

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Jesus' natural body was sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. Our natural body must also be sown in corruption, to be raised in incorruption. His body was sown in dishonor, and is raised in power. Our vile bodies must also be sown in dishonor to be changed into the likeness of His glorious body, by that power whereby He subdues all things to Himself.

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Christ is risen! With Him we rise, with Him to reign, that to our God may be the glory forever and ever!

See "Firstfruits of An Abundant Harvest" —
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and follow it.
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STANDARD BEARER!

THE STANDARD BEARER

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MEDITATION

Firstfruits of an Abundant Harvest

Rev. C. Hanko

"And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

John 12:23, 24.

"And there were certain Greeks. . . ."

The great feast of the Passover was but a few days away. On foot, by boat, on the backs of donkeys,

from nearly every corner of the civilized world, came thousands upon thousands of the faithful, Jews and proselytes, coming up to the Holy City to participate in the celebration. A conservative estimate has placed

as many as one hundred fifty thousand visitors in Jerusalem for this important event. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians were all present, drawn to Jerusalem by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God. They came to Jerusalem for the Passover, and they came to Jerusalem to see this Jesus of Nazareth, for word of Him had spread to the far reaches of Jewry. It was common knowledge that this Man went about teaching and preaching, sealing His testimony with signs and wonders such as the prophets before Him had never been able to do. Many cherished the secret hope that He might be persuaded to become a revolutionist to deliver them from the hated yoke of the Roman government. The raising of Lazarus particularly, and the triumphal entry into Jerusalem had aroused the enthusiasm of the multitudes to a fever pitch. Were the rulers possibly mistaken in branding this Man as a dangerous character, worthy of imprisonment and death? The smallest encouragement from Jesus would have supplied Him with an army and an enthusiastic following, ready to crown Him as their king. Satan was hissing once more, "Bow down to me, and I will give you all the kingdoms of the world; or else . . ."

Among the milling throng that crowded into the outer court of the temple and into the court of the Gentiles were also certain Greeks who faithfully attended this annual feast. They had given up their vain idols to worship Jehovah. Though we do not know their names, nor even how many there were, Scripture focuses our attention upon them, and that with a purpose.

It is possible that these Greeks came from Decapolis, a region near Galilee, where many Greeks had made their home. That would account for the fact that they approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee. They say to him, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Philip realized that this request was not from idle curiosity. It was not their vain ambition to spot a celebrity, so that they could tell the folks at home that they had feasted their eyes on the renowned Jesus of Nazareth. These Greeks knew about Jesus. They may have heard Him preach, and may have witnessed some of His miracles in the environs of Galilee. They may have been present in Jerusalem to witness the triumphal entry and the cleansing of the temple. They felt a strong urge to meet Him, to converse with Him. To these Greeks Jesus was the promised Messiah, the only hope of salvation. Likely He was teaching at this moment in the outer court, and they, not being allowed there, hoped that Philip could persuade Jesus to arrange an interview with them. At the very moment when Jesus' own people,

the Jews, were rejecting Him, these Greeks sought Him.

Their request places Philip in a quandary. Jesus on occasion had told the disciples that He was not sent to any others than to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. On the other hand, He had also spoken of other sheep, not of this fold, which also He must gather into the fold to make His flock complete. Could Jesus have had in mind these deeply concerned Greeks? Yet how would the chief priests and rulers react if Jesus should add insult to injury by consorting with Gentiles in the temple? Philip presents his problem to Andrew, who may have been his close companion, and together they approach Jesus with the request.

* * * * *

"The hour is come."

This request of the Greeks is a clear sign to Jesus that His hour is come. Jesus is visibly impressed. His grief-stricken face lights up with joyful anticipation. The longing of His soul is satisfied with a ray of hope that cheers the present gloom. Heaven itself sent these Greeks to give Him a foretaste of the glory that awaited Him. Like Rahab, the harlot from Jericho, like Ruth, the Moabite, like the Ninevites who repented at the preaching of Jonah, like the wisemen who were led to His cradle by a star, when He was but a Babe, so also these Greeks are the promise of the better things to come. Japheth is getting eager to move into the tents of Shem.

The hour. Jesus had often spoken of His hour. It had always been the anticipated hour — not yet, but always approaching, always sure to come. Now the hour had arrived. Amazing hour! Hour of great conflict; dreaded, yet desired; bitterly painful, yet blessed; filled with deepest shame, and yet with highest glory. This hour included all the suffering of the cross and the glory that followed. Soon Jesus prays, "Father, the hour is come: glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee." Later, standing before Caiaphas He will testify, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." After His resurrection our Lord will tell the men of Emmaus: "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?"

* * * * *

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die . . ."

What good does a kernel of grain do lying dormant in a granary? The kernel attains its real purpose when it is planted, sprouts into a plant, and brings forth fruit. But to produce fruit it must necessarily die; and that according to divine appointment.

The comparison is obvious. Our Lord sees Himself

as that grain of wheat that must die, be buried in the earth, in order to arise again in newness of life. Eternally He is chosen of God as the Firstborn among many brethren, the Firstborn from the dead, the Firstborn of an entirely new creation. He is appointed of God to be the Firstfruits of an abundant harvest, the entire church of the redeemed that eternally rejoices before the throne. The Seed and the Harvest are one, for God makes them one.

It is for that reason that the Son of God became Son of man. He took His flesh from the virgin Mary, that He might become flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone, yet without sin. He had to enter into our world of sin and death, had to become like us, burdened with the debt of our sin, in order to pay our debt and deliver us from it. As the Captain of our salvation He had to go through death and the grave to lead many sons into heavenly glory. He had to be made perfect through suffering. He had to bear the burden of God's wrath and deliver Himself and us from it. Mere suffering would never do. Suffering without complaint was not sufficient. He had to suffer willingly, dying every day. Deliberately He had to take upon Himself the burden of suffering. Unflinchingly He had to bear it, even as the load grew heavier and the way steeper. Repeatedly the opportunity offered itself to shed that burden. Friend and foe urged Him to have mercy on Himself, to shake off the weary load. Yet He carried on in obedience to the Father Who sent Him. No veil hid the future from Him. He knew that He, the Son, Who enjoyed intimate, covenant fellowship with His Father, would be rejected, cast out in His innocence, forsaken, panting under the torrents of divine wrath that would sweep over His soul. He must suffer spiritual death; and then, after He was delivered from that, give His body unto death and the grave. For Him the planting of the seed in the earth involved a willing surrender unto death in love, love to Father, love for His people, love that would cling to Father in longing, crying out of hell, "My God."

Greater love has no man than this, that he lays down his life for his friends. My Savior laid down His life for me, even for me, when I was still His enemy.

He loved us then. He loves us still.

The kernel of wheat *must* fall into the earth and die. How well our Lord Himself was aware of that. There is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved. There is no other way of salvation than that the Captain of our salvation passes through death into life to lead His many sons into glory. The prophet Isaiah had foretold that God would make His soul an offering for sin; yet through this offering He would see His seed. God had promised to prolong His days into endless eternity, and the pleasure of the Lord would prosper at His hand. (Isaiah 53:10)

Triumphantly we cry: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and is become the Firstfruits of those who sleep." (I Cor. 15:20)

* * * * *

As the coming of the wisemen served as a sign of Christ's birth, so the coming of the Greeks was a har-binger of His death.

To us it would appear as if they had arrived a bit early. Scripture does not inform us whether Jesus spoke with them or not. One would be inclined to interpret the answer of Jesus to Philip to mean: Tell these Greeks that all is well, but they must be patient a little longer. To see Jesus now would be but to see the Man of Sorrows, the Suffering Servant, the Seed that must still be planted in the earth. How would they ever be able to understand that He is the Savior, made perfect through death, especially if His own intimate disciples did not understand. Yet their inquiry is eagerly received, for it is the signal from heaven that the hour is come when God will glorify Himself by taking His obedient Servant into glory.

Were these Greeks still present in Jerusalem on Friday? Were they filled with fear and wonder? Were they still present on the morning of the resurrection? Likely they were. Likely they also heard the report of the wonder that had taken place in Joseph's garden. The Seed had sprouted. May we assume that they were back in Jerusalem on Pentecost to hear the 120 tell in many languages the great things that God had done for them on the cross, by the resurrection, and through the ascension of Christ to heaven? Were they included among those who heard Peter's marvelous sermon? Were they among the three thousand that were added to the church that day?

We can only surmise. This is certain, the risen Christ did implant His life in their hearts, so that they were born again, not of corruptible, but of incorruptible Seed, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever. They are now with the saints before the throne. Their bodies are sown in the earth, awaiting the glorious Harvest when Christ returns. They would see Jesus in the flesh; they now see Him face to face to reflect His glory, world without end.

Jesus' natural body was sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. Our natural body must also be sown in corruption, to be raised in incorruption. His body was sown in dishonor, and is raised in power. Our vile bodies must also be sown in dishonor to be changed into the likeness of His glorious body, by that power whereby He subdues all things to Himself.

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EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Our Australasian Tour (14) Open Season on Reprobation Editor's Notes

OUR AUSTRALASIAN TOUR (14)

In this concluding article concerning our tour, I wish to make a few observations by way of evaluating this work and to make a few suggestions of a general nature with respect to the calling of our churches and possible future labors in this area of our ecclesiastical life. I will not at this time write concerning the concrete proposals which our Committee for Contact With Other Churches is making to the coming synod. There will be such proposals and our Synod will have to consider them seriously and reach some rather important decisions. For the time being, however, I will not write about these, but wait until after our 1976 Synod has met. Then these matters will be reported. My present remarks will be of a more general nature.

