dwindled in size but picked up in labors. At present three families attend the services regularly while another family and two individuals are irregular in attendance. During the last two Sundays of February and the first Sunday of March, Rev. John Heys (from Holland, Michigan) was sent (at the request of the Mission Committee and with the approval of the Holland consistory) to Houston to help Rev. Harbach make as many outside contacts as possible. Let us not forget to bring this field and its labors before God's gracious throne." Rev. Ronald Van Overloop, pastor of Hope Church, plans to travel to Houston for the last two Sundays in March and the first Sunday in April to assist Rev. Harbach in the work there.

Activity in the area of church extension continues in many of our churches. Randolph is beginning a program of some selective mailing out of our material. The first item selected for distribution is the new pamphlet on Modern Bible Versions. Rev. Bekkering is seeking the assistance of his congregation in putting together a suitable mailing list.

An additional item was found in the Randolph bulletin concerning The Reformed Witness Hour, our denominational radio broadcast. "Beginning March 14, 1976, the Reformed Witness Hour will be broadcast at 12:30 PM on Sundays instead of 8:45. The idea behind the change is that it may enable more people outside of our church to hear the program. Most of the churches in the area begin at 9:30 AM, and, with the program running until 9:15, this constitutes a conflict. We hope therefore that this new time will be more convenient for those outside our church, and that it will be a good time for us as well. Please notify everyone that you know who listens to our program of the time change so that they may continue to listen." The program is carried on WLKE, 1170. Judging by the 'hustle and bustle' in our house 45 minutes before the service, this change in time of the broadcast would seem to be a good change. It is no small task to listen to a rather serious radio message while helping the children find their coats and straighten their ties.

Last summer we celebrated the 50th anniversary of our churches. This coming summer, our Hudsonville congregation plans to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their church with a program the evening of July 29 and a picnic the afternoon and evening of July 30. The members of the congregation are requested to plan their vacations accordingly. The anniversary committee is looking for pictures of interest, especially those going back to the building of the church and parsonage. It sounds as if a major event is in the making in the 'celery city.'

The following appeared in the Redlands, California, bulletin: "The Hope School Board with grateful hearts to little ones in Christ informs the congregation that the Hope School Society has received the following gifts: a) From the school children of our Hope P. R. Christian school in Walker, Michigan \$43.44. b) From the children of our Adams St. School in Grand Rapids \$128.67." These were Christmas gifts from the children in the 'East' to the children in the 'West.'

K.G.V.