

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

The room (of knowledge) is locked because sin locks that door with utter and total finality. Nevertheless that room is full of wonderful treasures; treasures of the knowledge of God, which knowledge is riches beyond compare, not only in this life, but to all eternity. What glorious and marvelous riches await the one who enters that room! It is indeed a storehouse that dazzles the eyes and brings ecstasy to the soul.

The key to that room — the key that unlocks the door — is Christ.

See “The Key of Knowledge” — page 920

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MEDITATION

The Divine Potter

Rev. H. Veldman

"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words. . . ."

Jeremiah 18:1-10

The subject of the potter and the clay cannot be considered popular. It is unpopular for two reasons. In the first place, man always resents being called clay. And, secondly, he resents the fact that God is called the Potter.

How difficult was Jeremiah's calling! He was called

to the office of prophet by the Lord while still a youth (see Jer. 1:6), approximately at the age of twenty, in the thirteenth year of King Josiah (see Jer. 1:2, 25:3), and was active in this calling until the destruction of Jerusalem, 586 B.C. He prophesied, therefore, in an age of hopeless apostasy.

It is considered rather certain that the prophecy in this Scripture occurred before the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, about twenty years before the final destruction of Jerusalem during the reign of Zedekiah. This word of God, expressed in the form of a figure, relates to Judah's sin and impending captivity. We read that this word of the Lord comes to the house of Israel. O, Judah may complain that the Lord has no right to do what He threatened to do; however, God is the Potter and Israel has no right to appeal to the promise of God when they walk in ways of sin and iniquity.

* * * * *

Jeremiah is commanded by the Lord to go down to the potter's house. We may conclude that these potteries of Jerusalem lay in a valley near the city, and that it is therefore literally true that Jeremiah must "go down" to the potter's house. Secondly, at the potter's house the Lord will cause His servant, the prophet, to hear His words. The Lord will reveal to him that which He is about to do; Jeremiah will see there a potter at work, and the Lord will explain to him the significance of that potter and his work, which Jeremiah must know, and then, of course, proclaim in the ears of the people, the house of Israel. The Lord will use the figure of the potter to reveal to His servant, the prophet, a spiritual truth.

What did Jeremiah see? He saw a potter working a work upon wheels. This figure of the potter was very common in the Old Dispensation and is still in use in Palestine and in Syria. We read of wheels because two wheels were in use, both of wood, an upper and smaller wheel on which the jar is shaped and a lower and larger wheel which was "kicked" by the potter. The same clay, usually a red clay, was used for the production of all kinds of jars and vessels which were made by the potter to suit his own purpose and fancy. And what was this potter doing? A vessel that had been made of clay was marred in the hands of the potter. It was spoiled. This potter now proceeds to make it again into another vessel, even as it seemed good to the potter to make it. This figure here, we understand, refers to the house of Israel. This is plain from verse 6. The house of Israel, Judah, the people of God in the Old Dispensation, the historical nation of Israel, is the vessel in the hands of this potter.

Now we must understand the distinction of this Scripture from Romans 9:19-21. In the first place, in Romans 9 the apostle is speaking of individuals. It is clear that those vessels of honour and dishonour are individual people. In this text in Jeremiah, however, the prophet is speaking of the nation of Israel. The vessel that had once been made, was marred, and is now being reshaped is the nation of Israel, called the house of Israel in this text. A second distinction, however, is more important. In Romans 9 the potter

is represented as forming several vessels out of the same lump of clay, according to his good pleasure. Those vessels are not first marred and then reshaped into other vessels. They refer to the elect and reprobate whom God has sovereignly willed and sovereignly calls into existence. In Jeremiah, however, the one vessel is marred and then reshaped into another vessel. This is very important. The viewpoint of Jeremiah is quite different from that of Romans 9:19-21, and the purpose is also different. In Romans 9 the purpose of the apostle is to show or vindicate God's absolute sovereignty in determining the final destiny of men, either to honour or to dishonour, to salvation and glory, or to everlasting desolation, without regard to their works. In this text, the purpose is evidently to show Israel that it has no right to the promises of God when it walks in sin and iniquity. Israel, the broken, marred, spoiled vessel, wicked Israel had certainly merited rejection by Jehovah. It was changed, in the way of sin, from a vessel of honour into a vessel of dishonour. This is the difference between these two passages. We must remember, however, that they complement each other. They do not oppose or contradict each other. It is not true that God is sovereign in Romans 9 and that His shaping of the vessel in Jeremiah 18 is conditional. This can never be. They must be explained in the light of each other. Scripture never contradicts itself.