In the first place, we may ask whether this tour was worthwhile? Was it worth the time, the effort, and the expense connected? I think that by this time, after our lengthy account of this tour, I hardly have to argue the fact that I am not asking whether this was a worthwhile pleasure trip. For a vacation trip this certainly was not. I may point out that in the space of thirty-eight days we held a total of 40 meetings of various kinds: services, lectures, cottage meetings. Some 21 different air flights, plus numerous trips by train, bus, and private car, were involved in our travels of more than 30 thousand miles. In our various meetings we spoke to a total of about 1800 people, many of whom we met personally and engaged in conversation concerning the Reformed faith. As far as the amount of work accomplished is concerned, therefore, there can hardly be any question as to whether this tour was worthwhile. Nor can the expenses be considered exorbitant when you consider that, due partly to the fact that our hosts also assisted with these expenses, the total expense for each emissary amounted to less than 7½¢ per mile. But permit me to quote, in answer to this question, from the official report which Rev. C. Hanko and I submitted to our committee and to our churches: "There is not a shadow of doubt in our souls as to the worthwhileness of this tour. In the first place, being

on the scene and learning to know the situation — especially in New Zealand and Australia — firsthand, as compared with what we have learned by correspondence in the past, is invaluable. In the second place, the reception accorded us both in New Zealand and in Australia was far beyond our expectation. We are referring now not merely to the friendliness and hospitality of the people, but to their reception of us as representatives of our Protestant Reformed Churches and their reception of the message which we brought. There was an exhilarating air of delight and excitement among these people, and we shall never forget this experience. Our strongest impression is that lasting bonds have been established with the churches in New Zealand and in Australia, while in other areas seeds have been sown." It is my hope that by means of our report to the churches and by means of this series of articles in our editorial columns something of this worthwhileness has been conveyed to our people. After all, this was not the work merely of a couple individuals or of a committee, or even of our synod, but the work of the churches and the work of the Lord. Personally, I have been deeply involved in contact with New Zealand and Australia both in correspondence and through writing for several years; but the value of this face to face contact far outweighs the value of such impersonal contact. And if the occasion should arise again, as well as the need, I would not hesitate to recommend that our churches follow this course again. I would also recommend strongly that sometime in the future emissaries from the churches down under visit us. This can only result in a strengthening of the bonds between us.

In the second place, I call your attention to the fact that this is a *first* for our churches. It is the first time that there have been any positive results of our efforts toward contact with others. For many years we have had a synodical committee whose work it was to seek such contacts on behalf of our churches. And at various points in our history we have attempted such contacts, and sometimes seemed on the verge of a break-through. I may mention in this connection the fact that our churches have repeatedly

sought contact with our mother church, the Christian Reformed denomination, but were shunned. We have sought fellowship more than once with the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, but the door was closed. Unofficially, during the 1940's, we had some contact with the German Reformed Church (Eureka Classis), but this came to nought at that time. We sought fellowship with the Gereformeerde Kerken, both Synodical and Liberated, but doors were closed in our faces. And now at last we have been received, and received warmly; and there is a real possibility of establishing some official ties of ecclesiastical fellowship. This is reason for thankfulness to our God. For it is good to know, is it not, that as churches we do not stand alone and shunned. This is reason for encouragement: for is it not encouraging to have fellowship in the faith and the bonds of the truth? And in the same connection, it is good for our ecclesiastical self-esteem and I believe that there is such a thing as sanctified self-esteem — especially in the light of the fact that we have so often been shunned and looked down upon as being sectarian.

In this same connection, there are some rather striking facts about these contacts which we should not overlook. In the first place, those with whom we have been brought into contact are, for the most part, not of Dutch and Reformed background; but they are Presbyterians. This is not to say that we had no contact with people of Dutch and Reformed background, particularly in New Zealand; but as far as the church groups are concerned, these were the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches in New Zealand and the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches in Australia, not to overlook the Reformed Presbyterian congregation in Sydney, Australia. Perhaps this was even one factor in the fact that we were received among these people: I refer to the negative fact that among these people are not found some of the prejudices against us which are found among the Dutch Reformed people, due to the fact that we have been misrepresented and maligned many a time among Reformed people. A second striking fact in this connection is the fact that it was exactly our Reformed stance which undoubtedly constituted the main element of attraction to us. I am convinced of this fact. We noted it time and again during our tour. We certainly made no effort to hide our position, either in our speaking or our preaching; on the contrary, we made it known clearly. And we experienced that it was exactly this which constituted the element which attracted others to us. This is reason for gratitude, and reason for hope with respect to future relationships. Thirdly, we may take note of the fact that these contacts came in an altogether unexpected corner of the world. The way of the Lord with His Church is sometimes surprising, is it not? Some ten years ago we were not even aware of one another; and

although, perhaps, some of us knew that there were people of Reformed and Presbyterian persuasion in the countries of Australasia, we certainly did not give this much thought, nor did we pay attention to these churches. In our thinking, they were more or less on the sidelines. And we certainly made no conscious effort to have contact with anyone in Australasia. As far as our churches are concerned, these contacts grew spontaneously and without conscious effort and solicitation on our part. Providentially, and in an unexpected manner, the Lord has brought us to know one another.

At the same time — and this is my third observation — we ought to keep things in the proper perspective. We must maintain our sense of proportion, and our enthusiasm should be a tempered enthusiasm. Our Committee for Contact With Other Churches is well aware of this. Perhaps the danger of over-enthusiasm is greater for those of us who are directly connected with this work than it is for others. Yet we may well bear in mind that though great and good things have taken place in this area of our ecclesiastical life, they are not *big* things. Nor, I believe, must we expect big things in the outward sense of the word. The groups of churches with whom we have been brought into contact are certainly not large and significant according to the standard of men. Our own denomination is small, but those with whom we have established contact are smaller than our own. The movement in New Zealand is still in the struggles of its infancy. And the churches in Australia are also small and struggling. We certainly should be accustomed to this as Protestant Reformed Churches because of our own experiences. But it is well that we keep this in mind, lest we also should have false expectations. Personally, I do not believe that we are living in times in which we may expect big things in the outward sense of the word as far as the faithful church is concerned. Nevertheless, let us also bear in mind that the significance of a church is not dependent upon its size and numbers, nor upon worldly power and influence. The crucial issue is that of faithfulness to the Word of God. And in that same connection, let us not forget that the Lord our God does not despise the day of small things; neither ought we, as His people, to do so.

My fourth observation — and this is a key one — concerns the fact that the Lord has very evidently brought us into contact with one another, and that, too, in a very wonderful way. About the fact of the contact, of course, there can be no doubt. But also about the fact that this is the Lord's work, I want to stress, there can be no doubt. I make bold to say this, first of all, in the light of the fact that it became very clear during our tour that the one factor which attracted us to one another was that of agreement in

the truth of God's Word and our Reformed heritage. This, you understand, can only be the work of the Lord; and, at the same time, this may be the only kind of ecclesiastical contact that we may seek. But I also say this in the light of the very manner in which we have been brought together. This was not our work. We did not seek and did not even expect these contacts. Not many years ago we did not even know of one another. These contacts were altogether unexpected and unsought, and came about in a wonderful way through what appeared to be a series of coincidences. This, too, should say something to us. And when I say "us," I have in mind not only our Protestant Reformed Churches, but also the churches in Australia and New Zealand. We mutually may not ignore this. To ignore it would be wrong. We are confronted by a calling.

What is the nature of that calling as far as our Protestant Reformed Churches are concerned? Negatively, let me point out that we are not speaking here of mission work, and do not and must not view the brethren and sisters down under as objects of mission work, so that we have in mind to change them, perhaps, into Protestant Reformed Churches of New Zealand or of Australia. No, we do and must recognize them as churches in their own right, not as potential Protestant Reformed Churches. We neither can change them, nor ought we to change them. They are not Protestant Reformed, and they never will be. They have a different background. They have a different constituency. They have a different history. They are very definitely Presbyterian and hold to Presbyterian Confessions, or subordinate standards. They do and must live their own ecclesiastical life and run their own ecclesiastical affairs. We understand this, and we certainly want the brethren down under to know that we understand this. But as our Church Order puts it, rather negatively, churches which differ from ours in non-essentials shall not be rejected. The positive of that is that it is our calling to have ecclesiastical fellowship with them, and, to the degree that this is possible, to recognize one another as sister churches. It is our calling to be of mutual strength and comfort to one another, to assist one another, to stand shoulder to shoulder in the bonds of the faith. Certainly, there are differences; and there will continue to be difference. As long as those differences are not essential, however, they may not stand in the way of fellowship and cooperation.

One of the notable differences is that our Protestant Reformed Churches are older, and we are a more established and experienced denomination. The churches down under are younger and of comparatively recent origin. They recognize this, too. As far as our churches are concerned, this means that we must be careful that we do not assume an over-

bearing, know-it-all attitude. We must not assume the attitude of a kind of big brother who knows best. As I stated, our attitude must be that of equals, so that we recognize the churches down under as churches in their own right. And therefore we must not attempt to *impose* our help and our advice and our knowledge and the benefit of our experiences, but we must show ourselves willing to help when called upon. We must be prepared to exercise ecclesiastical fellowship mutually to the degree that this is possible.

At the same time, as far as the churches down under are concerned, I hope that they will continue to see this calling, even as we discussed it together face to face. They must remember, too, that fellowship is a two-way street. We may not and must not go our independent ways and ignore and forget about one another, now that the initial contacts have been made. That would be wrong, and it would be a sad mistake if that which was accomplished during our visit would be allowed to become nothing but a fond memory.

That leads me to my fifth remark, namely, that we must *work* at maintaining contact with one another. We must do so from both sides of the ocean. If our contacts are to be worthwhile and fruitful, they must not be allowed to languish. We must not be so parochial and so preoccupied each with the affairs of his own churches that we lose from sight the broader scene. This is all the more necessary because we are so small and because we are so far separated from one another geographically. Officially as churches, but also unofficially through correspondence and through writing in our respective magazines, we must work hard at maintaining and fostering the ties which have been established. For my own part, I shall continue to do this, also through our *Standard Bearer*. I know too, that it is the mind of our Committee for Contact to do so officially. And I sincerely hope and expect that our Synod will do all in its power to cement the bonds, and will see its way clear to take various concrete actions in this regard.

Finally, I wish to say a word about our *Standard Bearer* in this connection. There is no question about it that our *Standard Bearer*, as well as our other literature, has played a significant role in our contacts with New Zealand and Australia. I mention this not to boast, but to encourage our RFPA to continue and to increase the witness of our *Standard Bearer* in those countries and in other places, as much as possible. Let us bear in mind that this is a significant part of our work. The primary question is not whether we gain paid subscribers, or whether the *Standard Bearer* pays its way in other lands. The fact of the matter is that even on paid subscriptions we lose money. But this is not the question. Our calling is to send forth our witness. We may do so and ought

to do so in the confidence, too, that the Lord will take care of the fruits of that witness. We do not know, and we need not be concerned about, the outcome of that witness when we send it forth. We should learn this, and we should learn from experience that the results may be very surprising and unexpected. If I may put it that way, let us learn to cast our bread upon the waters. Who knows what the results may be? In recent years the Lord has prospered our RFPA financially, so that we do not have the struggle to "make ends meet" which we had in some earlier years. Hence, we are very well able to spread abroad our witness wherever and whenever the occasion arises. We should not hesitate to do so, and to do so freely and generously.

