

# The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Christ, in His incarnation, assumed our human nature, in the likeness of sinful flesh. . . . And in that nature He obediently suffered all that was required to satisfy God's justice, to merit for us righteousness, and to obtain the right to heavenly glory. And He, the Son of God, glorified that nature in Himself. He took it through death into the glory of the resurrection, and having thus glorified it by His resurrection, He took it into heaven, into the sanctuary of God.

For His ascension does not mean that He put aside our human nature. The human nature is not and never shall be separated from the divine.

Our flesh, therefore, is in heaven.

*The Triple Knowledge,*  
Volume 2, pages 72 & 73.

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

## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## Jehovah's Knowledge Of The Righteous

Rev. H. Veldman

*"For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous." Ps. 1: 6a*

The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous — how wonderful is this knowledge of the Lord! What heights and depths of peace and comfort are experienced by the child of God because of this scriptural and wonderful truth! Psalm I is the keynote psalm, revealing to us the mystery of all these wonderful psalms which the church has received by divine inspiration, even as Gen. 3: 15 is a key that opens to us all

of Holy Writ. And of this first psalm, the heart is expressed in this scripture: "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous."

Indeed, how wonderful! However, how terrible is that other half of the text: "But the way of the ungodly shall perish." That this is such a wonderful knowledge for the child of God is because it concerns the way of the righteous. One feels instinctively that



there is a connection between this way of the righteous and the righteous. The way of the righteous is a narrow way, a way of affliction and trouble and distress, exactly because of the righteous who walk in it. It is exactly because the children of the Lord are righteous that their way is as narrow as it is. And, how wonderful it is that, in spite of every appearance to the contrary, the Lord knows that way and also the righteous who walk upon it. If ever we should doubt this, if ever the fear creeps in upon our soul that the Lord has forgotten us, His own, let us look upon Him Who died that we might live. If ever it appeared that the Lord had forgotten or forsaken them who put their trust in Him, it was surely at the cross of Calvary. None trusted the Lord more perfectly; none was forsaken more utterly; yet, none was vindicated more gloriously.

\* \* \* \* \*

The word *way* is a very familiar expression in the Word of God. Three things are implied in this expression. It implies, in the first place, that we are all travellers because we are all creatures of time. Time is an awesome reality. Time never pauses. It always marches on, drives us forward irresistibly, and never retraces its steps. The past is past forever; it never returns, except in the day of judgment, the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, we are creatures of time in the sense that we are always moving forward in a spiritual direction. This is due to the fact that, besides being creatures of time, we are also moral-rational creatures. We were created in the image of God, are essentially image bearers of the Lord. Hence, all our activity is a spiritual activity; we always either love God or hate Him. One can never be neutral. And, thirdly, as such moral-rational creatures of time, we are constantly moving toward an everlasting destiny. Our journey will not go on and on and on. It will come to an end. And that end is either heaven or hell, unspeakable glory or unspeakable woe, perfect salvation in heavenly immortality or a terrible and complete ruin in endless despair and desolation.

Now the Word of God speaks of righteousness from a two-fold point of view. We are righteous either legally or spiritually. The word has both connotations in the Word of God. To be righteous legally means that, before the face of God, the Judge of all the earth, we are declared righteous as according to His law and standard — we are declared free from all guilt and punishment. To be righteous also means, however, that the Judge of all the earth declares us heirs of eternal life and glory. And the wonder of this, even apart from the fact that it is in conflict with the appearance of things, is that this verdict of God can never be changed, because God is God alone and there is no court of appeal. This legal righteousness we receive through faith, and it is only through faith

that we can receive it. This is not because faith is something *we* must do as a condition before God can give it. This righteousness is strictly unconditional as far as we are concerned. Faith, however, is the only way God can give us this blessed justification and give it to us as the living God. And, finally, this legal righteousness we shall receive in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. In that day we shall appear publicly as a people who have been justified only in and because of the blood of the Lamb of God and of Calvary. That day will be the public manifestation of the truth that we have been saved by grace, and by grace alone.

Scripture, however, also speaks of righteousness in a spiritual sense. The word *righteousness* means “a straight line.” Viewed spiritually, this righteousness is akin to sanctification. This means that we are spiritually in a straight line with God, in harmony with his will and statutes.

It is obvious that we must interpret the word *righteous* in this text in the ethical, spiritual sense. We read here of the “way of the righteous,” and this refers to their walk and conduct in the midst of the world.

This “way of the righteous” clearly emphasizes two important truths. On the one hand, they reveal themselves as righteous in the midst of the world. Of course, this is true only in principle. Even so, however, they are the people of God here below, hating and confessing their sin, separating themselves from the world; they are of the party of the living God, and they also reveal themselves antithetically as lights in the midst of the darkness of this world. On the other hand, because they are righteous, they are treated as such by the world, and their pathway is therefore a way of affliction and persecution — they are hated as also Christ was hated — a servant is never greater than his master.

\* \* \* \* \*

The way of the ungodly shall perish — what a terrible thought! This means, of course, that the end of their way is eternal ruin. Who is able to describe hell? Who can define and describe it in all its unspeakable and unutterable hopelessness and despair and misery? Besides, this expression also means that their present pathway leads to hell; the inevitable result of the way of the ungodly is everlasting ruin.

Yet, this expression means much more. Mind you, the way of the ungodly shall perish. It must not escape our attention that the inspired psalmist speaks here of their *way*. This means that this way itself leads to hell, that it is a perishing way; it is a way that works eternal destruction. The way, every inch of it, shall perish. There are those who say that God will hate the wicked in hell, but that He loves them now.



They teach that the wicked receive in this life many tokens of God's love and favor, but in hell all these gifts and tokens of divine grace will be taken from them. This, however, is surely not true. The way of the ungodly, every part of it, is a perishing way, always; the favor of the Lord never rests upon it; the ungodly can never pause in their way and say, the Lord loves us now. Constantly the hatred of the Lord is pursuing them, relentlessly, is causing all things to work together for their ruin. The Lord is never blessing them. Indeed, the curse of the Lord is not only upon the wicked, but it is also in the house of the wicked; they are ever upon slippery places; the eye of Jehovah is never upon them. This is surely the testimony throughout the Word of God. And it is emphasized in this concluding verse of Psalm I. Besides, do we not also read that the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous? And this surely implies that He does not know the way of the ungodly.

The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous. How important and how wonderful is this word *knoweth*! We must not confuse this knowledge with a merely intellectual knowledge. The Dutch distinguishes between *kennen* and *weten*. Here we have *kennen*. That the Lord knows the way of the righteous does not merely mean that He knows *about* that way, that He is *familiar* with it. In this sense the Lord also knows the way of the ungodly. This knowledge is a knowledge of love. We feel this instinctively when we are reminded of John 17: 3: "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent." And this is also true of Romans 8: 29-30.

The Lord knows the way of the righteous. His love is upon that way. It is never upon the way of the ungodly. Always the love of God accompanies the righteous. He has loved them eternally and He also

loves them in time. Indeed, it may appear otherwise, when we must suffer for righteousness' sake. The psalmist, Asaph, in Ps. 73, complains because of the prosperity of the wicked and his own terrible affliction. And the demoralizing thought will enter into the souls of the people of God: "How doth God know?" and, "Is there knowledge in the Most High?" All this was changed for Asaph when he entered into the sanctuary of God and saw the end of the ungodly — and their present prosperity in the light of that end. Then he saw the folly of his complaint and he confessed his sin before the living God Who is always the God of our salvation.

Indeed, the Lord knows the way of His own. He knows that way in love, and He knows every step of it. Of course He knows that way! He has willed it in infinite love and wisdom. And having willed it, He causes all things to work together for our good; everything is adapted to our eternal and heavenly glory and immortality.

Besides, our God is the Lord, Jehovah. The Lord, Jehovah, knoweth the way of the righteous. And Jehovah is the Rock, the I AM, the Unchangeable, the Almighty, the All-Wise; it is He Who leads to everlasting glory. He loves us unchangeably; He is almighty and therefore able to lead and save us; and He is the Omniscient One, Who leads and saves us through the best means.

Believe this, ye righteous. Believe this, ye people of God, also when grief and sorrow threaten to overwhelm your soul with despair. The way of the ungodly shall perish — is always perishing; they never know the love of God.

But ye are righteous. Ye love God because God loved you first. Indeed, Jehovah speaks here: "I know the way of the righteous, every inch of it." And He will never leave or forsake us.

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## EDITORIALS

# Our Australasian Tour 13

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

Singapore was the last scheduled stop of our tour proper. Needless to say, at this stage in our tour all of us were beginning to think increasingly of home. The weariness of our busy travels, our long absence from friends and family, and the foreign surroundings in which we found ourselves in such countries as Indonesia and Singapore — all of these combined to

make us more and more eager to reach home. As was mentioned at the conclusion of our last installment of this report, when we reached Singapore, we were just slightly north of the equator and back in the northern hemisphere — a bit closer to home. For all of us, but especially for the Rev. Hanko, and certainly for the young ladies involved, Singapore was an important



milestone for this reason, that meeting us at the airport were Rev. Hanko's granddaughter, Miss Beth Bos, and her friend, Miss Verna Klammer, who had begun the trip with Rev. Hanko, but who had been visiting in Singapore for some three weeks while Rev. Hanko was touring New Zealand and Australia with us. It was a happy occasion for all concerned; and from this point on, our travel party numbered five instead of three. At the airport to meet us were also the hosts of these two young ladies, Rev. and Mrs. Peter Tow, and Mr. Ong Keng Ho, a young man who had been converted to the Reformed faith in New Zealand and who is now living in Singapore. I will tell you more about him in a moment. After warm greetings all around (no pun intended, although understandably the climate in Singapore is warm and humid) we were taken to a Chinese street restaurant for a snack and then were brought to the apartment of Rev. and Mrs. E. Paauwe, on the campus of the Far Eastern Bible College, where we were to lodge during our stay at Singapore.