Indeed, God is sovereign. First, the truth of divine sovereignty is always expressed by the figure of the potter. This is surely true in Isaiah 64:8. And it is undeniably true in Romans 9:19-21. The same also applies in this text. Do we not read in verse 4: "as seemed good to the potter to make it"? And do we not read in verse 6: "Cannot the Lord do with Israel as this potter?"

Besides, this lies in the very nature of the case as far as the figure of the potter is concerned. The power here of the potter is not so much that of brute power but of right and authority. The question is not so much whether the potter is able to do with the clay as he pleases — this lies in the nature of the case. But the question is whether he may do with it what he pleases, and whether the clay may ever question the right of the potter to make it as it pleases him.

In this light also this text must be understood. Indeed, the Lord had made Israel a beautiful vessel, had given it the promise to build and to plant it and give it everlasting salvation. The vessel, however, had been marred. Israel had sinned. And now the Lord will again shape it, make it a dishonourable vessel; the Lord will cast it off and destroy it.

In all this the Lord is sovereign. We must bear in mind that this text applies to Israel as a people. We read here of the house of Israel. Individual people of

God can never perish. This can happen to a people. Nevertheless, whatever may be the course which is followed by a people which was a vessel of honour and becomes another vessel of dishonour, God is sovereign. God remains the Potter. God, Who sovereignly softens the most stubborn and obdurate heart, also hardens and drives the reprobate farther away from Himself; and this occurs according to His own unchangeable decree and through His irresistible will. However, when the Lord's judgments fall upon wicked Israel, also the elect remnant, guilty with carnal Israel, suffer underneath these judgments of the Lord, but are saved through them by God's almighty grace. Only, after the captivity Judah as a people of God was destroyed, never regained its independence, never became the people of God again.

* * * * *

God, however, is also righteous. Israel had sinned. True, God's people always sin. But Israel or Judah had become corrupt as a people. The Lord now sends Jeremiah to them. He commands them to repent and also proclaims upon them the judgments of the Lord in their way of sin and evil. Israel, however, rebelled against Jehovah. They rebelled against His preaching. They objected that the Lord had given them His promises, had no right to proclaim doom upon them. Indeed, the sinner always complains against the Lord. In Romans 9 he complains: "Why doth He yet find fault? Who hath resisted His will?" In Jeremiah he appeals to the promises of God.

God, however, is the Righteous Potter. Notice carefully what we read in the verses 7-10. Do these verses emphasize a change in God? When the Lord, e.g., declares that He will destroy Nineveh because of its wickedness and later spares the penitent city, did He change? Indeed not! Nineveh changed! The Lord is unchangeable — see Isaiah 46:10, Acts 15:18, Romans 9:11. Or, do these verses speak of conditions for the divine Potter? Notice these "if" clauses here. This, however, is also impossible. Conditions for the heavenly Potter? But is He not the Potter? Does He not make of the clay whatever pleases Him? Is not our repentance His work alone? And, God should be determined by conditions? How impossible!

What do these verses mean? First, the change is not in God but in man! When the Lord declares that He will bless a church that walks in His ways and later threatens that church with His judgments when it walks in sin, is the change in God Who is holy and always blesses the righteous? Indeed, the change is in that church.

Secondly, we must bear in mind that God is addressing a people here. Indeed, the Lord does not do things tyrannically, but according to His righteousness. We must remember that what can never happen to an individual can happen to a church, also to us.

Individuals cannot fall away from God; churches can fall away. A church can begin in the truth and later depart from that truth. When the Lord, then, declares to a righteous church that He will bless and curse it if it depart from His ways, the change is not in the Lord but in that church.