I have one more suggestion of a practical nature. During our travels we noticed repeatedly in various places an extensive use of cassette recorders and recordings. I know that our First Church in Grand Rapids has a rather extensive cassette library service. Perhaps there are others of our churches who are engaged in this work also. I believe that it is a good work, and that it can be even better. More can be done along this line. This is an excellent means of spreading abroad the truth. One of the problems undoubtedly is that of publicity and distribution. For, surely, if people do not know of this tape library service and do not know the materials which are available, there can not be extensive distribution. I urge, therefore, that more extensive use be made of this medium. And for my part, the pages of the *Standard Bearer* are also open for purposes of publicity in this regard.

This brings me to the end of this published account of our tour. I hope that it has been interesting, and not tedious, to our readers. And I hope that it has served the purpose of informing and encouraging our people with respect to this work.

OPEN SEASON ON REPROBATION

A year ago I commented in these columns about a communication to the Christian Reformed Synod by Dr. Harry Boer. He himself called this communication a request that Synod furnish "the express testimony of Sacred Scripture" which Canons I, 15 asserts is available to establish the doctrine of reprobation. Not only did Dr. Boer address this communication to the Synod, but he also published it in the *Reformed Journal*. In an editorial on this subject I pointed out that this was actually a gravamen in disguise.

The Synod of 1975 received that communication as being properly before the Synod, and treated it in part. Synod recognized this as a communication which purported to be neither an appeal nor a

gravamen. Nevertheless the Synod declared "that Dr. Boer has raised a legitimate concern to which the church should express herself." This was the only substantive decision which the 1975 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church was able to reach on this matter. Obviously the matter was not finished yet. And after the rejection of various other recommendations, the Synod decided to appoint a committee to advise the Synod of 1976 on two items: "a. The status of communications like that of Dr. Harry Boer which purport to be neither appeals nor gravamina. b. The proper method for Synod to deal with them." Thereupon the Synod of 1975 also decided to postpone a further answer to Dr. Boer until this committee would report.

The report of this committee is now available (Report 45, *1976 Agenda For Synod*, pp. 479-483). The committee (Rev. Clarence Boomsma, Rev. William P. Brink, and Dr. John Kromminga) presents the following recommendations:

"1. That Synod declare that any communication, though it may purport to be neither an appeal nor a gravamen, which does in fact express doubt about any expression or teaching of the confessions of the church should be dealt with as a gravamen.

"2. That Synod declare that the communication of Dr. Harry Boer to Synod of 1975 (No. 4) is essentially a gravamen and must be received by Synod as such.

"3. That Synod declare that the request of Dr. Boer be open for public discussion and study in the churches.

"4. That the Rev. C. Boomsma be given the privilege of the floor when this report is under consideration by Synod."

In substance, therefore, the committee has reached the same conclusion which I reached last year, namely, that this "request" of Dr. Boer is a gravamen, that is, an objection raised against an article of our Confessions. And although the entire report of the committee also shows that they recognize very plainly that this is a *disguised* gravamen, as I pointed out, the committee nevertheless does not include this in their recommended description of the status of Dr. Boer's communication. If they had advised the Synod to declare that Dr. Boer's communication was "a gravamen in disguise," they could not have recommended that Dr. Boer's request also must be received by Synod as a gravamen. They would have been compelled to advise Synod that Dr. Boer's request was not legally before the 1975 Synod and that it could not properly be treated either in 1975 or 1976. They would have been compelled to declare, further, that Dr. Boer had violated the provisions of the Formula of Subscription, both by addressing his communication to Synod, instead of to his Con-

sistory, and by making known publicly his objections against the Canons, instead of keeping silence and making them known only to his Consistory. And they would have been compelled to advise Synod to declare that Dr. Boer is *de facto* suspended from office.

Now, however, the 1976 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church is confronted by a strange situation. Dr. Boer insists that his communication is not a gravamen. Dr. Boer's consistory and Classis Chicago South also insist that it is not a gravamen. But the committee says, "Yes, but it *is* a gravamen and must be treated as such." If the Synod of 1976 accepts this recommendation, it will mean, in the first place, that any office bearer can flagrantly violate the provisions of the Formula of Subscription, publicly agitate against the Confessions, escape any discipline, and then succeed in getting his case before the Synod. In the second place, it will mean that an office bearer can express objections against the Confessions without offering Biblical proof — something which is incumbent upon anyone who presents a gravamen, as the committee also recognizes in its report — and then transfer the burden of proof to the churches and the Synod. Moreover, since the report of the committee, in harmony with the mandate which they received, concerns not only the communication of Dr. Harry Boer but also "communications like that of Dr. Harry Boer which purport to be neither appeals nor gravamina," this will mean that from now on there is open season in the Christian Reformed Church on any article of the Confessions about which anyone chooses to bring a communication "which is neither a gravamen nor an appeal."

Still more: the committee recommends that this request of Dr. Boer be open for public discussion and study in the churches. This will certainly mean that there will be open season in the Christian Reformed churches on the doctrine of reprobation. Everyone will be free to speak and to write anything he chooses concerning this item of our Canons, and that, too, without danger of becoming subject to discipline. The committee offers no grounds for this recommendation, even as they fail to offer grounds for any of their recommendations. It is plain to see, however, that this would be a matter of simple fairness. After all, Dr. Boer could publicly express objections to the Creeds without penalty and without filing a gravamen; it is fair that everyone be accorded the same privilege and be free to express himself without fear of discipline.

I do not know, of course, whether the 1976 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church will accept these recommendations of Report 45. If they do, the following could be the results:

1. The churches will avoid a heresy trial, and one

more step will be taken toward becoming a modalities church. This is undoubtedly the desire of some.

2. The Formula of Subscription will not be worth the paper it is written on. The Christian Reformed Church could better discard the Formula of Subscription altogether. This would at least be honest.

3. The moment of truth of which I wrote in my editorial a year ago could be reached, and it could be a public moment of truth. The Christian Reformed denomination would then be squarely confronted by the question whether it wants to keep or to discard the Reformed doctrine of reprobation. The whole procedure could very well result in the official death of the doctrine of reprobation in the Christian Reformed churches. A ready-made formula for this is already available from the Gereformeerde Kerken of the Netherlands, who have declared that the doctrine of reprobation as expressed in Canons I, 6 and Canons I, 15 is not in accord with the Scriptural givens.

Time will tell. But do not forget that the 1975 Synod has already declared "that Dr. Boer has raised a legitimate concern to which the church should address herself." And do not forget that it is this declaration of the 1975 Synod which has already served as the wedge for lifting the suspension of Dr. Boer in Classis Chicago South.

EDITOR'S NOTES

DID YOU receive a defective copy of the April 15 issue? We know that some copies were defective — some duplicate pages and some missing pages. We also know that some of these went to addresses in Iowa and in Michigan. But we do not know how many copies were defective and who received them. If you were a victim and would like a good copy, please write to our Business Office.

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IF YOU file your copies by issue-numbers, please take note that somewhere between instructions and mailing a mistake crept into the May 1 issue. It is Number 15, not Number 14.

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STAFF MEMBERS, these notes are for you. In the near future you will receive notice from our secretary about a staff meeting in June, when Synod meets. If you cannot attend, please notify the secretary of any business items you may have. If you can attend, please plan to reserve some time during synod for this purpose; and also, please come equipped with good ideas for the new volume-year. And here is a special plea from your Editor. There is a tendency to become lax about meeting deadlines during the summer months when we publish only once per month. Please get your required articles in, and please get them in on time. This will make it easier for all concerned. Thank-you!

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter To Timothy

May 15, 1976

Dear Timothy,

We have already begun to discuss your last letter. You were concerned in your letter about *practical* preaching which you called "preaching on more specific sins." We talked at some length about the relation between doctrine and practice, and the total importance of doctrinal preaching. I do not think that this relation between doctrine and preaching can be emphasized strongly enough. If a minister abandons doctrinal preaching, he has really only two paths he can follow. He can become a "Sunday-School preacher" who gives little more than a Sunday School lesson to which is appended a pious moral homily of some sort. This type of preaching is, I think, far more common than you and I realize. It reminds me of one of the newer Bible Story Books. In this book the author is discussing the miracle which Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee by which He changed water into wine. The title of this chapter is already a dead give-away: "Jesus goes to a party." The little moral homily tacked on the end reads like this: "This was the first miracle Jesus did. Do you know why I think He did this first? It was because He wanted us to know that we must serve Him first of all in our daily lives. You do not have to go to Africa as a missionary to serve Jesus. Perhaps some day He will call you to go to Africa. And if He does, He will give you the special rewards He has promised to all those who leave family and home for His sake. But you must not wait till that day comes to start serving Him. He wants you to love Him, and obey Him, and to enjoy Him too, right now, beginning today, at home, at school, yes, and in your play and fun, and even at your parties." Now what in the wide world all this has to do with Jesus' marvelous miracle at Cana escapes me. In fact, I dare say that this kind of moralizing is down-right wicked and of untold spiritual harm to those who read this trash. But to forsake doctrinal preaching leads to this.

The other path you can follow if you forsake doctrinal preaching is the path of the social gospel. I think that even "ministers" who do not want doctrinal preaching see the wretchedness of moralizing; they weary of it and see that this sort of thing is worse than useless. And so they go the way of preaching a social gospel. They identify the Chris-

tian's life with social involvement and address themselves on the pulpit to berating their audiences with stern calls to be busy with the social problems of the age. I'm not interested here in discussing this miserable caricature of preaching. I only want to insist that this is the end of a man when he does not want doctrinal preaching any more.

And so, I cannot emphasize strongly enough how important it is for you to resist all those who make strong and steady pleas for less doctrine and more practice.