Singapore is a large and beautiful city, and is, as some of you may not know, an independent republic with a very limited amount of territory at the tip of the Malaysian Peninsula. Although the city is very large and crowded, its cleanliness and excellent housing formed a sharp contrast with the city of Jakarta. The city is so crowded — just to give you an idea — that there are very severe restrictions on cars entering the central business district in the morning at the peak hour. Another indication of the heavy population is the fact that we saw a large housing project, consisting of numerous highrise apartment buildings not far from the central city; and in these highrises, we were told, there is a population of some 250 thousand, equivalent to the population of metropolitan Grand Rapids. But the city is strikingly clean and beautiful. There are many parks and parkways filled with a large variety of tropical flowers, shrubs, and trees, all meticulously cared for; and one seldom sees any trash along the streets and roadways. We were warned, too, that the government is serious about keeping their city clean: there is a fine of \$50 for throwing so much as a cigarette butt into the street! We spent two full days, July 22 and 23, in Singapore; and since our meetings were in the evening of those days, we had some time for sight-seeing with our hosts, and took full advantage of that time — even though both Rev. Hanko and I had been surprised, upon arrival, by the fact that we had been announced as speaking on two subjects on which we had not spoken before and of which we had not been previously informed. Understandably, therefore, we were somewhat preoccupied during our sight-seeing tours; it is not so easy to organize a speech in one's mind while sight-seeing!

But Singapore, though a beautiful city, is basically a heathen city, not even nominally Christian. To be sure, there are Christians and churches, but they constitute a minority; religiously speaking, the heathen religions of the orient dominate. And here, as later in Bangkok, we were struck by the fact that the temples which we visited, and which were in the nature of tourist attractions to us, were nevertheless active centers of heathen religion.

Our contact man in Singapore and the young man who took the responsibility of arranging our meetings was Ong Keng Ho. We had had some contact with him prior to our departure, but it was in New Zealand that we learned his story. Incidentally, it was in New Zealand that we also learned to call him Ong; somewhat to our surprise, in Singapore we learned that Ong is his family name, while Keng Ho is his given name. Nevertheless, he told us to continue calling him Keng Ho. This young man was educated in New Zealand at the expense of the Singapore government. After his education was finished, he was required to return to Singapore, where he is under bond to work for the government for eight years. At the time of our visit he had a very responsible position, being in charge of the care of one-third of the park system in the city of Singapore. Since the time of our visit, we learned through correspondence that he has a different position at present. While Ong was in New Zealand, he came into contact with the people of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Christchurch; and it was during his stay in New Zealand that he was converted and was brought to the Reformed faith. Now, however, he finds himself in strange spiritual surroundings, and is very concerned because he cannot find preaching and instruction and fellowship of a Reformed character. For the Far Eastern Bible College and the entire Bible Presbyterian movement in Singapore leave much to be desired from this point of view. During our brief stay in Singapore we discovered nothing of a Reformed character, very much Arminianism and fundamentalism, a lack of healthy spirituality and of emphasis on Christian living, and even tendencies toward the social gospel in this movement. For example, we found the church promoting so-called "family planning," a euphemism for birth control. This, you must understand, is a very big thing in Singapore because of the large population and the limited amount of land for expansion; hence, the government is very interested for social and economic reasons in restricting the growth of the population. But the church cooperates in this and also promotes this evil practice. Incidentally, we were told that the Bible College and the churches there are independent of the Bible Presbyterian movement in America; only the Rev. Paauwe, we were told, among the workers there, is connected with and supported



by the Bible Presbyterian movement in America. But to return to my story, needless to say, we were very warmly welcomed by our soft-spoken and mild-mannered young friend, Ong Keng Ho. He thoroughly enjoyed his fellowship with us, and he had many questions to ask of us and many subjects to discuss. On our part, however, we also thoroughly enjoyed our fellowship with this young Reformed Christian. I know that Ong himself will read this report in our *Standard Bearer*, and will probably be embarrassed by my saying this; nevertheless I do not hesitate to say that our visit to Singapore would have been worthwhile if only for our contact with and our opportunity to talk with, have fellowship with, and encourage and strengthen our friend. When we left Singapore on the morning of July 24, it was difficult for all of us to say farewell to him. Yet we must remember that the Lord in His providence not only brought him to the Reformed faith in New Zealand, but also in His wise purpose has now brought him into this situation at Singapore. One's heart goes out to a young Reformed Christian such as this young man; and we could only encourage him to remain faithful, to witness as the opportunity arose, and to try to find some likeminded Christians with whom he can have fellowship. Who knows but that he could perhaps be instrumental in gathering a group of Reformed believers in that faraway place!

However, somewhat to our surprise, we had the opportunity in Singapore to have our Reformed testimony heard on two successive evenings by audiences which were larger than we expected. Our friend Ong had chosen the subjects for these meetings, and had seen to it that the meetings were advertised on the campus and in the New Life Church. The subjects, as I mentioned earlier, took us by surprise. We had no definite plans before we arrived at Singapore, and did not know at all what was being planned. And while the subjects were not unfamiliar to either Rev. Hanko or myself, they were not subjects on which we had any notes along in our brief cases, with the result that we had to do some quick planning and preparation. My subject on the evening of July 22 was "The True Church." Rev. Hanko's subject for the evening of July 23 was "The Believer and the Church." These subjects alone, I think, tell us something of what was in the mind and heart of our friend Ong. We had been forewarned not to expect large audiences. And although it is true that there were not many of the older generation of the church present, nevertheless much to our surprise, we had audiences of about 100 at these meetings. The audiences were very young: many who heard us were teen-agers attending the Far Eastern Bible College. It was evident to us that they did not have any Reformed background, nor much doctrinal background of any kind. We had to gear our addresses as much as possible to these audiences, and

that, too, on the spur of the moment. How much these young people understood of what we tried to tell them is a question. We certainly had good attention and apparently interested listeners. After the second meeting we also had a brief question hour, and after both meetings we had opportunity for informal discussion while refreshments were served. We left with the conviction that we had spoken the truth of the Word of God, and that seeds were sown. Whether there will be positive fruit of any kind in the future remains to be seen. Through Ong we do have an outlet for some of our literature in that area.

Thus ended our tour proper. It still remained for us to travel home, but our work in behalf of our churches was finished. Our itinerary called for us to fly home from Bangkok, Thailand, via Europe, so that by the time we returned to Grand Rapids we had been around the world. Once we were in Singapore, it was more economical under our travel arrangements to continue flying westward than to return across the Pacific. But our flight was scheduled to leave Bangkok on the evening of July 25. So, on July 24 it was wake up time at 5 A.M. Our plane got us to Bangkok at 9:30 in the morning, after a brief stop over at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. At Bangkok we had time to rest, to shop, and to do some sight-seeing. Then came the long overnight trip from Bangkok to Zurich, Switzerland, with a refueling stop in the heat of the desert at Teheran, Iran. That involved another time change of six hours, so that though we arrived at Zurich at noon, Bangkok time, it was actually six o'clock in the morning at Zurich. Fortunately, on the advice of our travel agent, we had planned a rest stop in Switzerland. After finally learning (in spite of the language barrier) where we were to go and how to get there, we traveled by train and bus to the little village of Weistannen, in the Swiss Alps, where we had accommodations in a little family hotel. This was supposed to be a missionary retreat; but to our chagrin, we discovered that the one church in the village was Roman Catholic, with the result that we were compelled to hold our own informal church service on that Sunday on the grounds of the hotel, surrounded by the majestic mountains and in sight and hearing of a rushing mountain stream. What would we do in a setting like that but sing psalms which referred to the mountains?

Our charter flight to Chicago was scheduled to leave Luxembourg on July 31. Hence we had time for some whirlwind sight-seeing. On Monday, July 28, we were on our way back to Zurich by bus and train at 6 o'clock in the morning. From Zurich we had an all day train trip down the valley of the Rhine river to the land of our forefathers, the Netherlands. There we parted ways for a day. Rev. Hanko and his travel companions went to Amsterdam, and thence to Sexbierum, where he visited with relatives of mem-



bers of his congregation. Mrs. Hoeksema and I left the train at Utrecht, where we were met by Mr. and Mrs. Ernest van Rij. In correspondence with his father in New Zealand, Ernest had kindly made arrangements for us to have a quick tour of the Netherlands. Although our purpose was sight-seeing, and not church contact, we did make a couple of the latter along the way. But whirlwind sight-seeing was our diet all day Tuesday, July 29. We even managed to visit the city of my father's boyhood, Groningen, and to walk the streets in the neighborhood of the Martini Toren (Tower), where he had walked as a boy. Our hosts over night in the little village of Hoornsterzwaag, Friesland, were Mr. and Mrs. K. Kasten. And I must confess — undoubtedly to the delight of my Friesian-American readers — that Friesland was the most attractive part of the Netherlands which we saw! The next morning Mr. Kasten broke all the speed laws to get us to Utrecht in time to catch our train back south to Luxembourg. After an overnight stay in that city, where our party was reunited, it was in the air again the next afternoon for the long trip across the Atlantic via Iceland to Chicago, and thence to Grand Rapids. What a thrill it was, after midnight at the Kent County airport, to see the faces of so many friends and relatives who were there as a welcoming party when at last the Lord had brought us home safe and sound. And what a thrill it was, even though the weariness of our travels had not yet left

us, to be able to participate in the 50th Anniversary Celebration of our Protestant Reformed Churches the following week!

I hope to make a few concluding observations in the next issue. But for those who may be interested in some statistics, we may mention the following. Over a total span of 38 days, we held a total of 40 meetings of various kinds, not to mention the countless private conversations. Between meetings we had some 21 different air flights, plus numerous trips by train, bus, and private car. We spoke to an estimated total of some 1800 people during this period, many of whom we met personally and engaged in conversation concerning the Reformed faith. We estimate that our travels took us some 30 thousand or more miles, and we touched down in 14 different countries.