Finally, this occurs according to the sovereign and unchangeable decree of Him Who is the sovereign Potter over all. When a people departs from the ways of the Lord this certainly occurs according to God's counsel and by Him Who makes vessels of honour and dishonour. When a people turns from its evil way (as Judah did according to the remnant of election), this also surely occurs according to God's counsel and through the power of His grace, because no man can ever repent of himself. We, however, be it according to the sovereign Lord Who never violates our moral-rational being but always operates sovereignly through it, are responsible beings and must give an account before the Judge of all the earth. What we are and have as churches we can lose, organically, in the line of generations. How the Scriptures emphasize this truth, as in Romans 11, in the history of Israel of the Old Dispensation!

May we, therefore, be and continue sober, watchful in prayer, that no man take our crown!

May we hold fast what we have, remain faithful even unto the end!

May the Lord preserve us by His grace according to His mercy. Preservation and perseverance . . . the latter only because of the former. And the crown of victory is sure!

**Know the standard
and follow it.**



**Read the
STANDARD BEARER!**

EDITORIALS

Pre-Seminary Graduation Report From "Down Under" Synod of 1976

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

PRE-SEMINARY GRADUATION

Friday, May 28, was a red-letter day for our Theological School, and especially for the five young men who graduated from our pre-seminary department.

In case you are unacquainted with the way in which our seminary operates and the way in which its curriculum is divided, let me briefly explain. We have two departments in the seminary: the pre-seminary and the seminary departments. These are operated separately, so that a student must complete the pre-seminary course acceptably before he is admitted by our Theological School Committee and our Synod to the seminary department. The pre-seminary department is a 4-year course in which the student must complete work equivalent to that required for a college degree. A large part of this course consists of various prescribed subjects taught at our own school, while the rest of the course consists of credits to be earned in various subjects at some local college. For the young men who graduated, therefore, this was an important way station along the road to their ultimate goal, that of being received into the ministry of our Protestant Reformed Churches. For our school and for our churches it means, in the first place, that we are one step farther along the way toward increasing the number of available ministers. In the second place, it means that for the second time we have fruits from our recently instituted pre-seminary program. We who are closely associated with the work are convinced of the benefits of this program and of the importance of maintaining and enlarging it. We have already seen the concrete benefits in our seminary department. Among those who graduated this year were some who entered the program right from high school and who spent parts of four years with us, therefore.

The graduates were Ronald Cammenga (from Holland, Michigan, and now a member of Southwest Church), Ronald Hanco (Hope Church, Grand

Rapids, son of Prof. Hanco and grandson of Rev. C. Hanco), Steven Houck (Hope Church, Grand Rapids), and Carl Haak and David Zandstra (both sons of our South Holland, Illinois congregation). Sorry, a group photo was not available when we went to print; you will have to be satisfied with the names.

The program was held in the seminary's Assembly Room, with Rev. C. Hanco (president of the Theological School Committee) in charge, and Prof. H. Hanco delivering the graduation address to a goodly gathering of friends and relatives of the graduates. Prof. Hanco's address will be found elsewhere in this issue.

REPORT FROM "DOWN UNDER"

From a correspondent in Australia we received some preliminary information concerning actions of the Synod of the Reformed Church of Australia and concerning developments in connection with the so-called Woudstra case. We hope to receive more detailed information later. But for the time being we pass on to the readers the following items:

1. The Reformed Church Synod decided to maintain their sister-church relationship with the *Gereformeerde Kerken* of the Netherlands. There were those who wished to suspend this tie, even as the Reformed Churches of New Zealand did; but apparently the fraternal delegates from the Dutch church persuaded the Synod that things were not so bad as reported, and even that the Dutch church is actually doing something about heretics like Kuitert and Wiersinga. The truth of the matter is, however, that while the GKN have made some pronouncements on the teachings of both men, they have not actually done anything about their heresies and have, in fact, refused to institute any disciplinary procedures against them. Anyone who thinks that the recent "*judicium*" concerning Wiersinga's denial of the atonement marks a turnabout in the GKN is whistling in the dark! Similar pronouncements have been made regarding Kuitert's teachings in the past; and what has

come of them? Kuitert goes his merry way! When Wiersinga is suspended and deposed from office, we can begin to believe that things are improving in the Netherlands. And bear in mind that the Australian Reformed Church becomes principally co-responsible for the corruption in the Netherlands by continuing to recognize the Dutch church as a sister church.