But now I have to turn more specifically to some of the questions in your letter. There are several remarks which you make in your letter which are of interest to me, and which are worth some discussion. E.g., you remark: "Ministers and those who are strong in faith don't realize all that goes on and is said by the weaker brother." And I think you mean that ministers especially do not always realize the specific sins with which many members in the Church struggle. It is in that connection that you write: "Shouldn't the Word be more specific on current sins in this generation? Examples: TV, birth control, sabbath observance, working on Sunday, novels, plays, drama, working mothers, false ideas of christian liberty, unprofitable servants?" And you sort of sum it up when you write: "We should have preaching in which the walk of a Christian is not to be treated as an ideal which is unattainable; but it should be something that should be strived for daily. 'I fear,' you write, 'for the Church on this earth. Temptation from within 'Israel' is very subtle.'" And again: "I would like stronger application of the preaching, on current prevalent sins that have crept into the Church."

Let's talk about this for a while.

Let me say first of all that in general I agree with you. The preaching must include all this. I recall vividly that my father tells a little story about this. And, while the story itself is not all that interesting and exciting, it does illustrate the point you are making. He tells about a minister in a neighboring Church where years ago my father shepherded a congregation. This minister in a neighboring Church had come out of the Seminary as one of the shining lights of the school. He was a gifted preacher, a man of no little ability to make a sermon, and he was extremely

popular in the pulpit. When the time came to send out calls, he was inundated with calls from many Churches which desired his services. There was strong competition for his services. This kept up for a number of years after he was in the ministry. After two years elapsed and he was once again eligible for a call, he received them almost with every delivery of the mail. And he moved around quite a bit too. But gradually this began to change. The calls came with less frequency until they ceased coming altogether. At last he was caught in the backwater of the Church and for years he never received even one call. One time when Rev. H. Hoeksema was visiting at our home, my father asked him about this: "Why is it that this man, once so popular, never gets any calls any more?" What was the answer, do you think? Rev. Hoeksema's answer was this, (and it was apparently correct, although I never knew the man and cannot verify it): "He failed to keep up with the times." That answer may surprise you, but that was the whole answer. And that answer meant, I assume, that he failed to be relevant. He failed to make his preaching useful for the times. He failed to address the Word to the problems which people were facing in the hard realities of life. He didn't know what was going on in the congregation. He didn't know the struggles, the temptations, the sins, the burdens of his flock. He retreated into the privacy of his own study and made his sermons in 1944 the same as his sermons were in 1921. They ceased to mean anything to his people.

Now, I don't happen to like the word "relevant." But my dislike for that word is not because it is not a good word. It is so distasteful to me because it has taken on, in the context of worship, such bad connotations. It means today in the ecclesiastical world, to be so like the times in which we live in dress, preaching, conversation, worship, liturgy, and all the rest, that we lose what Scripture has to say to us. But the word itself is a good one; and I think you mean that preaching ought to be relevant in the good sense of the word. With this I agree. It does not mean a bearded minister on the pulpit with a cross over his turtle-necked sweater who blasphemously begins the sermon with a "Good morning, God," and who pompously prates about things that are of no interest to anyone with an IQ somewhere above the level of 35. But it does and can mean to preach in such a way that the living and abiding Word of God speaks to us in our walk and path of life. And this should always be the case.

This is true because of the nature of the Word of God itself. We do not believe that, as the proponents of the New Hermeneutics put it, the Scriptures are time-bound and historically conditioned. We do not believe that there are huge pieces of Scripture which are of no immediate concern to us in our day because

they were merely addressed to problems current in the times they were written. To take this position is to deny that the Scriptures are our rule of faith and life. And, finally, of course, to take this position means to take the position that Scripture is not the Word of God which He gives to His Church.

The Scriptures were certainly written under specific historical circumstances. Who can deny this? Isaiah spoke to problems present in Judah during the reigns of Uzziah, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh. Zechariah spoke to the Church which had returned to Palestine from captivity and was having trouble finding the spiritual courage to go on with the important work of building the temple. Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians because there were wicked men in these Churches whose teachings on the place of the law in the life of the Christian had to be contradicted. Nevertheless, the Scriptures are totally and completely relevant to the Church of every age. They speak to us with exactly the same authority and power with which they spoke to the Church which existed in that day. In fact, this is so true that in order to learn what the Scriptures have to say to us today, we must learn first of all what they said to the Church in the days when they were written. You may not and cannot preach out of Galatians and make your sermon relevant without telling your people exactly why Paul wrote to these Churches.

But this is not so hard to understand. After all, we still believe in the doctrine of providence. And, among many other things, that means that God so controlled the circumstances in the Galatian Churches by His sovereign power that when He inspired Paul to write that beautiful and powerful letter, He did so with His Church of all ages in mind. God knew then already that the principles and truths which He inspired Paul to write to that situation were going to be of abiding use to the Church — even 2000 years later. And you must remember that, after all, the Scriptures are a part of the miraculous. They belong to the wonder of grace. God is speaking through Christ to His Church; and God is revealing Himself. Everything is there that the Church will ever have to know. Our Belgic Confession speaks of the fact that "We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe, unto salvation, is sufficiently taught therein."

So, my answer is, Yes. Of course. By all means. These problems must be discussed on the pulpit. The minister must address himself specifically and concretely to all the evils which are present in the Church. He must do so explicitly and with force. His words must carry the authority of the Word of God. His preaching has to be relevant in the good sense of the Word.

And to do this he must know his people and their

life. He must know the difficulties of their way in the world. He must know their struggles, temptations, weaknesses, and battles with Satan and his host.

He cannot live the lives of his sheep, of course. He cannot spend a month out of the year working in the factory to learn what it is like. He cannot go out as a salesman to see what are the temptations peculiar to one with such a calling. He cannot live for a week or two in the homes of his parishioners. But this is not necessary either. What he can do and must do is, first of all, know himself. His own sins and temptations and struggles are not all that different from those of his sheep — not in their deepest character anyway. And, in the second place, he can be a faithful student of the Word. In countless places the Word tells him (as it tells us all) what sin and temptation is all about.

Solomon says there is really nothing new under the sun. This is true too as far as our life in the world is concerned. And, finally, he can listen. He ought not to be talking all the time, you know. He can listen to His sheep. He can listen with his heart as well as his head and ears. He can listen with sympathy and understanding, with love and concern. And if only he learns once to listen, he will learn too what is going on — even among those whom you call “the weaker brethren” who do not always dare to say what is on their minds.

There are dangers though. But enough for now. Another letter is a better place to discuss them.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

ALL AROUND US

What About Movies, Religious or Otherwise

Two Churches of the Reformed Family in the Netherlands
Move Closer Toward Union

Billy Graham's Compromise

Detroit Lutheran President Ousted Friday

Of Love and Risk

Rev. H. Veldman

WHAT ABOUT MOVIES, RELIGIOUS OR OTHERWISE (4)

THE MESSENGER is the organ of the Free Reformed Church of North America. In its January issue, 1976, Vol. 23, on page 1, an article appeared on movies, religious or otherwise. We wish to quote from this article. May we all take this to heart — also our young people, but not *only* our young people.

In a final article I want to give you a bird's eye view of the attitude our Reformed fathers took to plays and theatre going.

In general it can be said that as far as the Reformers were concerned, their attitude to acting was negative. Not only were they opposed to professional

acting — any decent man was disgusted with the extremely low morals of most professional actors — but they were also against plays put on by amateur actors.

Calvin, at any rate, would not hear of it. His motto was: whether good or bad productions, no stage plays! And why not? According to him, plays corrupt character, lead to neglect of true service and are a waste of time and money, encourage immorality, pull down the Holy Scriptures, and promote idolatry. Only once did Calvin permit the staging of a play in Geneva. But this was really against his will. It was actually a concession to the citizens of Geneva who were still very fond of plays, and he did not think it wise to forbid everything right away. Calvin did allow a certain type of school plays, however, to help

students overcome their shyness and to improve their speech. But the stipulation was: absolutely no Biblical material.

The Reformed churches all adopted Calvin's opinion. Synod after Synod decided that the Holy Scriptures are not to be used as source material for plays. The Synod of Nimes in 1572 stated: "The Scriptures were not given for our amusement, but to be preached to our edification and comfort." Many Dutch Synods spoke in a similar vein.

What our Heidelberg Catechism says about images in the church was also applied to religious plays. Such "books to the laity" were condemned on the ground that "we must not pretend to be wiser than God, who will have His people taught, not by dumb images, but by the lively preaching of His word." (H.C., Question and Answer 98) "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" — that was the text which our fathers always quoted in this connection, and rightly so.

The English Puritans were just as adamant in their rejection of plays. They condemned the Elizabethan stage as "a home of paganism, obscenity, and profanity." (Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, Vol. VII, p. 78)

Then, after quoting from these Puritan fathers, and also referring to C.H. Spurgeon's strong opposition to play-acting of any kind, the writer writes as follows:

Today, however, not much of this sentiment is left in Reformed circles. Movie attendance is since long acceptable in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, as well as in the Christian Reformed Church on this continent. What about us in the Free Reformed Church? Officially we are still opposed to it, but I fear that many of our young people frequently attend movies and other worldly amusements. And not only our young people! Many of their parents, while never setting foot inside a theatre, will watch the same movies at home on TV.

The writer has more to say, but I believe that this is sufficient. What the writer has to say about Calvin, the Reformed churches, our Heidelberg Catechism, is pertinent and should lead us to sit up and take notice. That Calvin did allow a certain type of school play does not mean that we should follow him in this. But it is striking that he was absolutely against all Biblical material.

TWO CHURCHES OF THE REFORMED FAMILY IN THE NETHERLANDS MOVE CLOSER TOWARD UNION

The RES NEWS EXCHANGE of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod writes of this in its issue of Vol. XIII, No. 2, Feb. 3, 1976, page 1145, and we quote:

(Grand Rapids) According to a declaration issued conjointly by committees of the Christian Reformed

Churches in the Netherlands (CCKN) and the Reformed Churches (Liberated, Unaffiliated), the two churches have taken substantive steps toward approaching one another. Far-reaching agreement was found to exist on the subject of the "appropriation of salvation." This subject involved questions such as rebirth, the experience of faith and conversion, the place of the covenant and God's promises in preaching. These have long separated the two churches. Part of the discussion dealt with the question whether the one church did not focus too exclusively on preaching conversion and the other too exclusively on preaching the covenant promises of God. Both sides agreed that a balance was necessary to avoid, on the one hand, undermining the certainty and assurance of faith and, on the other, a placid sense of having arrived.