Not only was this trip a first for our Protestant Reformed Churches, but through the blessing of our God it proved, beyond doubt, to be a very significant break-through as far as the ecumenical outreach of our churches is concerned. Moreover, that this was indeed the case is not only the conviction of Rev. Hanko and myself; but, after we had made our report, it was also the conclusion of our fellow members on the Synodical Committee for Contact With Other Churches. All thanks and praise to our covenant God!

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## QUESTION BOX

# About Covenant-Breaking

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

About a year ago I answered some questions about this subject. In that answer I maintained — and my questioners agree with me on this point — that God's covenant is unbreakable, that is, eternal and faithful. In the course of my answer I also made the following statement: "Finally, I think it should be pointed out that we sometimes speak rather loosely and inaccurately in connection with the sins of those who are brought up in and live in the sphere of God's

covenant in the midst of the world of those sins as being a breaking of the covenant. . . ." The reader may, if he wishes, look up my complete answer in Volume 51, pp. 368,369. My answer at that time occasioned questions from three different persons in various parts of the country. All of these questions refer to passages from the Old Testament which speak of breaking the covenant. I will not quote the letters in detail, nor will I mention all the passages. One



questioner sent me a long list of passages in which this expression is found. In the course of my answer I will refer to at least some of these passages. The basic question is, of course, this: If it be true that God's covenant is unbreakable, how must these passages of Scripture be understood?

#### Answer

First of all, let us get before us some of the Scripture passages in question. I quote them, of course, from the King James Version. In Deuteronomy 31:16 we read: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them." Two of my questioners also referred me to Leviticus 26:14-16: "But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it." The context here goes on to mention more judgments which God will send among the children of Israel. Joshua 23:16 does not use the term "break," but speaks of transgressing the covenant. Judges 2:20 uses the same language. In Jeremiah 11:10 we read: "They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers."

Many other references might, of course, be cited.

I cannot very well take the space to explain each one of the Scriptural references to the breaking of the covenant separately. I will, however, make a few explanatory remarks in general.

In the first place, the term that is translated by "break" is the same term that is used more than once in Scripture with respect to breaking a commandment or breaking a law. Now, obviously, when a commandment or a law is broken, this cannot mean that the law as such is broken in the sense that it no more stands whole and complete and valid. The opposite is true. That law remains in force. The same is true with respect to the covenant. The term "break" refers to a violation, a transgression of the covenant, even as the same term can be used to refer to a violation or transgression of God's commandments. At the same time this term, we must remember, points to the seriousness and heinousness of the sin. On the part of the

sinner it is so serious that it constitutes a breaking of the law, or a breaking of the covenant.

In the second place, you will notice, if you check up on the various Scripture passages, that they refer to the Old Testament situation. This, too, is an important factor to remember in connection with this entire question. We must bear in mind that the peculiar dispensation of the covenant in the Old Testament was the dispensation of the law. At Sinai, the Mosaic law — not only of the ten commandments, but of the types and ceremonies — was the form which was given to God's covenant. This is undoubtedly a large factor in Scripture's speaking so often of the breaking of the covenant on the part of Israel. It was precisely because that covenant was under the dispensation of the law that it could be and was broken in the sense of not observing and keeping that law. If you will take the trouble to consult the passages of Scripture in question, you will find that this is indeed the case. One example is the passage in Leviticus 26, quoted above.

In the third place, in close connection with this fact stands the fact that Scripture speaks more than once of "the house of Israel" as breaking God's covenant. This also stands connected with the fact that the dispensation of the covenant was the dispensation of the law and, at the same time, a *national* dispensation in the Old Testament. And when the carnal element in Israel had the upper hand in the nation, then it could be said that the "house" of Israel broke God's covenant.

All of this, I believe, is quite in harmony with what I wrote earlier on this subject. If my questioners have further questions, they are welcome to call again.

#### About Having Our Flesh in Heaven

From a Wisconsin reader I received the following question: "The resurrection of our Lord was glorious and spiritual. In the light of this, how must we understand that we have our *flesh* in heaven? (Lord's Day XVIII)"

#### Reply

My questioner refers to the expression found in Question and Answer 49, which speaks of the advantage to us of Christ's ascension. In mentioning a three-fold advantage, the Catechism speaks of the fact "that we have our flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that He, as our head, will also take up to Himself us, His members." My questioner is evidently troubled by the term *flesh*, in the light of the fact that Christ's resurrection was spiritual and glorious.

In reply to this question I will quote the following passage from *The Triple Knowledge*, Volume 2, pp. 72 and 73:

"We have our flesh in heaven!



“By the term ‘flesh’ here must be understood our entire human nature, as to soul and body. Christ, in His incarnation, assumed our human nature, in the likeness of sinful flesh. As such, that nature was wholly unfit to enter into heavenly glory. For, not only was it of the earth earthy, but it was also corrupt through sin, under the wrath of God, lying in the midst of death. Nor did we have the right to be delivered from the corruption of our nature, and to enter into heavenly glory. Heaven was closed to us. That nature, although without sin, yet as it was earthly, and in the likeness of sinful flesh, Christ assumed. And in that nature He obediently suffered all that was required to satisfy God’s justice, to merit for us righteousness, and to obtain the right to heavenly glory. And He, the Son of God, glorified that nature in Himself. He took it through death into

the glory of the resurrection, and having thus glorified it by His resurrection, He took it into heaven, into the sanctuary of God.

“For His ascension does not mean that He put aside our human nature. The human nature is not and never shall be separated from the divine.

“Our flesh, therefore, is in heaven.

“It is not in heaven as ‘flesh’ in the form in which He assumed it, and in which we know it, but in its glorified form. It has been changed into the image of the heavenly. For ‘flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.’ But it is, nevertheless, our flesh, the real human nature, which He took into the highest heavens, when He ascended up on high.”

With the above explanation I am in agreement.

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## STUDIES IN ISAIAH

# The Church Protected And Purified

*Rev. Robt. C. Harbach*

*1. The Church Defended.* In our last installment we saw that within the church organism of Isaiah’s day there was “a generation pure in their own eyes” and so “not washed from their filthiness” (Prov. 30:12). Here the Lord calls the glory of their gaudery, which they deemed so wonderfully clean, “their filthiness” (4:4), and just as much so as the bloody violence of criminals in Jerusalem. But also the glories of the world’s best, their wealth, business, idealism, and good works, being, as they all are without God, filth.

“And Jehovah will create upon all the dwelling-place of Mount Zion and upon her places of convocation a cloud by day and smoke and a brightness of flaming fire (by) night; for upon all the glory (shall be) a covering” (4:5, Heb.). When the church is purified, the glory of salvation shall appear. So it is prophesied, “Arise, shine! for thy light is come, and

the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee” (60:1), the fulfillment of which is recorded in Revelation 21. The glory and work of salvation is like that of creation: God spoke, and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast. Creation is solely the work of God. (The Creator, not the creature, is active in the work of creation.) So salvation is exclusively God’s work, as those being saved are spiritually dead. He creates New Heavens and New Earth. There He dwells in Zion, which whole mount becomes the holy of holies. But even now, Zion is wherever the Word of God is preached. The churches in the world are centers of the communion of saints. These have over them the covering of the divine benediction. The picture is that of the church in the wilderness with its pillar of cloud protecting God’s people, and pillar of fire devouring the wicked, and keeping His people from wandering



off into the darkness. As in the beginning God exerted His almighty creative power, in the Red Sea His redemptive power, and in the wilderness His daily miracle power, so He will deliver and protect His church to the end, and make every single home in the Israel of God His holy Tabernacle, as the typical tabernacle exclusively was.

2. *The Church a Defence.* "And a booth shall be for daytime shade from the heat, and for a refuge, and for a hiding place from storm and from rain" (4:6, Heb.). The church of the New Testament dispensation is and enjoys one age-long Feast of Succoth. Wherever the Word of God is preached there is a Feast of Tabernacles. As there was in the original paradise no storm or rain, so in paradise regained, in the New Jerusalem (not in the millennium, which turns out to be a colossal failure) there will be no damaging changes of weather. "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil." (Ps. 121:6-7a) (Cp. also Ps. 32:7,2; 91:9; Pro. 18:10; Isa. 25:4; 26:20; 32:2). "In this world we must expect change of weather, and all the inconveniences that attend it; we shall meet with storm and rain in this lower region, and at other times, the heat of the day . . . But God is a refuge to His people in all weathers." (M. Henry) This He is in Christ, for in Himself, absolutely considered, He is a consuming fire. To attempt to approach God, even to consider Him, unitarian fashion, apart from His co-equal Son, the eternal Word incarnate, is to phantasize about God and reach out to a humanly invented godhead. None but Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, is our refuge and our strength.

## THE PARABLE OF THE LORD'S VINEYARD

Isaiah 5:1-7

1. *The Great Labors God Had Bestowed on It.* Here is the gloomy picture of the guilt and judgment of Israel according to the flesh without presenting the cheerful side of the deliverance of the Israel of God. The chapter is not limited to one event, but was true of reprobate Israel in the time of the first or Egyptian captivity of His people for four hundred years, in the time of the Judges, in the captivities (under the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Persians, Greeks, Romans) and especially after the rejection of their Messiah, in the destruction of Jerusalem, 70 A.D., when darkness forever descended on them. Israel in parable is seen as a vineyard of the Lord. When the vineyard does not produce as expected, it is delivered up to judgment. The bad fruit produced is described, as well as a kind of judgment which would follow.

"I will sing now concerning my beloved, a song of my beloved concerning his vineyard. A vineyard had become my beloved's in the horn (the protective

encirclement) of the son of (an expert and rich producer of olive) oil" (5:1, Heb. See KJV, marg.) The song refers to the singer's own beloved, his dearest one, not his cousin (Luther), nor his uncle (Vulgate). It is a song concerning the beloved's vineyard, a song of the beloved, the Lord himself (v. 7). Isaiah like John the Baptist thinks of himself as the friend of the bridegroom, the beloved in whom we are accepted. The prophets, too, are the friends of the bridegroom. The bridegroom, being the beloved, is to be loved. For "if any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema. . . ." Jesus said of some in His day, "I know you; you have not the love of God in you." He said to His own disciples, "If any man love Me, let him come after Me and take up his cross daily and follow Me." Actually, the song does not go on in this lovely vein, for it is really a lament, an instruction, a denunciation.