2. As might be expected, matters related to the dismissal of Dr. S. Woudstra from the Reformed Theological College at Geelong were before the Synod. In this connection, the following was reported to us:

a) Dr. Woudstra, who became pastor of the Hobart (Tasmania) Reformed Church after his dismissal from Geelong, retained his standing as minister in the Reformed Church.

b) Opportunity was afforded to Dr. Woudstra to appeal his dismissal from Geelong to a specially appointed tribunal. There was an appeal procedure already at the time of Woudstra's dismissal, but he did not take advantage of his right to appeal at that time. Allegedly this was because the same personnel who dismissed him would also be involved in his appeal. Now, however, a special tribunal for appeal will serve. On this tribunal there will be men only from the Reformed Church, however, since the Free Church (Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia) has officially decided to withdraw its support of Geelong. It will be interesting to see what a tribunal unhampered by any Free Church strictures will decide if Woudstra appeals. Actually, of course, the doctrinal issue has already been decided for the Reformed Church: for they have embraced Woudstra as a minister in good standing in spite of his dismissal from Geelong for serious doctrinal errors.

c) Reportedly Dr. Woudstra is not seeking reinstatement at Geelong, but only exoneration. The report is that he intends to return to the U.S. in February, 1977.

3. A new complication has developed, however. In the course of the discussion at Synod, it was learned that Dr. Vander Laan, newly arrived professor of philosophy at Geelong, has doctrinal views similar to those of Dr. Woudstra, and that he so informed the Principal of the Reformed Theological College before his arrival in Australia. This fact became known, however, only at the Synod — prior to the time that the Synod finally went into closed session. It ought to be a question, therefore, whether Vander Laan can continue as professor. Whether this will be an actual question remains to be seen.

4. Apparently there was also some discussion about the possibility of re-examining and reframing the Canons of Dordrecht along the lines of Dr.

Woudstra's views of reprobation. We expect to hear more on this subject later.

From the above it is evident that the Reformed Church of Australia has by no means solved its problems and the problems involving Geelong. Nor is there any evidence as yet that the Reformed Church in that country has made any move to solve in a Reformed way the *doctrinal problem* which confronts it concerning the denial of sovereign predestination. In fact, as of now the evidence is all in the opposite direction.

Meanwhile, the Reformed Church of New Zealand will also have to pay attention to the matters concerning the Reformed Theological College at Geelong. Supposedly a safe agreement was negotiated which will insure the support of those churches only as long as Geelong is doctrinally sound. Can those churches continue to support Geelong in the light of the fact that one instructor after another becomes exposed as having non-Reformed tenets? Time will tell.

SYNOD OF 1976

After a week of very busy meetings, Synod of 1976 has become history. As is our custom, we present a brief review of some of Synod's activities and decisions. This report is not official, and it is not exhaustive. Hopefully, the Acts of the Synod of 1976 will be published promptly this year; and the complete account of Synod's decisions may be found there.

This year's synod met at South Holland, Illinois; and there were several days during Synod's sessions on which the air-conditioned facilities of the South Holland church furnished welcome relief from the heat (and smog!) of the Chicago area. The pre-synodical prayer service on the evening of June 1 was led by the Rev. J. Kortering, president of last year's synod. The text of his sermon was Psalm 125:1,2: "They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever." The sermon was warm and inspiring, and it certainly furnished the appropriate encouragement to the delegates. For this reporter listening to Rev. Kortering preach was a rather novel experience: it was the first time I had heard Rev. Kortering preach since his practice preaching efforts in his senior year in seminary in the 1959-'60 school term.