When the churches of the Secession of 1834 (De Afscheiding) and of the Doleantie (led by Dr. Abraham Kuiper) united in 1892 to form the Gereformeerde Kerken of the Netherlands, those who refused to go along with this merger became the Christian Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (not to be confused with the Christian Reformed Churches in this country).

Apart from the relative significance of this possible merger, one must concede that important questions are at stake here, questions such as: rebirth, faith and conversion, the place of God's covenant, and God's promises in the preaching.

BILLY GRAHAM'S COMPROMISE

In the GOSPEL WITNESS, a magazine of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand, on page 7 of its March, 1976, issue, we have an article under the above heading, and we quote:

BILLY GRAHAM'S COMPROMISE

This has been apparent for a long time, but the following report should clear all illusions from everyone's mind. Preaching at Leighton Ford's "Reachout" in Milwaukee, on Sunday, October 21, 1973, Dr. Graham said: "This past week I preached in a great Catholic cathedral, a funeral sermon for a close friend who was a Catholic . . . and as I sat there going through the funeral mass, that was a beautiful thing, and clear in the Gospel that I believe. And I think in a meeting like this it's wonderful of all of us to gather together and realize that we represent different denominations, but believing in the same God. And so I say, God bless the Christians of Milwaukee of all denominations.

Is comment necessary? Here is a clear example of how far a man can get from the truth once he takes the first steps of compromise. *The mass is totally contrary to Scripture and there is no Gospel in it. The entire thing is a system of salvation by works — dead*

works. Furthermore, people who have never been regenerated by the Spirit of God *simply do not worship the same God as Bible-believing, born again Christians*. Perhaps the greatest tragedy of our times is the widespread confusion that has been sown by Dr. Graham and other evangelists. Any "Gospel" that is compatible with Romanism is surely *a false Gospel*.

We agree: no comment is necessary. According to our Heidelberg Catechism, and in harmony with the divine Scriptures, the Romish mass is an accursed idolatry. How can a truly Protestant evangelist deny the fundamentals of Protestantism and of the holy Scriptures as Dr. Graham did that Sunday of October 21, 1973?!

DETROIT LUTHERAN PRESIDENT OUSTED FRIDAY

The Grand Rapids Press had an article in its April 3, 1976, issue, page 6-A, reporting the ousting of four Lutheran district presidents. We quote the following:

ST. LOUIS (AP) — A controversy within the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod over ordination of graduates of a breakaway seminary reached a critical stage Friday when the head of the synod fired four district presidents. The presidents said they will defy his order.

But Dr. J.A.O. Preus, whose decision was unprecedented in the 129-year history of the 2.8 million-member synod, said he did not believe their ouster would precipitate a split in the church.

"I don't anticipate anything happening in the way of anyone leaving," he told newsmen. His decision followed meetings Thursday and Friday with the four district presidents, who are all from the eastern half of the United States. Included in the ouster was Harold L. Hecht of Detroit, president of the non-geographical English District.

"The congregations are quite synodically minded in that part of the country. I don't see any mass resignations of pastors or congregations," said Preus.

It was the first time the denominational head had used the authority of the office to oust regional church presidents elected by their home districts. The action signaled a test of strength between denominational headquarters and home rule, a tradition in Lutheranism.

The district presidents, who hold an office comparable to that of a bishop, were removed for ordaining graduates of Concordia Seminary in Exile (Seminex), formed in February 1974 following a doctrinal dispute between moderates and conservatives over interpretation of the Bible.

This action of Dr. Preus is surely a step in the right direction. The attention of our readers has been called to this Seminex in the past. This breakaway

seminary is liberal, denying the fundamental truths of the Word of God. We say that this action of Dr. Preus is a step in the right direction. However, we understand that there are more district presidents who support Seminex and have departed from the conservative position of the Lutheran Church. What action will be taken with respect to them? We hope that Dr. Preus did not take this action against these four district leaders because he is assured that there will not be any mass resignations of pastors or congregations in their parts of the country. This action should be taken only for the sake of and in the interest of the truth.

OF LOVE AND RISK

In the Banner of March 26, 1976, page 20, Dr. James Daane reflects upon an article written by William and Marianne Radius in the Christmas issue of the Banner upon the subject *The Risk of Loving*. We will not quote their answer to this article of Dr. Daane. The article of Dr. Daane reads as follows:

OF LOVE AND RISK

We owe much to William and Marianne Radius for the many excellent articles they have co-authored for us Banner readers. This fact makes me reluctant to express criticism of their article *The Risk of Loving* in the 1975 Christmas issue of the Banner. I have reference specifically to the assertions that when in love God created the world and in love sent His Son to redeem it, God was taking a "risk" because it is always a risky business to love. I disown the idea that God is the cause of man's rejection of God, but I would disown no less that in His loving act of creation God exposes His love to risk and that his redemptive act was a "great act of risking His own Son." I do not believe that either such determination or such acts or divine risks can be biblically supported. I do not believe that God ever runs a risk.

The authors contend that in creating man in His image God took a risk because Adam was given by God the "choice" of loving or rejecting God. I know that this idea is widely held, but I think it untrue. Even in the case of Adam and Eve, loving God was an obligation (command), not an option. Had God indeed given them a choice, it would be unjust to punish them for exercising one of their God-given options.

Love, even God's love, gets hurt in this sinful world. But this is not a chance God's love takes, nor a risk it runs. Old Simeon after that first Christmas *predicted* the hurt when he said about the infant Jesus that He would "be spoken against," or be a "sign of contradiction." But the language of divine risk is the language of ultimate unpredictability.

How confusing is this article of Dr. Daane! He

surely confuses the meaning of the words "choice" and "option." And he disowns the idea that God is the cause of man's rejection of God.

Indeed, the loving of God was not an option for Adam and Eve. Dr. Daane does not believe that Adam was given by God the "choice" of loving or rejecting God, and he adds that "Even in the case of Adam and Eve, loving God was an obligation (command), not an option." Of course, it was not an option. It was not left to Adam and Eve whether they should serve and love God or not. From this viewpoint, Adam had no choice. He had no right to sin, to obey the devil. He had no alternative. It was his calling and obligation to serve and love the Lord his God.

However, Adam certainly had a choice, or he had to make a choice. He was confronted, on the one hand, by the command of the Lord that he might not eat of the forbidden fruit. But, he was confronted, on the other hand, by the word of the devil. He must obey the one and reject the other. He must say Yes and No, Yes to the command of the Lord, and No to the temptation of the devil. This is surely obvious.

Thirdly, this choice confronting Adam was of the Lord. How anyone can dispute this the undersigned cannot possibly understand. It was the Lord Who had given our first parent the prohibitive command in regard to the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And it was also the Lord Who controlled this incident in paradise, the garden of Eden. The Lord would have Adam serve Him antithetically, to love Him, obey His word, and to reject all evil.

Fourthly, the Lord is surely the sovereign and determining cause of man's rejection of the living God. Dr. Daane writes that he disowns the idea that God is the cause of man's rejection of God. However, Reformed theologians have often made the distinction between God as the First Cause and man as a

secondary cause of his own deeds. Would Dr. Daane be so bold as to rule out the sovereignty and control of the living God in the fall of Adam and Eve? Do you, Dr. Daane, believe in what we read in Eph. 1:9,10, where the apostle Paul writes, by divine inspiration, that it was the mystery of God's will, according to His good pleasure, to gather in one all things in Christ in the dispensation of the fulness of times? Do you, Dr. Daane, believe in Isaiah 45:7? Do you, Dr. Daane, believe the Word of God as recorded in 2 Samuel 16:10, where we read that the Lord had said unto Shimei: Curse David?

Finally, Dr. Daane, do you believe in the divine decree of Reprobation? If you do not, then, of course, you do not believe in the decree of Election either. But, do you believe in what we read in Matt. 11:25,26, where we read that the Saviour ascribes it to the good pleasure of the Father that "these things" were hid from the wise and prudent? Or, what do you do with the Word of God in 1 Pet. 2:8, where we read that the stumbling of the disobedient is that whereunto they were appointed? Finally, Dr. Daane, you yourself call attention in your article to the incident in Luke 2 of the aged Simeon. The old servant of the Lord says about the infant Jesus that He would be "spoken against," or be a "sign of contradiction." Why would He be "spoken against"? Why? Because, according to Luke 2:34, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. God, we read in this text, has set this child for, unto, their fall. This is the simple interpretation of this passage in the Word of God. And this is the divine decree of Reprobation. It is for this reason that the aged Simeon can predict these things of this child, Jesus, inasmuch as this aged servant of the Lord speaks this word through divine inspiration. The Scriptures, Dr. Daane, are not time-bound; they are the inspired, infallible Word of the living God.

IN HIS FEAR

An Experience With Asaph (2)

Rev. M. Joostens

As you recall, we left Asaph with a very painful problem in his soul. He witnessed to us that his "feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped" when he considered the ways of the wicked. The

strength of the wicked is firm, there are no bands in their death and they are not in trouble as other men are. Asaph became envious of the prosperity of the wicked and did not understand why the people of

God have the waters of a full cup wrung out to them. While the wicked prospered, he was chastened day by day. God's hand was heavy upon him. Asaph fell into a carnal thought process and in so doing lost the spiritual perspective of the problem with which he grappled. The situation had become a conundrum to him. "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." We also saw last time that this problem is by no means strange and foreign to us. Sometimes we, too, ask ourselves, "Why do I strive after a sanctified life when all I experience is the weighty hand of God upon me?" Is a christian life in vain? When Asaph thought to know this it was too painful, because this would implicate vanity on the part of all the faithful people of God who have striven and do strive after godliness.

Let us in this installment benefit from Asaph as he resolves his problem. The problem continued to be painful for him until he went into the sanctuary. This, we must understand, is old testament language. Asaph lived in the dispensation of shadows and types. The sanctuary was, in all probability during the days of Asaph, the tabernacle which king David erected upon Mt. Zion. But regardless, whether it was a tabernacle or a temple, the significance is the same. Both were types which foreshadowed the realization of God's covenant fellowship with His people. God was behind the veil in the sanctuary. And therefore when Asaph enters into the sanctuary with his painful problem, he brings his problem before the Most High God. Asaph is now moving toward the spiritual perspective of which we spoke earlier. For there was but one element missing from Asaph's former carnal consideration of the dilemma which presented itself to him, and that was God!