2. *The Disappointing of His Expectations of It.* "And he dug it up (spaded it), and he stoned it, and planted (it) a vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also a wine-press he hewed in it; and he waited for (its) producing grapes, and it produced stinks" (5:2, Heb.). The vineyard, situated like a beautiful diamond in a perfect setting, was provided with everything to make it the best vineyard producing the richest vintage. Verse one is expressive of great fruitfulness. The son of oil is "one who has oil and is rich with oil" (Luther). To bring this about, he spaded it, cleared it of stones, the Owner laboring faithfully to do this. (The Owner does promise His spiritual Israel to take the stony heart out of their flesh.) Then he planted his vine, and out of the stones removed from the field he built a guard-tower for protection of the vineyard and for a comfortable covert for the Owner which he could even use as a honeymoon lodge (Song 7:12). Also he hewed a wine-press (out of rock!) in order to provide everything necessary to produce the best vineyard and the highest quality grapes.

The Lord does not survey His vineyard from its tower to see which vines grow strongest, noting which bring forth the best fruits, and so determining to select them. For that is Arminianism. Jehovah might sit on His throne to eternity without finding one worthy of His choice, if He operated that way. No, but the vineyard represents the sovereign choosing of Israel to be God's elect people. The vineyard had husbandmen who tended it, spaded and dunged its soil. This the prophets and later the apostles did in teaching the law and preaching the gospel. So God first chose Israel, not Israel the Lord. God's choosing of Israel was by grace alone. God's election of the vineyard implies an organic election. God predestinated the entire organism. Of that organism, some of the branches were ordained to be cut off and destroyed (vv. 5-6), (every plant which My heavenly



Father hath not planted shall be rooted up!), while the elect nucleus shall be preserved (Psm. 80:8-19).

There are branches on the vine which do not produce fruit. "He waited for (its) producing grapes." The vine as it grew was tended and watched in justifiable anticipation of a crop. But it brought forth withered, dried up, stinking, rotted grapes. The vine proved worthless, and that in the sense of the useless chaff of the threshing floor (Matt. 3:12). It turned out that the vineyard was not worth two cents an acre.

"And now, dweller of Jerusalem and man of Judah, judge you, I pray, between Me and between My vineyard" (5:3, Heb.). That is, as Nathan put a parable to David (2 Sam. 12:1) in which he intended that David judge the man in the parable who appropriated the poor man's ewe lamb, so you be the judge. In this way David was led to see that the parable applied actually and only to himself. In this way the man of Judah within the framework of the parable, umpiring between the beloved friend and his vineyard, would, unawares, pass judgment on himself and justify God.

"What to do more to my vineyard and (that) I have not done in it? Why waited I (for it) to produce grapes, and (why) produced it stinks?" (5:4, Heb.). Israel had the highest privileges (cp. Ro. 9:4-5; 3:1-2), the richest blessings, the greatest advantages, and what better culture could they have had (particularly, spiritual culture)? So that what they must admit to is

that their wickedness in professing the true religion while lacking any possession of it amounted to the most unaccountable and unreasonable thing in the world. For they who own Christ as "my Beloved" in truth, do so, if necessary, at the expense of forsaking father, mother, wife, children, house, lands and his own life also. But in the day of judgment, the wicked, hypocrites and mere professors will have to confess, as Pharaoh did, The Lord is righteous!

3. *The End and Ruin it Deserved.* "And now, I will tell you, if you please, the thing which I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge of it, and it shall be consumed. I will break down its wall, and it shall be trodden down" (5:5, Heb.). Now the Lord goes on to answer His own question. It is peppered with biting wrath, coming, too, as something of a surprise, as we would expect further digging, dunging, or some last ditch mode of cultivation, and not, as we have, the threatening of the vine's destruction. Not only no more good gifts will God bestow on them, but they shall be plundered, ruined by their enemies and trodden down by the Gentiles, the wrath of God coming upon them to the uttermost. The vineyard (theocracy) would then cease to be. The church of that nation would be unchurched. That is, since *church* means *the Lord's*, they would no more be the Lord's. They would no more be Ammi, but Lo-ammi, Not My People. They would no more be a peculiar people, but become so common as to be scattered among all nations.

## NEWS FEATURE

# Congregational Singing And Organs

*Rev. David Englesma*

On March 19, 1976, the members of the South Holland congregation had a ceremony of dedication for their new organ. In addition to the playing of many numbers on the organ, the choral society of the church sang, the choir of the Protestant Reformed Christian School sang, and I gave a brief address. At the request of some, including the program committee of the council, I publish this speech in the

*Standard Bearer.* The chapter read was II Chronicles 5.

\* \* \* \* \*

Music in the form of congregational singing has a very important place in the worship of the Church. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament Scriptures teach that congregational singing is, and must be, an element of the service of worship of the



Church. Our singing is a form of prayer, and, as the Heidelberg Catechism teaches, prayer is the chief part of thankfulness that God requires of us.

The Reformation, and Calvin in particular, purified the worship service in this regard and restored the praise of God in congregational singing to its rightful place. Calvin treats of singing in the *Institutes* (III,XX,32): "And certainly if singing (in church — DE) is tempered to a gravity befitting the presence of God and angels, it both gives dignity and grace to sacred actions and has a very powerful tendency to stir up the mind to true zeal and ardor in prayer."

Calvin busied himself to provide a good songbook for the Reformed Church — a psalter, by the way. In the preface to the metrical psalter used in Geneva, Calvin wrote that music is "the first gift of God, or one of the first, for man's recreation. In worship, in particular, it has great force and vigor to move and inflame the hearts of men to invoke and praise God with a more vehement and ardent zeal" (quoted from *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* by James Hastings Nichols).

Calvin put an end to choirs and soloists in the services of worship, which had by his time replaced congregational singing, and called for singing by the whole congregation as part of their worship of the Lord. We may bless God that we are the beneficiaries of this insight of the Reformation, too. It is the congregation's duty and privilege, as well as its desire, to "make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Jehovah," as we read in II Chronicles 5:13.

It is the function of an organ in the Church to assist the congregation in carrying out this calling; the organ is to help congregational singing.

Just because it has this function, the organ becomes important — whatever aids in the congregation's praise of God is important.

But it is the congregation that dedicates the organ to God, and it does so by its heartfelt singing of God's praises. In its use of the organ to praise the Lord God for His goodness, the congregation consecrates the instrument to God. If we do not sing; if we do not sing from the heart; if we do not sing songs that ascribe all of salvation to the Lord and songs that glory in the Lord and His cross; well, then we misuse the instrument, beautiful though its sound may be, and press it into the service of sin.

Let us resolve tonight to glorify our Maker and Redeemer in songs of thanksgiving and praise; let us resolve to sing from the heart; let us resolve to sing God-centered, God glorifying songs — which the psalms are.

We do well, in this connection, to recall Calvin's warning, when he was speaking of singing in church:

"We must, however, carefully beware, lest our ears be more intent on the music than our minds on the spiritual meaning of the words."

This we will do, if the gospel of sovereign grace continues to be preached here. Ultimately, the organ is consecrated to God — and made beautiful! — by the Word preached.

I emphasize that the organ is our servant, that it is servant to congregational singing. We do not serve the organ, but it serves us. It must never "take over" in the worship service, whether by volume, or tempo, or "frills." The organists must be guided by this principle: the organ accompaniment is the handmaid of congregational singing. So fearful were Calvin and Dutch Reformed Churches of the organ's becoming the center of attraction in the services that they opposed the use of an organ in the worship services. It was not until 1637 that the Dutch Reformed Churches began using the organ in the service.

But the organ can be used rightly: aiding congregational singing and, thus, our worship of God. Then what we read of the worship of God in Solomon's temple characterizes our worship: "...as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord . . . for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God" (II Chron. 5:13,14).

To this use of the praise of God by a singing congregation, do we tonight dedicate the organ that God has given us.

Know the standard  
and follow it.



Read the  
STANDARD BEARER!



## THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

# Eternal Election, 2

Prof. Robert D. Decker

“We believe that all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin, by the sin of our first parents, God did then manifest himself such as he is: that is to say, merciful and just: Merciful, since he delivers and preserves from this perdition all, whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel of mere goodness, hath elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works: Just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves.”

Article XVI, *The Belgic Confession*

Having discussed the doctrine of divine election in the previous issue we turn our attention to the Reformed doctrine of reprobation. It is well, for several reasons, that we devote an entire article to this truth. There is often a great deal of misunderstanding concerning this truth, even among those whose desire it is to be thoroughly Reformed in doctrine. This truth is widely and openly denied by many who claim to be in the Reformed tradition. And, the truth has been attacked at this point from earliest New Testament times. Those who object to the Reformed truth invariably object especially to the doctrine of Reprobation. The Apostles had to deal with this (especially the Apostle Paul), Augustine fought for the truth on this score and so did Calvin, the great Synod of Dordrecht defended this doctrine against the Arminians, and the Reformed churches after Dordt (including our own Protestant Reformed Churches) engaged in many a polemic in defense of the doctrine of Reprobation.