As is customary, after the organizational meeting on Wednesday morning, the four advisory committees spent the remainder of the day studying and preparing advice on the portions of the Agenda assigned to them. For some reason — I have not been able to determine what it was — the advisory committees seemed to have difficulty completing their work this

year. If I am not mistaken, all of the committees continued to have meetings during the evenings, after Synod adjourned for the day, even as late as Monday, June 7. But in most instances the careful work of the committees also served to guide Synod very efficiently in its deliberations and decisions. Only in a couple of instances did Synod deviate from the advice of the committees or recommit an item to the advisory committee.

Officers of Synod this year were: President, Rev. C. Hanko; Vice President, Rev. D. Engelsma; Clerks, Revs. J. Kortering and G. Van Baren.

On Thursday morning, June 3, Synod began its deliberations by giving attention to matters regarding our Theological School. One of the main items receiving attention in this connection was the rapid growth of our student body and the consequent increasing work of the faculty. Consideration was given to the eventual need of another professor. But Synod was not of a mind to make any hasty changes. Instead, provision was made for some temporary assistance in the school (to be arranged by the faculty and the Theological School Committee); and the Theological School Committee was instructed to make a study of the long-range needs of our school. Prof. Decker, whose first term as professor ended this year, was re-appointed to a 4-year term; we are happy to report that later during Synod's sessions he informed us of his acceptance of this appointment.

The second item assigned to Committee I was the report of the Committee for Contact With Other Churches. Most of this report dealt with matters which arose in connection with last year's Australasian Tour and with the fruitful contacts made at that time. This was something new for a synod of our churches: for this was really the first time in our history that our churches were confronted by anything positive in the way of relationships with other churches. Synod, therefore, gave long and careful attention to these matters, and was not minded to act hastily. In fact, Synod still had to complete action on one important item, that of the request for help from New Zealand, during its final session. Two items deserve special mention here: 1) Synod authorized the Committee for Contact to continue discussions with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia with a view to establishing a sister-church relationship. 2) Synod heeded the call for help from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Christchurch, New Zealand, and authorized the loan of one of our ministers as pastor of that congregation. This was a major decision; and although Synod first hesitated somewhat, after long and careful discussion and a few changes in the original proposal of the Committee for Contact, a decision was taken by overwhelming vote. The Committee for Contact was instructed to inform

the congregation of Christchurch immediately; and steps have already been taken to implement the decision. Our Committee has submitted a nomination to the Session of Christchurch OPC consisting of Revs. B. Woudenberg, A. den Hartog, J. Slopsema, and M. Hoeksema. The congregation in Christchurch will now extend a call to one of these brethren, according to the plan. And it is our sincere hope and prayer that the Lord will incline the heart of one of these men to answer the call for help from "down under."

Committee II served Synod with advice on matters pertaining to missions. Synod had before it a long and detailed report concerning the work in Jamaica. There were many details of this work to be considered. The country is closed to a permanent missionary at present, so that there could be no consideration of the possibility of sending a man to Jamaica on a permanent basis. The work there, however, will be continued, help will be given especially to the four young ministers trained through our labors, and emissaries will again be sent to oversee and evaluate the work there. With regard to Rev. Harbach's labors in Houston, it was decided to continue the work in that field with a view to the possibility of new contacts there; the situation in Houston is not yet ripe for the organization of a church. And the Hudsonville Consistory, along with the Mission Committee, were instructed to have Rev. Kuiper labor to follow up various contacts in the Michigan area for the time being. If nothing develops, Rev. Kuiper will be declared eligible for a call from one of our congregations. Both of our missionaries, by the way, were present at Synod and addressed the Synod concerning their labors. Let us remember the cause of our mission labors and the laborers before the throne of grace.