Oh, what a tremendous experience for the child of God, when his feet are almost ready to slip, to appear before God in prayer. We must understand the doctrinal implications which are so very practical here. To approach unto God requires the recognition that God is the infinite and independent One. All things that come upon His creatures must be understood from His viewpoint. When we, as did Asaph, approach God with awe in our soul, then we understand the words of God in Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The ways of God are deep, and His dealings with us incomprehensible. But these dealings are always right, because the God to Whom we pray is Jehovah our Father for Jesus sake. And certainly a father always seeks the well-being of his sons. To put it more plainly, at the very center of all the dealings of God, i.e. the execution of His determinate counsel, stands Jesus Christ Who is *the*

Son, of Whom we are brothers and sisters. God freely gives us all things in Christ unto eternal life.

This is the wonderful and ever comforting truth of divine providence. To point out the extreme comfort that we have in this doctrine, we cannot help but refer to Lord's Day 10 of the Heidelberg Catechism: What advantage is the doctrine of providence to us? "That we may be patient in adversity; thankful in prosperity; and in all things which may hereafter befall us . . . place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father . . ." (Answer 28)

The problem with Asaph (and often with us, for we must not exclude ourselves) is that he did not look at his life from a comprehensive and total viewpoint, but rather from the viewpoint of a particular situation or circumstance. Not to excuse, but to explain, this is not so difficult an error to fall into. For we are creatures of time, we live from moment to moment and are always becoming. This means that we must always deal with particular present situations without fully understanding their future outcome. This takes a tremendous amount of faith. And, to our shame, our faith is often weak at this juncture. Sometimes our own particular carnal considerations of the moment are determinative of the situation. You see, we do not think in the channels of faith and complete trust! We must learn to say, "Lord, this doesn't look to be to my welfare, but I know Thy ways far surpass my finite understanding, and in spite of the way things appear they must be to my eternal well-being." That's the voice of faith. That's what Asaph learned when he entered the sanctuary!

"... then understood I their end." Asaph is now able to look also at the wicked from a comprehensive viewpoint. He is now able to place them in the perspective of the whole of God's dealing with them. Though the wicked revel in their sin and boast in their affluent success, nevertheless God has made them vessels fit for destruction. "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places." The wicked seemingly stand secure in the midst of their prosperity. But their security is just for the moment. For their trust is placed in the things which are earthly. They amass unto themselves the riches of this world and boast in the powers that their riches give to them. But all the pleasures of sin are but for a season. All their treasures and wealth are subject to decay and corruption. They are treasures of the earth where moth and rust doth corrupt. The carnal prosperity of the wicked is due to God's forbearance with them. In prospering them from a carnal viewpoint, God has in mind their utter desolation and destruction. God puts them in slippery places and will cast them down into destruction. That which Asaph perceived about the wicked and became envious of was but temporary. The things which the wicked possess and which often

look good to us are but for the moment, and their latter end is utter destruction in hell. Asaph here learns what Moses had seen long before, when he chose "rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season."

O, how ignorant was I not to see this, exclaimed Asaph (verse 22). We must not be foolish and spiritually ignorant, as was Asaph. It is easy to be deceived and to listen to the desires of the flesh and so to become disenchanted with our life and the place which God has given to us. Sometimes we think we ought to have certain things, or again think we can very well do without afflictions that plague us. Let us be careful! The heart is deceitful above all things. We must not become entangled in our own carnal psychology. This is foolishness, says the Psalmist. Instead we must approach the Most High God, and in such a spiritual frame of mind we will not grumble, but be content to know that the Lord has placed the wicked upon a swift slide into hell, but that all things will work for *our* good.

Asaph confesses his sin of carnal mindedness. "I was as a beast before thee." Before thee! Asaph realized that when God's children so reason (that is, carnally) they do it before the face of their God. Yes, while God is a faithful Father, constantly watching over us and leading us perfectly in the way everlasting, we are as prodigal sons, disenchanted with our Father's dealings and headed for the pig sties of a foreign country. We must see that the emphasis is upon, "before Thee!" When we stand before God, these spiritual considerations take over our thinking. As does Asaph, we do some introspection. What a difference! When we let God slip far from our considerations, then we look only at things and circumstances outside of ourselves. The wicked prosper and increase. How foolish! The problem is with ourselves. This Asaph realizes, "My heart was grieved and I was pricked in my reins." The idea is better put across in

this: when my heart was embittered and my feelings were aroused. Then, I was a fool and ignorant. We are to blame. As James warns us, "...every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed." (1:14) Our own hearts deceive us and the flesh urges it on. From a carnal viewpoint we begin to second guess God in His dealings with us and the world. The positive side of this is set forth in Philipians 4:11-13; "not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." After facing God in the sanctuary, we can say with Asaph (verses 24 and 25), "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

God is faithful! In our more or less frequent moods of disenchantment, when we are dissatisfied with our lot in life, when we are as beasts, ignorant and foolish before God, we must confess our shortcomings and lack of trust before God and rejoice in His faithfulness. This also Asaph realizes. Listen. "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand." He will never leave us or forsake us. Though we as His children often grumble and complain regarding our afflictions, trials, and lot in this life, our Father's arms are always open. More! He holds us by our right hand even through the times when our feet well nigh slip. "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." (verse 26) Shall we make that our assurance? Then we return from the sanctuary with the words of Asaph in our hearts and upon our lips: "...Lo, they that are far from thee shall perish... But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God..." Thus we live in His care, in His fear.

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

The Little Foxes

Rev. J. Kortering

The Song of Solomon is a beautiful book.

Chapter two is no exception.

Some people remember this chapter for its beautiful description of spring. "For lo, the winter is past,

the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my

fair one, and come away." (verses 11-13)

Others read it as a love poem. "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters . . . He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love . . . O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." (verses 2, 4, 5, and 14.) No more beautiful words can be found to describe the anticipation and consummation of the love relationship.

Of course, spring and love go wonderfully together.

My interest, however, is in the foxes. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes," verse 15. I hope this isn't a disappointment. After all, the lovers, the vineyard, and the foxes are all joined beautifully together. The lovers say, "Take us the foxes."

THE TENDER GRAPES

As you know, the Song of Solomon is rich in symbolism. This does not take away from the moving and explicit description of love that is referred to in its verses. After all, if the symbol isn't beautiful, then the thing signified isn't either. But it is; the love that Solomon had for his Shulamite wife was rich and deep. The inspired author rises to exalted heights as he reflects on his love for her.

Solomon is not simply writing a marriage manual, he is writing to the church. Hence the description of his love for his wife and her love for him symbolizes for us the spiritual love which Christ has for His Church and the love the Church has for Christ. All this is in full harmony with all of Scripture. The most well-known reference can be found in Ephesians 5: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body . . . Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it . . . For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (verses 23-25, 31 and 32)

As we watch these two lovers walk in the vineyard, he speaks, "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely. Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes." (verses 14 and 15) Christ is here speaking concerning the vineyard. The vineyard represents the church in the midst of the world. Did

not our Lord Jesus say, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit"? (John 15:1,2)

Christ is now concerned about the well being of the vine, or more particularly the tender grapes that are upon the vine. It does not take much imagination to realize that the tender grapes represent children, young people, or anyone who is not spiritually mature. Since it is springtime, the grapes are tender. They are just beginning to form in the bud. They are especially sensitive to chill. They can easily be torn loose from the vine. Hence, they must be protected carefully. This also applies to youth within the covenant of grace. You young people are tender of faith. This is no disgrace; it is a spiritual fact we do well to recognize. You have not yet been tested and tried. You can easily be persuaded to follow different ideas. There is glamor in the lust of the flesh; there is pleasure in the cesspool of sin. You are very impressionable and sensitive to the wide world around you. You are tender!

LITTLE FOXES

As these lovers walked together through the vineyard, a little jackal scampered ahead of them. This reminded him that they had to do something about those "little foxes" lest they spoil the vines and thereby destroy the tender grapes. As they played in the vineyard they would dig at the roots, tear the vine, and certainly damage the potential of having mature grapes.

I suppose those jackals looked anything but dangerous. A little fox has all sorts of appeal, they even look soft and cuddly. Many children have been tempted to try to make a pet of a little fox. However, it doesn't take long before its true nature becomes apparent. A little fox is still a fox! The appearance may differ, but beneath that innocent exterior is a sly and treacherous animal.

Within Christ's vineyard there are little foxes. These little foxes are a threat to the well-being of the tender grapes. What might these be?

In general these little foxes represent anything that appears to be innocent yet can have a deadly influence on the youth of the covenant.

I'd like to hear *you* suggest what these might be.

I suppose you would come up with quite a list.

Let me help you.

By now you know that there are erroneous views circulating within the sphere of the church of Christ on earth. Maybe you read about them in some magazine. Perhaps you encountered them in school, either

because your teacher showed you the errors of others or because your teacher might have advocated a wrong view, depending on which school you attend. Your minister or parents may have showed you some of these views in the catechism class or at home.

The striking thing about error as it relates to our faith is that it doesn't always seem so bad, particularly while we are young. That's what makes them "little foxes." Think of the truth of creation over against evolution. How many teachers of evolution or theistic evolution claim that it doesn't make that much difference whether we say God created in six days, each limited by 24 hours, or that we say God created by means of a process taking up to billions of years? What's the difference as to how we got here, as long as we are doing the right thing once we are here? Have you heard this language? Yet what is at stake is the Word of God itself, our original perfection in Adam, the historicity of the Garden of Eden and the events of the fall, and ultimately our whole salvation.

The same is true in so many doctrinal truths. Did Eve actually talk to a serpent? Were the miracles real? Is man really "incapable of doing any good and inclined to all evil"? Was Christ really born of a virgin? Was the cross necessary unto the satisfaction of sin? These are in question form deliberately. More and more people are denying them today. Very carefully and subtly they insist that the Bible is not reliable for history, that man is not completely corrupt, and that Christ died for everyone because God loves everyone.

Such lies are presented in a subtle way and thereby become "little foxes" for covenant youth. You may sometimes think that your parents and teachers as well as preachers are getting pretty "technical" over these differences; yet what is at stake is a little fox.

There are other areas.