But before getting at the truth of reprobation we should note the fact that the *Confession*, in its presentation of election and reprobation, proceeds from the infralapsarian point of view. The question of “infra / supra” is no longer disputed, and perhaps that is reason sufficient for us to comment on it. The words, infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism, are derived from Latin compounds; “lapsus” which means fall, and “infra” which means below, and “supra” which means, “above.” The question is, therefore, do election and reprobation in the counsel of God stand “below” or “above” the fall of Adam? To put it another way, did God choose His elect out of a fallen human race (infra) or did God choose His people out of a human race that was destined to fall

(supra)? Or, to state the question in still another way, which is first and which is last in the counsel of God? The *Confession* is quite obviously infra, for it speaks of election and reprobation from the point of view of history. The posterity of Adam had fallen into perdition and ruin by the sin of our first parents. God revealed His mercy in saving from perdition those whom He had chosen in Christ. God revealed His justice in leaving others in the fall and perdition in which they had involved themselves. The point is that infra lists the order in the decree of God in the way in which that decree is realized in history. Thus God, according to the infra view, first decreed the creation, then the fall, election and reprobation, Christ, and the new creation. The supralapsarian view conceives of the order in God’s counsel as follows: 1) God will the glory of His Name in the exalted Christ; 2) God born of every creature; 3) For Christ God elected His Church, and to serve that elect Church in Christ God willed the reprobate as vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction; 4) Finally God willed the creation and all things in it as means designed to serve the realization of both election and reprobation, and therefore, of the glory of God in Christ and His Church.

On the basis of several specific passages (cf. Eph. 1: 3-10, Col. 1: 13-19) and the general teaching of the Word of God we prefer this latter conception. Besides, according to this conception election and reprobation do not simply proceed side by side out of eternity and throughout history (the old “equal ultimacy” charge!) but the decree of reprobation serves that of election! This is literally the teaching of Scripture. Concerning His elect, precious Israel God says: “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine . . . For I am



the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." (Isaiah 43: 1-4) One finds the same idea in Romans 9: 22 and 23: "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering (for His elect's sake) the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." Indeed, not only does reprobation according to the supra conception serve election but: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Romans 8: 28-30)

Article XVI speaks of the decree of reprobation in these terms: "Just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves." Notice that, while we might prefer to speak of reprobation in terms of God's willing to create vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, or of God's determining to condemn the reprobate to destruction in the way of their own sin, the *Confession* certainly teaches reprobation. The "leaving of others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves" certainly involves an eternal *decision* on God's part. And this is the clear teaching of Scripture throughout. Already in the "mother promise" of Genesis 3:15 the Lord speaks of the great gulf of enmity which He puts between the seed of the woman (Christ and the elect in Him) and the seed of the serpent (the devil's brood, the reprobate). Jesus thanks His Father because He has hid the mysteries of the Kingdom from the wise and prudent and revealed them unto the babes according to His good pleasure (Matthew 11: 25-27). The Savior speaks in parables because to some it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom and to some it is not given (Matthew 13: 10-17). Concerning those who murmured at His sermon on the Bread of Life Jesus said: "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And He said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." (John 6: 64,65) Jesus flatly told the unbelieving Jews: "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know

them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." (John 10: 26-30) That the unbelievers got the point is evident from the fact that when they heard that, they took up stones to stone Jesus. (verse 31) Jesus' teaching is obvious, is it not? Some are given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom and some are not. Some believe because the Father gives them to Christ and they are His sheep. Others reject the Savior because they are not of His sheep and from them God hides the things of the Kingdom. For these Jesus did not come into the world; for these He did not lay down His life as the good shepherd; for these He did not speak the gracious words of everlasting life. For these, indeed, He came in judgment!

And, if this be not proof enough, consider the teaching of Romans nine. In this chapter the inspired Apostle speaks of a distinction between spiritual and natural Israel, the "children of the flesh" who are not counted as the children of God and the "children of the promise" who are counted for the seed. How must this distinction be explained? Why this difference? Did not all hear the Word of God? Did that Word take no effect? Oh, No! They are not all Israel, which are of Israel. This is evident from the Word of the Lord concerning Abraham and his natural born children. Not all of these were counted for the seed. Only Sarah's son, Isaac, is the child of the promise. The same is evident in the twins of Rebecca. Before those children were born or had done any good or evil, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger." (verses 10-12) Moreover, God had spoken of this long before when He said through the prophet Malachi: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." And let no one say at this point that God elected (loved) Jacob and reprobated (hated) Esau only after they had manifested themselves in life. That is neither the Apostle's nor Malachi's argument. Scripture teaches here that God made an eternal distinction, a distinction between elect and reprobate, righteous and wicked, the children of the flesh and the children of the promise, the natural seed and the seed of Abraham, irrespective of works. God did this sovereignly. This is Romans nine. God has mercy on whom He wills and whom He will He hardens. This is illustrated in the history of the hardening of Pharaoh. God raised Pharaoh up to show His power and declare His Name in the earth. Studying the history of Exodus we find God repeatedly telling Moses that He will harden Pharaoh's heart (cf. Exodus 3:19,20;



4:21-23; 5:1,2; 6:1-8; 7:1-13, 22) and only after this do we finally read that Pharaoh hardened his heart (8:15)!

At this point invariably the objection is raised that God is unjust. If the case be so with the reprobate how can it be that God deals justly with them when He casts them into destruction? The Apostle faced this very objection: "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?" (Vs. 19) And what did the holy Apostle answer? Listen: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (vss. 20,21) The answer to this objection must always be "O man, keep still!" Let no man question the sovereign dealings of the Almighty Potter! Indeed, let us confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts that God: "did manifest himself such as he is; merciful and just . . . Just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves." This great truth ought to move us to deepest humility before the eyes of Him with Whom we all have to do!

## FROM HOLY WRIT

# Exposition Of Hebrews 13:17 -- Continued

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

## THE SPIRITUAL HEALTH OF THE SOULS OF THE SAINTS (Hebrews 13:17)

It is true that in this text there is no direct statement concerning the spiritual health of the saints; the text does not mention healthy souls. Still there is an implied reference here to such health, which is more than a mere suggestion. For the text speaks in the negative of this when it says, "that they may do so with joy and not with groaning, *for that is unprofitable for you.*" This form of statement is called "litotes," that is, a weak negative statement which implies a very strong reality. This means here, therefore, that it will be very hurtful for your spiritual well-being not to submit willingly to the teaching and the correction of the leader-watchmen in the church as appointed by the Lord. You will need to write the profit which you receive on the non-credit side of your spiritual ledger. You will not then grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, but you will be a prey of the wolves, who will then give you evil teaching, and destroy your soul's steadfastness in the Lord, and rob you of the glad assurance that the anchor holds sure and steadfast in the holy place whither the forerunner of our salvation has entered, Jesus Christ a high priest after the order of Melchizedek!

What really constitutes spiritual health we are told in many passages of Scripture. In general it may be said that spiritual health is inseparably connected with "sound words of doctrine." The apostle Paul speaks of such sound words in his pastoral letters, both to Timothy and to Titus. (I Tim. 1:10) The adjective "sound" is the translation of the Greek word "*hugianoo*" from which our English term *hygiene* is derived. Sound words are words which give spiritual health to the new man in Christ. In I Timothy 1:10 Paul points out that a life of fleshly lust is contrary to spiritual health. These sins are: those of whoremongers, those who defile themselves with mankind, menstealers, perjured persons, etc. All who walk in such sins are not under grace and the power of the Holy Spirit but are under the law which was made for evil men. (I Timothy 1:9) This is all contrary to sound words which teach that the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned. Those are sound words of truth. Such sound, health-affording words are, that Christ came into the world to save sinners. This word is worthy of all acceptance. Paul speaks in II Timothy 1:13 of the *form* of sound words to which we must hold fast! When the evil days come upon the earth, then they will not



"endure sound doctrine." (II Tim. 4:3) And in Titus 1:9 the equipment of a watchman-bishop must be sound doctrine to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. Such gainsayers must have their mouths stopped. And that can only be so when the preacher holds fast to the *form* of sound words. (Rom. 6:17) It is a form of doctrine which was delivered to the churches. The form is sin-redemption-gratitude. And that must be preached over against the gainsayers, who deny the gospel in their false preaching. And this sound doctrine must be spoken to the old men, aged women, young daughters, each according to his need and station in life. (Titus 2:1-6) Then there will be spiritual health in the congregation, and then only. It is indeed important, and also interesting, to notice that Prov. 14:30 teaches that "a sound heart is the life of the flesh, but envy the rottenness of the bones"! Soundness, health-yielding soundness of the soul is a spiritual-ethical matter of grace in Christ. It is a matter of crucifying the old man and putting on of the new man. A healthy soul is one who has true joy in God through Jesus Christ. The so-called mental depressions of the children of God are at bottom spiritual problems of sin, littleness of faith, of a David whose bones waxed old in him when he fell into sin and did not confess his transgressions!!! This accounts for such a statement as that written in Psalm 38:2, 3: "For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness (health) in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin."

Now the watchmen on the walls of Zion must know that unless they warn God's people and shepherd them with the rod of the Lord, they will not be able to give a good account in the last day. They must be watchmen like the apostle John was when he wrote in III John, "Beloved, I wish (pray) above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (verse 2) When the soul prospers (euodousthai) it presses forward on a beautiful way toward heaven, walking on the road which leads to the final rest of God. Such a soul has taken refuge in God and is assured that all is well because the anchor holds in the holy place. Then we are in spiritual health. And such care of true poimenics in the church and real breaking of the bread of life is the only deeply spiritual psychiatry for sick souls. And true, healthy souls will "walk in the truth." They will desire pure doctrine and the admonitions of the gospel which conform to the form of sound words once delivered to the saints.

What a joy for the minister when he sees the congregation walk in the truth! He is a good servant of the chief Shepherd of the sheep, and he goes in and out before the sheep. He has no greater joy than to hear that "my children walk in the truth." If he is not

heeded then he groans with the groan of a shepherd for the sheep. He knows so profoundly what the implications are of the injunction to Peter, "Feed my sheep."

### THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE WATCHMEN TO THE LORD (Hebrews 13:17)

The matter of accountability of the watchmen is here stressed by the writer. It is not impressed so much upon the minds and hearts of the watchmen of the souls as upon those for whose souls the watchmen care. The sheep must not suffer loss under the watchful care of the shepherd who is diligent and vigilant. The warning "for that will not be profitable for you" has been variously interpreted. The stronger interpretation is that, in such a case of insubordination, the rulers, the leaders who are to watch for their souls, will complain to the Lord when they groan in their work as did Elijah when "he made intercession to God against Israel," saying, "Lord they have killed thy prophets," and as Ezekiel would experience from the Israel of his day. (Rom. 11:2, 3; Ezekiel 3:25-27) That is a cry of the preacher who is free, against the gainsayers, from the blood of his congregation. However, there is on the other hand the less severe interpretation which holds that the writer here implies, that, when we do not heed the Watchmen and the sound words of doctrine, we suffer spiritual loss in life and in vigor. In either case the text gives ample motif that we should heed the teaching which comes to us from the chief Shepherd of the sheep, by those whom he authorizes for this work of caring for our souls.

### THE REQUEST FOR CONGREGATION-PRAYER FOR THE WATCHMEN (Hebrews 13:18)

There is nothing strange in this petition for the prayers of all the saints for the apostles and all who labor in the word. Preachers are like Elijah, men of like passions with all the saints. (James 5:17) Their hands need to be strengthened like those of Moses when Israel fights with Amalek. (Exodus 17:11, 12) Paul often asks for the prayers of the churches. (I Thes. 5:25; II Thes. 3:1; Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:3) God gives His grace and Spirit to be experienced only in that church where the elect cry day and night unto God. And there He answers speedily. He says in the Psalms that we shall open our mouth widely and that He will fill it with good things. (Luke 18:7; Matt. 6:5-8; Psalm 81:10) The Lord Who is our God says that we shall cry to Him, and we shall be heard. Paul was deeply conscious of this and so is the writer here in Hebrews, whoever he is. And well may this be the request of all the servants in the church of Christ: professors, ministers, elders, and deacons. Jesus says: pray, lest ye fall into temptation!



The writer does not merely ask for the prayers for himself personally. Yes, he too is included. He asks the prayers for all the watchmen, who must give account one day. "Pray for us." The tense of the verb is in the present. It is the term which covers all forms of prayer. It refers to prayers, askings, and thanksgiving. But it is the intent of this injunction that this prayer be such that it is not just once, but constant and fervent: ask, seek, knock on the portals of heaven and God's throne. It must be prayer which reaches God, Who has providential care over all things, all events, in heaven and on earth, and Who so rules that Satan and all his hosts cannot stay His hand, saying, "What doest Thou?" For prayer is directed to the one, true God as revealed in God's Word. And His hand is never shortened, so that He cannot help. He says, "before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isaiah 65:24; Psalm 32:5; Dan. 9:21) And to this God prayer must be made for all the servants of God, for the writer and those who are with him.

When the entire church (churches) will be instant in prayer, God will heed as He did in the case of Peter in Jerusalem, when he was thrown into prison by Herod, after Herod had killed James. Peter is to be killed after the feast by Herod. But they are watchful unto prayer even in the night. (Acts 12:12) Upon

their prayers Peter is delivered from the prison in a very miraculous way by an angel, and he is returned to the church the sooner. This happened more than once. Whether the writer here refers to such a restoration, or whether he has in mind the overall controlling providence of the Lord in regulating the events so that the writer can be restored the sooner, the text does not say. Paul speaks of Satan's hindering his coming to the saints at Thessalonica. (I Thes. 2:18) At any rate, the Lord would surely restore the writer the sooner upon their prayers.

The writer gives a reason for this request. He has a good conscience with the Lord. He is a faithful servant. He writes of his good conscience in order to excite them to pray. And it is meet that it be so. If God does not hear the prayer of the wicked, He also does not hear the prayer which is offered in behalf of those who do not have the Lord's cause at heart, and who do not have a good conscience. The writer trusts that the congregation is deeply convinced that their prayers will be heard, just as were the prayers of the Jerusalem saints for the release of Peter, the apostle, in Herod's prison. What a motivation for us to remember our ministers, missionaries, and professors in prayer. We should be found instant in prayer for our officebearers. They need our prayers, and not our carping fault-finding.

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## GUEST ARTICLE

# Our Church Order: Time For A Revision?

*Rev. Mark Hoeksema*

Revision. A word and concept very popular with some, and just as unpopular with others. In the political sense the term is favored by the leaders of Communist China, who regularly deliver dialectical broadsides against the Russian Communists, accusing them of "revisionism." In religious circles the term is often used to describe, either favorably or pejoratively (depending on the point of view), the amending of the doctrines, practices, and creeds of the church. Recent history has seen a great deal of revisionist thinking and activity, most of it with negative results as far as orthodoxy is concerned. Many churches have revised their creeds by rewriting them; the most

recent example is the thoroughly bland and corrupt revision now proposed for the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer*. Many more, including those of the Reformed community, have more subtly but just as really revised their creeds by ignoring them. And some have added to their creeds, as the Reformed Church of America is in the process of doing. Indeed, revisionism is the current trend of our day, especially where the creeds of the church are concerned.

All of this has undoubtedly given the term a bad connotation in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Justifiably it leaves a bad taste in the mouths of our people, who properly resist being swept along by the



spirit of the age. Surely we must have none of this change in the wrong sense, but must maintain the faith of our fathers.

But is there not another aspect to this question? What do we say to revision in the proper sense? The term comes from a Latin word which means "to see again." Thus, according to Webster, it means, "to look over again in order to correct or improve, to make a new, amended, improved, or up-to-date version of something." That is true revision: correction and improvement. Not a negating of past efforts or a rejecting of previous work for these are *revisionism*, the perversion of revision, but a strengthening and a making better. Applied to our Church Order, what do we say to such revision? To that I address myself briefly. Obviously I cannot write about the details of such revision, nor about how and when and where and by whom it can or should be done. I am not necessarily proposing such revision, but am asking some deliberately general questions in order to ascertain the thinking of our people. I merely ask some pertinent questions about the necessity and possibility of revising our Church Order, in the hope that we as saints and as denomination will face this question squarely and honestly. I do not claim to have absolute answers to all of the problems connected with our Church Order, so with the kind permission of our Editor-in-Chief I invite the comments, questions, and opinions of our people. Perhaps the best way to approach the subject is to present various objections which are frequently raised against a possible revision, and also say a few words about the character and extent of a revision.

The most often raised objection against the alteration of any creed, in this case the Church Order (which is a lesser or secondary creed), is perhaps that it has stood the test of time. The Church Order which we now use is substantially the same as the one adopted by the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-1619. In fact, so the objection goes, many of the principles of the Order of Dordt were conceived and formulated more than a half century before the great Synod itself. Ever since that time the Church Order has been in use in many Reformed churches even until the present. In short, this ecclesiastical code has stood the test of time, having served the church admirably for more than 350 years; and that is a long time, by anyone's reckoning. But the question must be asked: Is age the criterion by which we judge the present usefulness of the Church Order? I do not imply that the Church Order was lacking for the church of the past, though in some respects it may have been, nor do I deny the weight of history, especially as the Holy Spirit has guided the church throughout the ages. I do question, however, whether age is a legitimate standard to use, since in other aspects of our life

it is not. For example, when a house or church building is so old that it becomes outmoded, we remodel it to bring it up to present standards; we do not leave it in its former condition simply because it is old. Is our Church Order essentially different?

Closely related to this first objection is the objection that our Church Order was written by the fathers of the church. Names such as Calvin, Beza, Olevianus, Walaeus, and Voetius are familiar to those who know the history of the Church Order. And besides, this polity was approved by the historic Synod of Dordt. Though it is rarely stated directly and bluntly, the clear implication is that these church fathers were somehow superior to us in Scriptural knowledge, wisdom, and insight, and therefore we should not question or alter their work. An aura bordering on veneration surrounds them. But are this tacit implication and the conclusion drawn from it true? Do not misunderstand: I mean no disrespect to the fathers, nor do I denigrate their work, they were not only learned and wise, but also giants of the Reformed faith whose genius flourished even in times of persecution. We do well to listen to them and learn from them, though many in our day are reluctant to do so. But were they so superior to us as to be well-nigh infallible? Is it not rather true that because of the development of the faith since their time the church and its leaders today have a clearer understanding of the truths of Scripture, and in many respects are superior to them?

Along the same line is the idea that because the Church Order has been sufficient for the church of the past it is (or at least ought to be) sufficient for us. Colloquially, it did the job in the past, so what's the matter with it now? But is it sufficient? Again, I do not question whether or not it met the needs of the church of the past; if we are to believe the record of history, it did so admirably. But does the Church Order meet the needs of the Protestant Reformed Churches of today? For one thing, is there not a radical difference between the situation in the Netherlands at the time of Dordt, when the Reformed Church was the state church, and our status as church today in the U.S., where we have the separation of church and state? An examination of many of the articles of the Church Order and their history will reveal a very close connection between church and state as the underlying principle, a principle which obviously is not applicable to us. For another thing, are not the many additions to and decisions pertaining to the articles (decisions taken first by our Classis and later by Synod), decisions which are at times contradictory to the very articles to which they are appended, proof in themselves that the Church Order has already in the past been insufficient for us? Besides, must we not honestly say



that some of the articles we simply ignore as inapplicable, and twist the meaning of others to fit our needs in ways which the authors could not possibly have intended? In the light of all of this, can we really say that the Church Order is sufficient?

Finally there is the matter of change itself. There are those who might suggest that there is the danger of a change for the worse. And certainly they would be astute observers of the ecclesiastical scene, for many bad changes have taken place as to creeds and church polity. But is this a real and threatening danger for us. More there are, perhaps, who are simply opposed to change. They do not like the rocking of the ecclesiastical ship, perhaps not even by the asking of such questions as I am asking now. And certainly in the light of the universal departure from and weakening and destruction of the Reformed faith, we must be careful. What we need, if change is to be effected, is not a weakening, but a strengthening and sharpening of our uniquely Reformed position. But are those who oppose all change not a little bit like the ostrich who buries his head in the sand so as to remain blissful in his ignorance? What valid objections can be adduced against change, so long as it is alteration in the sense of improvement and strengthening?

Though there are other objections which could be raised against a revision of the Church Order, I believe I have presented the most common. The central question we must face in all of them is this: Are they valid? The answer must determine our attitude towards any alteration.