A final item of importance on which Committee II advised Synod was an overture and an accompanying Study Committee report which dealt with the place of the local church in mission labors and with the relationship between the local church and the Mission Committee. The advisory committee served Synod with very careful and detailed advice on this matter — advice which, for the most part, was adopted. It is not possible to report the details of these decisions here. In general, we may say that the whole process of overture and study has resulted in some adjustments with respect to the relationship between the churches and the Mission Committee and a renewed emphasis upon the calling of the local churches in the work of missions. Unless, however, the churches pay attention to these decisions and unless our mission calling receives proper emphasis in the pulpit, all the decisions in the world will have no effect. Let us remember this!

Committee III advised on many items which are usually classified as rather routine, as well as on some interim reports concerning the unfinished work of catechism book revision. The major item on this committee's docket was that of the Study Report concerning Baptism on the Mission Field. The Study Committee presented a lengthy and careful report which recommended that our missionaries, under certain limitations, should administer baptism on the mission field even where no congregation has been organized or is on the point of organization. Since this is an important change from past practice, and since the Study Report had been in the hands of delegates and consistories for only three weeks or less, Synod decided to refer this Study Report to the churches for study, with a view to reaching a decision at the next Synod. It is incumbent, therefore, upon the churches to study this report carefully; and if individuals or consistories wish to reflect on this report, they should do so by overture to the next Synod. This brings to mind a weakness in our system which ought to be corrected. The purpose of our Agenda, according to our rules for synod, is to provide the churches with the opportunity to reflect (by way of overture) on matters coming before Synod. However, the Agenda does not appear until about the 10th of May; and there are no classical meetings between that time and the time when Synod meets. Nor has any procedure been outlined by which a consistory may reach Synod with an opinion or an objection concerning matters in the Agenda. Unless correction of this weakness is made, I predict that some day our churches are going to face problems in this regard. This ought to be discussed, and a solution of this flaw in our system should be presented.

Committee IV advised Synod chiefly on matters of finance, such as subsidy for needy churches, budgets of standing committees, etc. It is a fact that there will be a considerable increase in the synodical budget for the next fiscal year, and a consequent increase in assessments. Part of this increase is due to a large increase in subsidies for needy churches; part of it is

due to the need of building up our denominational Emeritus Fund with a view to future retirement of our older ministers; part was, of course, due to our decision to help God's people in New Zealand. Synod, it may be said, was constantly mindful of the budget, acted very carefully, and certainly was by no means a spendthrift synod. Committee IV is actually a kind of watchdog committee in regard to finances, and serves Synod and the churches well in this regard. But the simple fact is that the Lord has laid this work, and its attendant expenses, upon us. The work of God's kingdom as represented in the cause of our churches must go forward; and our churches should consider it a privilege as well as a responsibility to support this work. Meanwhile, it would be well — and it certainly would be helpful — if one or two of our larger congregations would agree to sponsor and underwrite the costs of some of these labors. In the past, for example, one of our churches supported one of our missionaries by itself. Why not consider this possibility, either with regard to our mission endeavors or with regard to the loaning of a minister to New Zealand?

For the rest, you will have to consult the Acts of Synod-1976 for details. You ask when will the Acts appear? Well, I failed to mention that Rev. M. Schipper reported to Synod that he was unable to carry out the duties of Stated Clerk which he accepted last year. Synod accepted his resignation; and it elected a young, vigorous, efficient man in his place: Rev. M. Joostens. We look forward to the prompt publication of this year's Acts, as well as to the belated publication of the 1975 Acts.

May the Lord our God follow the various decisions taken with His indispensable blessing, and may the cause of His church as represented in our churches continue to prosper and go forward!

Postscript: I neglected to mention that Hudsonville, Michigan, was appointed the calling church for the 1977 Synod.

GRADUATION ADDRESS--

The Key Of Knowledge

Prof. H. Hanko

INTRODUCTION

While dining in a certain Pharisee's house, Jesus was the object of the scorn of His host because he was eating without first washing. This became the occasion for a series of woes which Jesus pronounced upon the hypocritical Pharisees who make clean the

outside of dishes, but who are inwardly full of wickedness.

This series of woes was interrupted by a lawyer who complained that Jesus was also reproaching them with his condemnation of the Pharisees. In response to this, Jesus turned also with His terrible woes to

them. And among the reasons why they too were to be condemned was the fact that they had taken away the key of knowledge.