Certain sins do not seem so bad, and sometimes have a lot of appeal. Think for instance of rebellion. That's an ugly word. We recall times of civil disobedience, campus riots, strikes. All of these were accompanied with violence, bloodshed, open hostility to authority. We all react to this and agree, "no way!"

Yet, the big fox begins with a little fox. Sometimes you like to accept the challenge to "bug" your teacher. No, I don't suppose you are going to stand in front of the whole class and mouth off. You'll try something more sly. Ring typewriter bells — how will she ever know who did that? Let a mouse loose in the room — that's good for a few laughs. Maybe you'll get more nerve and crash the monitoring system — and find yourself with an unexpected free period.

Do you get the point? There are the "little sins" which don't seem to be so bad: the "gosh" instead of

"God," the girlie magazine instead of the real thing, yelling "teach" yet not staging a campus revolt, telling the "white lie" and still not always being a deceiver.

You can take it from here.

We might add one other area. There are many things in our lives which are not sinful in themselves but which can become the means to sin against God. How often have we heard that there is no sin in television! And that's right! Yet, the television can easily become a little fox. It has such an innocent appearance. Just look at the veneer cabinet, complicated by an array of knobs, and demonstrated in living, dazzling color. It's a marvel. Beneath that slick outside is a complicated electronic wizard, with resistors, transistors, and all the rest. A human genius developed it, there is no doubt about it.

There are more than electrons bounding around, however. There are pictures and sounds that teach, that teach moral values. They may teach us science, they may teach world events, they may even teach the skills of sports. But, they can also teach the horrors of murder, hatred, lust, crime, and the whole world of iniquity.

It could be a little fox.

There are so many others: books, magazines, musical instruments, record players, projectors, and all kinds of inventions.

There is no sin in things. It just makes a difference what we do with things and how we use them. If we use them to the glory of God, they are instruments unto righteousness; if unto sin, they are little foxes.

TAKE THE FOXES

It is not enough to sigh and say, "Yes, that's right. I should do something about this in my life." That kind of sigh only brings one closer to destruction.

We have to *take* the foxes and remove them from our lives.

To be sure, this is the business of the whole church and all who are involved in the development of children: parents, teachers, ministers, and guardians.

You young people have to realize that this is also *your* calling. In the interest of protecting you, your parents and others are commanded by God to get rid of these little foxes lest you become spiritually torn apart or even ripped off the vine. Little foxes are deadly foxes. They must be taken and destroyed.

As you get older, you have to handle these little foxes yourself. Remember it is in love that Christ tells us, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes."

How good are you at fox hunting?

CORRESPONDENCE AND REPLY:

Dear Sir:

I am astounded at the way Prof. H. Hanko represents my views in his review of *A Christian View of History*? He quotes a passage in which I say (in part) that Christians should study history "since the Christian's task is to live in this world and to witness to the love of God as manifested in Christ, it is essential for us to understand ourselves and the world as well as we possibly can." Prof. Hanko observes, "This taken by itself, is a wholly inadequate reason for studying history, but it follows from the general view of the authors, for they reject the traditional view of history as the unfolding of the counsel of God."

I would agree that *taken by itself* this statement is inadequate, since it tends to emphasize an ethical aspect of living to the glory of God and does not include some important theological bases for the Christian's understanding of the significance of history. However, the point is that this statement can not be *taken by itself*. If it is it distorts my whole position by ignoring the essential context of my fundamental theological presuppositions. Since I state such fundamental points directly, I can only ask for this space to set the record straight so that your readers can see what is the actual position in my essay.

On the same page from which Prof. Hanko quotes I speak of the centrality of God's revelation in Scripture for our understanding of all of history. Then (after a passage in which as a matter of fact I defend an antithesis between Christians and non-Christians even in their knowledge of elementary facts) I have a section clearly entitled "OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S ACTIONS IN HISTORY." Part of this reads:

"We know of God's actions particularly in the history of redemption recorded in Scripture and centering in Christ. We also know that God will continue his redemptive work through the workings of the Spirit in the church, and hence that the highest value and the most meaningful experience for men is knowing and loving God. We know also that human experience for men is knowing and loving God. We know also that human history will end in judgment. We can say therefore that there is meaning in the most fundamental developments in history and that there is a general progression defined by the actions of God in our history." P. 38

Compare this to Prof. Hanko's sentence (following the one quoted above): "Doing this, they can no longer find in history the revelation of God, and they no longer see in a study of history the benefit of

growing in the knowledge of God in His works and ways."

I do argue against those persons who argue from the "valid observation" "that all things are under the providence of God" to one "that does not necessarily follow, that we know specifically how God providentially influences history." My main argument against this "traditional approach to history" is that it involves "an apparent failure to distinguish adequately between God's special revelation in Scripture and his more general revelation elsewhere." If I took Prof. Hanko's review by itself I would suspect that he does not adequately make this distinction between special and general revelation. He at least blurs this distinction when he suggests such things as that our purpose should be to "find in history the revelation of God," *while making no clear distinction between the revelation we can find in Scripture and that which we find elsewhere*. Taken by itself Prof. Hanko's statement amounts to the principle of Modernism, that we find God revealed just as much in the historical progress of culture as in Scripture. I'm sure that Prof. Hanko does not intend this blurring concerning the quality of special and general revelation, so I'm sure it would be as unfair of me to take his review by itself as it is for him to take my one statement by itself.

I expect that Prof. Hanko and I do have real disagreements. These disagreements, however, have to do not with *whether* history is the general revelation of God but over how accurately we can read what is revealed in God's providential work in history. I think Prof. Hanko is mistaken and presumptuous if he thinks that we make definitive declarations on what God's purposes are in everyday historical events.

I do not, however, think that if Prof. Hanko is mistaken on this point (as I think he is) therefore his whole position on history is "of little or no help (except by way of antithesis)". I am genuinely offended that he is so ready to draw such a conclusion concerning my work and of that of my colleagues. I hope at least that he will withdraw that remark. Perhaps then we could begin to come to an understanding of each other which I think should at least be among the minimal goals of Reformed Christians.

I expect that Prof. Hanko may be able to find some theological imprecision, misplaced emphasis, and even some inaccuracy in my essay. This would

not surprise me since (as our book emphasizes) we do not claim infallibility for our formulations of Christian views of history. I leave it for your readers to judge, however, whether the essay takes the essentially anti-Christian stance that he attributes to it in his review.

Sincerely yours
George Marsden,
Professor of History

Reply:

Although it is somewhat distasteful for me to have to defend a "Book Review," nevertheless Dr. Marsden's letter requires at least a brief response.

The first part of his letter deals with my criticism of his statement concerning the reason for studying history. He takes exception to the fact that I leave the impression that this is the only reason the author gives for studying history and that I omit other reasons which he enumerates. In this connection, I remind Dr. Marsden of the following — facts of which he himself cannot be unaware.

1) The reason for studying history which Dr. Marsden gives and which I quoted is said by him to be "the basic reason." (p. 31; underscoring is mine.) I emphatically disagree.

2) On p. 34, Dr. Marsden calls this same reason: "the most compelling purpose for studying or teaching history." He writes: "Although for the Christian the most compelling purpose for studying or teaching history is to gain such a perspective that contributes directly to Christian living . . ."

3) The only other reason I can find (after re-reading the chapter two more times) for studying history which Dr. Marsden offers is the reason of "memory." Exactly what he means by this, I am not sure, but it is not germane to our subject.

4) Dr. Marsden speaks of my failure to pay special attention to the essential context of his fundamental theological presuppositions. Nevertheless, in the whole context of his theological presuppositions, I do not find any other reason given why the Christian ought to study history.

It is, however, indeed correct that our basic disagreements lie in the area of these theological presuppositions. I disagree with Dr. Marsden's view of man. I do not believe that "the biblical revelation" gives us a "paradoxical" view of the "character of man," namely, that, "on the one hand, man is the crown of creation, made in God's own image, and given both responsibility and capability to subdue the earth"; and, "On the other hand, man is fallen and is the great self-deceiver, constantly prone to think more highly of himself than he ought." (pp. 40,41.) I believe in the truth of total depravity, that man was

created good, but fell and lost the image of God, and is therefore unable to do any good at all.

Dr. Marsden denies, in a somewhat scoffing way, that "history is a contest of good guys versus bad guys, good ideas versus bad ideas, Christians versus lions." (p. 43.) I believe this to be true. I believe in the absolute antithesis in history — an antithesis between the works of darkness and the works of light, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between Christ and Belial.

But centrally, as Dr. Marsden also notes, our differences center in the concept of revelation. Although it may come as something of a shock to Dr. Marsden, I do not blur the lines between special and general revelation because I do not believe that Scripture teaches the idea of general revelation in the generally accepted use of that term. I accept the traditional view of history, although I do not accept Dr. Marsden's description of it as "lessons of history becoming largely the readings of the special providences of God" (p. 39); or, history as the means whereby we can tell "what God's purposes are in particular historical events" (p. 39.); or, that the Old Testament national distinctions are still in force today and serve as a basis for blessing and cursing. I, along with Dr. Marsden, reject these ideas.

But that is not the traditional viewpoint of history — although I am not interested in getting into an argument about what is traditional and what is not. I do believe that God's counsel is absolutely decisive in all of history. I do not believe, as Dr. Marsden does, that God "has decisively entered into and changed human history" (p. 38.); or that "men's sinful actions work against the purposes of God." (p. 38.) While this is not the place to discuss this whole question (and indeed it would be nice if we could "begin to come to an understanding of each other" on these matters), it must certainly be maintained that because God's counsel is absolutely determinative for everything which transpires, God sovereignly realizes His purpose in all that takes place in history. That purpose is attained in Christ through the salvation of the elect and the condemnation of the reprobate on account of their sins. That purpose is constantly being realized in history as Christ, from His position at God's right hand, executes all God's will. But because reprobation must serve election, all of history, in all its details, serves the salvation of the Church. This must be the fundamental starting point for all the interpretation of history, and this must be the deepest explanation for the absolute antithesis which runs through history between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

While this certainly does not enable us to interpret every detailed "fact" of history, and while the purposes of God are not always apparent to us, neverthe-

less, history interpreted from any other viewpoint is incorrect interpretation. To use Dr. Marsden's own example, while we cannot see God's purpose in the isolated fact of Washington's crossing of the Delaware, we can see God's purpose in some measure in the American Revolution. And we can and must pass moral judgment on that Revolution as well.