For purposes of further clarification I must make a few comments regarding the character and extent of revision as I have spoken of it thus far. Although I must again be general, we must have clearly before our minds exactly what this term should encompass.

As to the character, I would make a distinction between matters of principle and practical matters, or between Scripturally essential matters and those matters which are concerned simply with general good order and convenience. We find both of these emphases in the various articles. As to those articles which set forth authoritative Scriptural principles, we may not alter them, except perhaps to amend some

of the language to make them clearer and more precise. These have stood the test of time; indeed, they are timeless, for they are the rule of Christ for His church. But there are other articles which are simply wrong or inapplicable; these should be deleted or modified according to the current needs of the church. And there are those articles which do not deal with matters of principle, but with the general good order of the church; many of these also require modification so that they would be in harmony with our position as churches.

As to the extent of any revision, there would seem to be only two alternatives: a comprehensive change or piecemeal alterations. Some have suggested that any revision should be gradual, perhaps one or two articles at a time, starting with the most glaringly inadequate. But the results of this would be as piecemeal as the process itself, besides making the matter of publishing and keeping the Church Order current a practical impossibility. Rather, what I have in mind is a complete and comprehensive review of the Church Order so that it would be thoroughly amended and improved. This would require careful study and take time; certainly the result would have its weaknesses and would not be beyond all criticism, for perfection is impossible on this side of the grave. Such perfection I do not propose nor expect; I am looking only for improvement and development in the church of Christ, so that the government of the church will be as good as it can be.

Such in brief is the nature of the revision about which I am asking these questions. I believe that we as churches should give this matter serious consideration, as I have done personally for some time. Already in seminary a thorough study of our church government brought out the need for changes. Since that time through study, application, and discussion, especially in Bible societies, this need has been reinforced in my mind. And in contact with those outside of our churches the weaknesses as well as the clear strengths have been made evident. It is in the spirit of the benefit and upbuilding of the church of Christ, and in the light of these considerations that I ask the question which heads this article: Do we need a revision? Are we ready for it? Has the time come? What do the brethren think?

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# News From Jamaica

*Mr. John M. Faber*

*(Editor's Note: This report represents the personal viewpoint of the writer, and not necessarily that of the Rev. G. Lubbers or that of the Mission Committee. HCH)*

Having been privileged to serve the Mission Committee as one of the "emissaries of '76" to Jamaica, I would like to share with you my personal impressions of the country, "our" churches and the ministers we are supporting.

We have a commodious "cottage" to live in with large rooms and high ceilings. We are very comfortable with a living room, a dining room, two bedrooms, and a guest room, each with its private bath. This cottage is situated about two miles from downtown Montego Bay, and about the same distance from the airport. This last named fringe benefit is not all on the plus side because the start of the take-off runway is so near that the noise of the huge Jets is so loud that all conversation stops, even to the extent that our table prayers suffer a hiatus at such times.

We met with the people of "our" churches as often as possible, sometimes on a four-times-a-week basis. These trips are invariably over and in the mountains, making each journey a wearying business. The first four weeks we covered 2500 miles in a Toyota four-door car which takes the twists and turns with dexterity. The rear seat passengers are unwilling subjects of that childhood game of "crack the whip." When we get home we are honestly tired. The mountain roads have many chuck-holes of varying depths, which after a rain hide an unknown depth until we hit them. It rains almost every afternoon in the mountains while the sky remains clear blue in the north coastal area where we live. When it rains just before church service time there will be no service. The people refrain from venturing out on the slippery trails and paths down the mountain sides. A blind man is a regular attendant in one of the churches, and on some occasions feels his way down with his cane, finding his accustomed seat by the wall and the convenient nail for his hat.

I am also impressed by the fact that all the elders and deacons can lead in public prayer. Even the child that is favored to take up the Sunday School collection is asked to pray for a blessing upon the offering, and does so! The prayer of the elder may turn out to be more personal than representative, but it is based on the awareness that he is a sinner saved by the

Blood of The Lamb. I am told that at the beginning of our ministry on the island, the prayer for the forgiveness of sins was totally absent. I believe that our impact upon the theological character of the services has been noteworthy. This is not yet entirely true about the moral character of the people. A mother in a family may be known as Miss so-and-so, while her four children may have four different surnames. The "New Morality" finding acceptance in our country is but the old morality of any heathen country, and in Jamaica as well. It is a way of life just as common place as the bacon-and-egg breakfast is to Americans.

The membership of some of the churches may be three to six men, five to ten women (all grannies) and from five to forty children. Fathers and mothers are conspicuous by their absence. When the children reach the age of about fourteen they fade from the scene, the girls going to the city to find employment, and becoming the producers of today's Sunday School children to be brought up by their grannies. The eye-opening aspect of this to me is that there seems to be no stigma attached to this "way of life." There isn't any to American's breakfast preference, is there? To be honest, this is not always the way in "our" churches. In one of them there is an elder who "preaches" in the absence of a minister, whose wife is the song leader, and whose daughter is the Sunday School teacher, while his other children make up one fourth of the Sunday School.

In the services the ministers have good "eye-contact" with the listeners, who show their obvious agreement with the positive and the negative statements of the preacher with their long drawn out "yeeees" and "noooo" at the appropriate times. Their "amens" are sometimes heard at inappropriate times due to habit impulses, no doubt. But a speaker in these churches has a splendid rapport with his audience!

I must tell you about one church's being investigated because it sought affiliation with "our" churches. This church was visited on a Monday evening, and it had an orchestra of its own. Three men (that's all there are) play instruments interchangeably. A drum, a snare drum, and a pair of cymbals make up the orchestra. This, accompanied by three lusty voices produce such volume that I wondered if they could drown out our pipe organ at home. While they wait for additional worshippers to arrive they sing their favorite songs interminably —



which, to my mind, tends to turn off the minister's frame of mind from preaching. In that Monday evening service, conducted by Rev. Lubbers, a visiting "prophetess" shouted "Hallelujah, my Lord Jesus!" so loudly and so often that he finally turned to her and said, "Cut it out, you are disturbing the service." She then stomped out in a huff, giving a next-to-last shout inside the door, and a last shout outside. Such "prophetesses" are rampant on the island and their ambition is to shout down the preaching of the Word of God. On another occasion a woman began to twitch her shoulders, muttering something, and then began to stomp around on the dirt floor between the worshippers. On one of these voyages I stopped her and whispered to her that we did not like such carryings on. Evidently the "influence of the spirit" was not irresistible, for upon my rebuke she stopped her actions. But she, too, did not stay to the end of the service, presumably thwarted in her attempt to harass the preaching of the Word.

Almost every church has its "church mother" who owns, or has donated the property, and thus "has" the church. She rules with grim determination, even to the extent, in some cases, of appointing elders and deacons, some of which cannot read or write, but can "preach."

Am I portraying too dark a picture of the churches under the umbrella of our support? I admit that this picture is quite dark; but — and there is a big but which is so encouraging — the bright side to the Jamaican story, I am convinced, is centered in the four young ministers who have been instructed by the Revs. Lubbers, Hanco, Heys, and M. Hoeksema. Their work brightens the whole picture. These preach the truth of Sovereign Predestination and the accompanying truths that comprise Calvinism. They uncompromisingly preach the Gospel unadulterated with the leaven of Arminianism, unspotted with the false teaching of the "holiness" people which swarm over the island. They boldly preach the full council of God to the best of their ability. They do this against almost unsurmountable "odds." Their arms which have embraced the Truth have again been strengthened by the visit of the "emissaries of '76." This is their own testimony, and it also became evident in their appreciation of the solutions to many of their questions and problems that were given them in private consultations. Most of those problems were the direct result of their straightforward preaching in the past year. I noticed a remarkable growth in the preaching ability since last year. I believe this was, to a great extent, due to the instruction mailed to them by Rev. Heys, and sermon outlines for them to fill up. The benefit was again evidenced by their earnest pleas to "come again and teach us." They express need for more of our material of Reformed writings: our periodicals and all our books, and more sermon outline instruction. They love our Psalter songs, which was clearly seen

one evening after the Sunday Service when one of them led us in the singing of Psalter numbers for over an hour. The number of the selection, all the verses, and the correct tunes were known by that young Jamaican minister. This all without a book and in the dark.

The progress of the spiritual growth of the membership of the various churches is harder to gauge than that of the ministers. But because the preaching is sound, and because it truly is the ministry of the Word of God, I believe that the congregations are growing in grace and knowledge. His Word never returns void and is either a savour of life unto life or a savour of death unto death; so we leave the increase to the Holy Spirit. The ministers are well aware of the fact that they can only sow and water, but that they cannot supply the increase. The three younger ministers naturally turn to their eldest colleague who has taken over the father-role, counselling them and encouraging them when they need a boost in morale. They all have much difficulty in reaching their churches. Busses do not run on Sundays, and the mini-busses and taxis sometimes wait for a pay-load before they will start out, so that our men have to urge the drivers to start soon so they can be on time for the service. Even the taxi driver will not take anyone to Mt. Lebanon; the road is so very rough, so the minister must still walk the final four rocky miles.

The economy of the country is at a very low ebb, depending as they do so much on tourism, with hotels at 10% capacity due to reports of violence in the Kingston area. The poverty of the people must be seen to be believed. I visited one family who was privileged to own two pet dogs whose leanness was like to that of the lean kine of Pharaoh's dream. Those dogs must literally eat the crumbs from the master's table! Extreme poverty is only a few blocks from extreme riches.hovels and mansions are the prevailing dwellings of the populace. It is no wonder that the prime minister tells the people that he likes Communism because the common people would then fare better. According to the daily papers the country is ripe for it. The government has clamped down entirely on issuing work permits. So it seems that it will be impossible to send a missionary to work here. Emissaries are still acknowledged, and it seems to me that this is the best solution to the problem of helping the people so they may hear the pure preaching of the Word of God. The government, though not yet Communistic, is nevertheless reaching its tentacles of control into all spheres of life, even into church life. None of "our" ministers can obtain a license to marry unless their churches have doors and windows and other requirements.