The lawyers were that group of Jewish leaders who made the law of Moses especially the object of their study. They sought to understand the law and apply it to the life of Israelites. But in their study and teaching of the law, they took away the key of knowledge; and by doing this, they did not enter into that knowledge themselves, nor did they permit others to enter who desired this.

Although this is a rather negative discussion of the key of knowledge, I wish to call your attention briefly to it this morning on the occasion of your graduation.

THE KNOWLEDGE REFERRED TO

There have been various interpretations of this expression by different commentators. Meyer, e.g., makes the knowledge of which Jesus speaks divine, saving truth which he compares to a closed house. The key, he says, has no specific referent, but the lawyers are accused of preventing the people whom they instructed from gaining true knowledge.

Lenski speaks of the fact that the key spoken of in the text is the Scriptures, and specifically, Christ. But he identifies the key and the knowledge which the key unlocks.

Calvin identifies the key with the keys of the kingdom of heaven and makes the knowledge of which the text speaks the true understanding of the law of Moses.

No doubt all these interpretations have an element of truth to them. The correct idea must be determined by the context in which these words of our Lord appear.

The lawyers to whom Jesus speaks were men who made the law of the Old Testament the particular object of their study. But that law was a part of the Old Testament Scriptures which God had given to His Church. In their study of the law and their application of it to the life of the people of Israel, they considered that law as a mere body of legislation governing Israel's civil, ceremonial, and ecclesiastical life. Or, at best, they looked upon the law as a kind of ladder upon which a man could climb to heaven. They forgot that the heart of the law was Christ, for all the law pointed ahead to Christ and was the schoolmaster, to use Paul's expression, to lead to Christ. Thus, by their teaching, they took away Christ and deprived the people of the knowledge of the truth as revealed in the law — specifically the knowledge of the riches of the kingdom. They did not enter into that knowledge themselves, and they hindered those who were entering in.

From this context we may say that the knowledge to which Jesus refers has especially four elements about it.

In the first place, Jesus uses the word "knowledge" in the broad sense of the word. He does not limit the expression here. He speaks of knowledge in general. He speaks of knowledge from the viewpoint of all that a man knows with his soul.

In the second place, this knowledge, however, is true knowledge. Or, to put it a little differently, it is knowledge of the truth. And, as such, it is always knowledge of God. This is the only true knowledge there is. Although we may perhaps speak in a certain sense of knowledge from a formal point of view (Columbus discovered America in 1492), nevertheless, true knowledge in the sense in which Scripture speaks of it is always knowledge of God. Anything else is principally the lie.

But at the same time, there is also no true knowledge of God except it be *saving* knowledge. Once again, in the abstract it is perhaps possible to speak of a certain objective knowledge of the truth which a man possesses; but man being the sinner that he is will never hold to that truth apart from faith. Thus faith is absolutely indispensable to the acquisition of that knowledge. But faith is always more than mere intellectual assent to a body of objective data.

In the third place, this knowledge is principally in the Scriptures. This does not contradict what I have already said. Jesus refers indeed to knowledge in a very general sense. And some of that knowledge you have acquired in your years in college. You have gained knowledge in such areas as history, science, psychology, logic, philosophy, etc. Yet the fact remains that the Scriptures are the principle of all knowledge. This is true for two reasons. One reason is the subjective condition of man. Man is a sinner. And the sin which inheres in his very nature makes it essential for knowledge to come to us in the Scriptures. Without Scripture there is no knowledge of God. The second reason is objective. All knowledge comes through Christ. Let me say that again. *All* knowledge comes through Christ. God does not reveal Himself except through Christ. All revelation is through Christ. And Christ may be known only through the Scriptures.

In the fourth place, the figure of the text is that of a locked room. No doubt, knowledge is presented under that figure in the text on the one hand because all knowledge comes through revelation. Revelation is the uncovering of the Unknowable God. On the other hand, the room is locked because sin locks that door with utter and total finality. Nevertheless, that room is full of wonderful treasures: treasures of the knowledge of God, which knowledge is riches beyond

compare, not only in this life, but into all eternity. What glorious and marvelous riches await the one who enters that room! It is indeed a storehouse that dazzles the eyes and brings ecstasy to the soul.