How can we do this? We can do this because Scripture itself gives to us the key to the understanding of history. And Scripture gives to us the objective standard to pass moral judgments on the events of

history. Because we have the Scriptures we are compelled to do this. Does Dr. Marsden hold to this view of Scripture?

While indeed the whole subject of the relation between so-called *historia revelations* and world history is an important one — especially as it relates to the whole question of revelation, whether special or "general," I do not find in Dr. Marsden's essay any of these truths emphasized. But they should be emphasized by any history teacher who is Reformed and Calvinistic.

Prof. H. Hanko

Book Review

POWER-WORD AND TEXT-WORD IN RECENT REFORMED THOUGHT, by Harry L. Downs; Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1974; \$3.50 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This book, by the pastor of the Dresden Christian Reformed Church in Dresden, Ontario, is an analysis of "the view of Scripture set forth by some representatives of the philosophy of the law-idea." Particularly, the author examines in some detail the views of the A.A.C.S. with respect to their basic doctrine of the Word of God.

Although the author enters into the more philosophical views of the A.A.C.S. in Chapter II (a chapter which can be skipped by those who are not interested in the vagaries of philosophy), the book as a whole gives a rather thorough presentation of the views of those who are followers of Dooyeweerd's philosophy on the North American continent and in various places overseas. In chapter I, the author deals especially with the differences in the Reformed community on this question and points out not only the differences between the proponents of the law-idea and those who oppose this view, but also shows that there is not complete agreement among the A.A.C.S. men themselves. But especially in the rest of the book, the author concentrates on the view of Scripture and goes into a rather lengthy critique and analysis of these views. For these reasons the book is worth reading.

However, I must, in this review, also make mention of the fact that I am increasingly troubled by those who oppose the errors of the A.A.C.S. As those who have been readers of the *Standard Bearer* know, I have no sympathy for the aberrations of the A.A.C.S., and I consider the whole philosophy of this movement to be a dangerous and heretical movement within the Reformed church world. But this does not alter the fact that a book such as this under review, as well as the writings of many who have opposed this

philosophy, leave me with a deep feeling of dissatisfaction. It seems to me that the A.A.C.S. has forced errors in some parts of traditional Reformed theology out into the open. The A.A.C.S. is collecting bills past due because of these errors. And the result is that those who oppose the views of the A.A.C.S. find themselves in an unfavorable position to combat successfully the enemy which they see creeping into the camp.

Although a book review is hardly the place to go into these matters, let me be specific and mention them at least.

For one thing, the theologians of the A.A.C.S. have placed a lot of emphasis on the idea of the Word of God. This is both their strength and their weakness. The doctrine of the Word of God is, without question, of fundamental importance. In placing emphasis on this doctrine, the leaders of the A.A.C.S. have properly made some important distinctions — as e.g., between the creative Word, Christ, the Scriptures, and the Word preached. With these distinctions I not only have no quarrel, but find myself in complete agreement. The trouble with the A.A.C.S. is that it has *separated* these aspects of the Word of God so completely that there is no room left for any relationship between them whatsoever. The opponents of the A.A.C.S. have, on the other hand, all but *identified* these various aspects of the Word of God. And this too is a serious mistake. To give but one example, the opponents of the A.A.C.S. have identified the *gospel* with the *Scriptures*. We believe with all our hearts that the Scriptures are the infallibly inspired *record* of the Word of God. But it is the *written record* of the Word of God, not the gospel. The opponents of the A.A.C.S. speak of the Scriptures as if the Scriptures themselves are the powerful Word of God which is able to save. But they are not. I have even heard Rom. 1:16 quoted as support for the proposition that the *Bible* has power in itself. But Paul does not say

that in the text. He writes: "For I am not ashamed of the *gospel* of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation . . ." That is something else. Only the gospel, which is the preaching of the Scriptures, is able to save. The Scriptures can be called "The Word of God" only in the sense that the Scriptures contain the infallibly inspired *record* of the Word of God. The Scriptures have no power in themselves. The opponents vitiate their own criticism when they fail to make this distinction; and we have the A.A.C.S. to thank for bringing this distinction out into the open.

For another thing, the A.A.C.S. has made a lot of the revelation of God through the Word in the creation. They have erred, and erred seriously, in making a disjunction between the Word in creation and the Word of God in Scripture. Nevertheless, leaning upon the traditional idea in some parts of the Reformed Church world between "general" and "special" revelation, the opponents of the A.A.C.S. have committed the same error of making a disjunction between God's Word in creation and in the Scriptures — the Scriptures now as the infallibly inspired record of the revelation of God in *the* Word which is Christ. It is my considered opinion that if the opponents of the A.A.C.S. are to be successful in their refutation of the views of the A.A.C.S., they must abandon forthwith the whole concept of "general revelation" of which neither Scripture nor our Confessions (not even Article 2 of the Belgic Confession) speak. If they insist on holding to this distinction, they will never be able successfully to refute the errors of the philos-

ophy of the law-idea.

And this brings me to the third matter, for the whole idea of general revelation is closely connected to the idea of common grace. While some members of the A.A.C.S. seem somewhat reluctant to accept the idea of common grace — at least all the implications of this view, they cannot really escape it. But those who oppose the A.A.C.S., while still maintaining the doctrine of common grace, never get around to a successful refutation of this heresy. One illustration will suffice. In all the writings of the A.A.C.S. there is almost no mention of the devastating effects of sin both on the creation itself and on man whose mind is so darkened that he cannot hear the Word of God in creation. But this same fundamental fault is to be found in those who oppose the A.A.C.S. In all the critique of the book under review there is almost no mention made of sin. Without even discussing the whole doctrine, it is of utmost importance to see how sin affects the whole truth concerning the doctrine of the Word of God and revelation. Without a proper conception of sin, no light can be shed on this problem. And the concept of common grace makes this utterly impossible.

It would be well for this whole subject to be analyzed in detail. And if the opponents of the A.A.C.S. do not do this, they will find that their efforts to combat the A.A.C.S. are futile. The A.A.C.S. will continue to collect the bills due, and their heresy will continue to permeate the Church.

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.

NOTICE!!!

The Hull (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a teacher for Grades 3, 4, and 5 for the school year beginning September, 1976. Anyone interested please contact Mr. Bernard Driesen, RR 1, Box 13, Boyden, Iowa 51234. Phone 712-725-2071.

The Board of the Hull Prot.
Reformed Christian School.
Bernard Driesen, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!

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

News From Our Churches

Rev. Van Overloop, pastor of our Hope Church in Walker, Michigan, returned to his congregation early in April after spending some time in Houston, Texas, working there with our missionary, Rev. R. Harbach. Rev. Van Overloop gave the following report to his congregation in his April 11 bulletin: "Your pastor gives thanks to God for being safely brought back to your midst after working with Rev. Harbach for two full weeks. Because the size of the group in Houston is small (3 families, 18 souls) we should not despair and come to the conclusion that the time has arrived to pull out and close the field. To 'shake off the dust of our feet' (Matt. 10:14) is not a move to be taken lightly. But even apart from that it is my opinion that there is still much work to be done. Through various contacts which were made, I am convinced that there is potential which has not been touched heretofore. Let us remember this field and their missionary in our prayers and let us not expect the rate of growth in a mission field to be any faster than the rate of growth our congregation experiences from without."

Rev. Moore has accepted the call to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, but due to immigration laws his move has been delayed. One of the steps Rev. Moore had to take was to journey to Chicago and undergo a personal interview with the Canadian Council. His original goal was to be in Edmonton by May 1st. Whether that will be possible or not remains to be seen.

Rev. Moore's present congregation in Doon, Iowa, formed a trio consisting of Rev. M. Hoeksema, Rev. M. Kamps, and Rev. Van Overloop. From this trio, the congregation has extended a call to Rev. R. Van Overloop.

Another fiftieth anniversary celebration within our churches — the Doon, Iowa, congregation celebrated their fiftieth anniversary on Sunday, March 21, with a singspiration. The program also included some special numbers and a short speech by Rev. Moore. Doon invited sister congregations in Hull and Edgerton to join with them for this evening of spiritual fellowship.

The Edgerton consistory decided that the church kitchen was in need of some refurbishment. A night was set aside last February during which the families of the congregation were given the opportunity to make a gift for this project. A total of \$523 was collected on the Kitchen Fund drive. We trust that on various special occasions some rather pleasant smells

will again be coming from that kitchen.

With the coming of Spring also comes Spring weather. Several of our Michigan churches have had notices in their bulletins concerning the policy of that church in regard to holding church services in the event of a "tornado watch" or a "tornado warning." The Council of Southwest Church has purchased a "weather alert system" to give warning of severe weather conditions as they develop.

Two of our Michigan church bulletins have contained reports from their deacons regarding the dwindling balance in their Benevolence Funds. In this time of much material wealth and a great number of social welfare programs administered by state and national governments, it is good to see that the work of Christian Mercy as performed by the deacons has not disappeared in the Protestant Reformed Churches as it has in many churches of our day. In their 1975 Financial Report, the deacons of First Church in Grand Rapids reported disbursing over \$21,000 in assistance to the needy for the year.

The last in a series of lectures given in Rock Valley, Iowa, by the Reformed Witness Committee was scheduled for March 24. Rev. Moore's topic was "Preaching and Discipline: A Vital Unity." The work of the Reformed Witness Committee is supported by our churches in Hull and Doon, Iowa, and Edgerton, Minn. These same churches also scheduled an Office-bearers' Conference on March 30 in Edgerton. Rev. Slopeema spoke on "Christian Giving and the Mercies of Christ."

A little further to the East, another Office Bearers' Conference was scheduled on April 6 at Hope Church in the Grand Rapids area. Prof. H. Hanko was to speak on the question, "When Family Discipline Fails, When Should Church Discipline Be Applied?"

The Young People's Societies in our churches across the land seem to be very busy sponsoring all kinds of activities, including car washes, soup suppers, singspirations, talent nites, roller skating parties, banquets, swimming parties, family nites, and a few more activities — all with the goal of raising funds for the 1976 Young People's Convention scheduled for late August at Camp Geneva on Lake Michigan. I have a suspicion that the Young People, in addition to raising funds, might even be enjoying a good time!

K.G.V.