Next week we are invited to the wedding of one of the young ministers who is marrying his Sunday School teacher. Then the next week we go home again. Good old U.S.A. here we come!



## ALL AROUND US

# Criminals Are Made -- Not Born Time For Decision

Rev. H. Veldman

## CRIMINALS ARE MADE – NOT BORN

In GN, THE GOOD NEWS of March, 1976, appears a lengthy article under the title: Why The Land Is Full Of Bloody Crimes. We quote only a small part of that article, page 5:

CAUSE AND EFFECT. Criminals are made – not born. Our mushrooming crime problem should be no mystery to anybody who really looks into it. It's all a matter of cause and effect. Our epidemic of criminal behavior has been learned from adults in a factory we call the home. Thousands of criminals have been molded in our tottering homes.

But it doesn't need to be that way. We could begin to raise a whole generation of respectful, loving, obedient young people who are a gigantic plus and an enormous credit to this great country. But will we?

No matter what may befall this United States of America, you can as a committee of one begin to rear your children right. God said of the ancient patriarch Abraham: *"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment..."* (Gen. 18: 19). Does God know that about you?

Indeed, we do not deny or minimize the importance of the home. That many lawless of our day and age are fed and nourished in wicked and lawless homes is certainly true. But does this mean that criminals are made, not born? Does this mean that these lawless homes are factories in which these criminals are made and produced? Do not the Scriptures teach that "you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins," and that we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others"? – Eph. 2:1, 3. Indeed, it is not true, as this article would have us believe, that it is all a matter of cause and effect, the effect being our many criminals, and the cause of these criminals being the adults in a factory which we call the home. To be sure, the Church of God need not despair because of our mushrooming crime problem. But our comfort does not lie herein, that we are able to raise a whole generation of respectful, loving, obedient young people who are a gigantic plus and an enormous credit to this great country. But this is our comfort and assurance: the Lord will bless the Christian home because the ever-

lastingly faithful covenant God will surely maintain His covenant and church and gather that church in the line of continued generations.

## TIME FOR DECISION

Rev. Peter De Jong writes on this subject in THE OUTLOOK of February, 1976. In this article he deplores conditions within his church, the Christian Reformed Church. Even the casual observer, he writes, can hardly fail to notice that these churches are increasingly troubled by diverging opinions regarding moral and religious issues that, until recently, gave them no problems. In this article he refers to these problems. And these difficulties trouble him. This we can understand.

We need not quote the article. It is easily read and digested. We do wish to quote the concluding paragraph.

It is not pleasant to have to differ with the opinions of sincere Christian colleagues and invite possible controversy, but it must be done. Refusal to take the stand the Bible demands that we take on its own authority as God's Word must inevitably, especially in our changing times, result in our standing for nothing at all. Trying to avoid taking such a stand by evasion or compromise can only result in further confusing and weakening our Christian life and testimony. That must not be permitted to continue. The Church must without question believe and obey the Word of God if it is to be what our Lord calls and commands it to be, "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3: 15).

I assume these "sincere Christian colleagues" are men who hold to these opinions which trouble Rev. De Jong. Now, I do not question their Christianity. But I cannot help but wonder how sincere they are. Rev. De Jong writes on the subject, "Time for Decision." Does this mean, Rev. De Jong, that the time for decision has come, that the time has come for the Church to believe and obey the Word of God if it is to be what our Lord calls and commands it to be, "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"? Is that time now? And if the Church fails in this calling, what then? Rev. De Jong, how much longer will you wait? Is this "time for decision" to be postponed indefinitely?



**NOTICE!!!**

The Free Christian School of Edgerton, Minn., is in need of a teacher for grades Kindergarten thru 4th grades. Please send applications to: MR. ART VER HEY, RT. 1 — Box 188, EDGERTON, MINN. 56128.

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Mary-Martha Society of SouthEast Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to their fellow member, Mrs. George (Margaret) Stuursma, in the sudden loss of her sister, MRS. HENRY (JOHANNA) SCHOLTEN. May she be comforted in the knowledge that God has taken one of His own unto Himself. We also pray for her to be given patience in her own convalescence in the lonely days ahead.

Mrs. M. Schipper, Pres.  
Mrs. H. C. Ophoff, Sec'y.

**ANNIVERSARY NOTICE**

On May 14, 1976, the Lord willing, our beloved parents, MR. AND MRS. GERALD BOUWKAMP, hope to celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their grateful children, thank our Heavenly Father for the covenant training we have received through them. It is our prayer that God will continue to bless them in the remaining years of their pilgrimage together.

Their grateful children:

Mr. and Mrs. Henry A. Bergman  
Mr. and Mrs. Gary Bouwkamp  
Ruth Bouwkamp  
Kathy Bouwkamp  
David Bouwkamp  
Carol Bouwkamp  
Lori Bouwkamp  
and grandchildren — Barbara, Thomas, and Julie.

**NOTICE!!!**

According to the decision of the Synod of 1975, the Council of the South Holland, (Illinois), Protestant Reformed Church was appointed the calling church for the 1976 Synod. The Council of the South Holland Church hereby notifies our churches that the 1976 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Wednesday, June 2, 1976, at 9 AM in the South Holland

Church. The pre-Synodical service will be held Tuesday evening, June 1, at 8 PM in South Holland Church. Rev. J.L. Kortering, President of the 1975 Synod will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Council before the service. Delegates in need of lodging should contact Mr. Gene Kuiper, 1211 East 164th., St., South Holland, IL 60473.

Gene Kuiper, Clerk.

**News From Our Churches****Report of Classis East**

April 7, 1976

Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison

Classis East of our churches met in regular session on Wednesday, April 7, 1976. Rev. C. Hanco led the Classis in opening devotions, and after declaring Classis properly constituted handed the gavel to Rev. A. Den Hartog, who chaired this session.

The business before Classis was routine and uneventful. But this did not in any way adversely affect the good fellowship which each classis affords. As always, this classis was a good opportunity for fellowship and communion between the officebearers of Classis East who attended from far and near.

In its routine business the Classis received for information the report of the Assistant Stated Clerk, and the Report of the Classical Committee, which informed the Classis that, as a gesture of good faith to

Classis West, Rev. H. Veldman supplied Edmonton's pulpit the Sundays of March 14 - 28. The chair appointed elders G. Bol and R. Teitsma as the Finance Committee for this session. This Committee reported a total expenditure of \$318.30. Elder J. Dykstra of Hope Church was appointed to thank the ladies for refreshments. The Classical Appointment Committee of Rev. Van Overloop, elders G. Vanden Top and G. Scholten submitted the following pulpit supply schedule for Kalamazoo: April 11 — C. Hanco, April 25 — M. Joostens, May 2 — G. Van Baren, May 16 — J. Heys, May 23 — R. Van Overloop, June 6 — H. Veldman, June 13 — M. Schipper, June 27 — C. Hanco, July 4 — M. Joostens. Classis adopted this schedule.

Voting for church visitors resulted in Revs. J. Heys and G. Van Baren being chosen, with Rev. C. Hanco as alternate.

The questions of Article 41 of the Church Order



were asked and satisfactorily answered by each consistory. None needed the advice of Classis regarding any matter.

Classis stood adjourned until July 7, 1976, which

meeting will be held at Hope Church. Rev. G. Van Baren closed the meeting with prayer.

Assistant Stated Clerk  
Rev. M. Joostens

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Rev. Dale Kuiper and family, according to the decision of the Mission Committee and the Hudsonville consistory, returned from Maine the week of March 28 and will live in Hudsonville for the time being. It was decided to close the field of labor there since there appeared to be no interest other than that of the original two families and two individuals. Rev. Kuiper will probably be investigating various other areas of labor in the next months. Faith Church's bulletin reported that Rev. Kuiper would supply the pulpit of Edmonton until Rev. Moore is installed there.

The last couple of bulletins received from Hudsonville were printed in a new, rather attractive bulletin cover which features a sketch of what will be Hudsonville's new church building. Rev. Hanco penned a note on the last bulletin (March 28) that Hudsonville hoped to have the ground breaking ceremony for their new church building that week. Perhaps we will receive a further report on that long-awaited event later.

Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Faber returned from Jamaica a week earlier than anticipated because of an infection in Mr. Faber's ankle caused by a sting of some animal. Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers returned on March 30. We await their report for information concerning the work of our Jamaican Emissaries.

Another of our churches is taking steps toward erecting a new church building. The Southwest Church (Wyoming, Michigan) has appointed a permanent "Future Church Building" Committee and in connection with this has established a special fund for future building plans. Since contribution envelopes are available for regular contributions to the building fund, it can be seen that this project is

being given rather serious attention.

Hope Church (Walker, Michigan) has decided to establish an organ fund. The Hope Council has placed a note in their bulletin that gifts from individuals, societies, or collections from programs rendered in the church would be welcome additions to the organ fund.

Our South Holland Church has progressed beyond the stage of establishing an organ fund. South Holland's new organ has been installed. The dedication service for their new instrument was held on March 19. Mr. Andrew Vogel, guest organist, performed several numbers on the organ, both the school choir and the church choir sang, and Rev. Engelsma gave a short speech. Refreshments were served afterwards in the church basement. The South Holland Council has decided to offer their old organ to the highest bidder among all of our churches. The buyer is to pay the shipping costs.

The South Holland Evangelism Committee has been busy with church extension work. They have just finished a series of radio broadcasts with their pastor, Rev. Engelsma, as speaker, with the general title "Fundamentals of the Reformed Faith." The committee felt constrained to continue this radio ministry. Accordingly, they have arranged for a series of twenty-four half-hour broadcasts using tapes that Rev. Engelsma had prepared for the Reformed Witness Hour. These will be aired over the same station, WFLM-FM, 103.9 mh from 8:00 to 8:30 AM on Sunday mornings. The cost of this radio ministry has been borne by our Mission Committee with funds that they received from the assets of our former congregation in Oak Lawn, Illinois.

K. G. V.