THE KEY

The key to that room — the key which unlocks the door — is Christ.

In a certain sense of the word it is true that the key and the room are to be identified. On the one hand, Christ is indeed the key by which the door to that room is opened. Because the lawyers of Jesus' day cut Christ out of the law, they threw away the key of knowledge. But, on the other hand, because the Scriptures are the principle of all knowledge and because the Scriptures are the record of the revelation of Christ, therefore Christ is also the principle of all that knowledge.

Nevertheless, He is the key. All knowledge is opened to us only through Christ. This is true of the Scriptures first of all. If you take Christ out of the Scriptures, whatever you have left is not true knowledge. Indeed, you have nothing left principally. Only when you see Christ in the Scriptures do you see that which the Scriptures reveal. Only when Christ is the key by which the door of the Scriptures is opened, do the riches of that room full of treasure become available to us and become our possession. The Scriptures are what they are because of Christ.

But, from this viewpoint, this is true of all knowledge. Because we can come to true knowledge, the knowledge of God, only through the Scriptures, therefore, we can acquire knowledge in any discipline of knowledge only through Christ. This is true of history, of science, of philosophy, or whatever. Take Christ out and you have nothing left. Remove Christ from history and you can have no genuine history. Take Christ out of science and you have no genuine science. But with Christ as the key to all knowledge, everything fits and all becomes clear. The room of knowledge is opened and the true treasures of the knowledge of God become our possession.

THE KEY THROWN AWAY

The lawyers threw away the key of knowledge.

There are many who do the same today.

Those who no longer accept the Scriptures as the infallibly inspired Word of God take away the key of knowledge. It may be that the errors which some find are relatively few in number. But the trouble is that there is really no stopping. And presently Christ is taken out of the Scriptures, for the miracles are denied; and along with the miracles go the virgin birth of Christ, His resurrection from the dead, and His atoning sacrifice on the cross. But when the key is thrown away, then all true knowledge is gone, for the

door to that knowledge remains locked.

The theory of common grace also throws away the key. Those who are addicted to this theory teach that because of a general attitude of favor towards all men, God gives to all men a general operation of the Spirit. By means of this there is, so they say, a certain true knowledge of God apart from Scripture which can be obtained apart from faith and apart from Christ without salvation. This too throws away the key of knowledge and locks the door to the true knowledge of God. If the unbeliever is able to acquire some such knowledge, then that knowledge is the knowledge of the lie. Throwing away the key one is consigned to stumbling about in a pitch dark room, thinking one has acquired treasures when one only handles the filthy lies produced in unbelieving minds.

The key of knowledge is also discarded by the A.A.C.S. Those who follow the new philosophy from Amsterdam make a disjunction between Scripture and God's Word or work in creation. But then there is a knowledge to be gained apart from Christ. And the effect is that the key is thrown away, and the room of the true knowledge of God remains locked.

But you have been given that key. Your graduation is the token of that. Graduation from a school is not necessarily that. But here, within these walls, it is. Your diploma does not signify only that you have intellectually mastered a given amount of material with sufficient competence to acquire a passing grade. It signifies that you have been given the key of knowledge. If it does not signify that, then we have no business here in this institution.

You have been given that in all the subjects you have been taught. It is a key which opens to you the storeroom of the treasures of that knowledge of which Jesus speaks. As long as you hold that key, the door will be open before you. You have begun to enter that room. Do not think that you have now examined and acquired all the treasures in it. You have only begun. Indeed a lifetime is insufficiently long to discover the riches in that room.

But it is your key given to you to use. Use it as you continue your studies now that you are ready to enter Seminary. Use it as you enter that room again and again in your quest for the truth. The lawyers did not themselves enter in. You will not either if you discard the key.

But because you study for the ministry of the Word and sacraments in God's Church you will, in the future, the Lord willing, also lead others into that treasure room of the kingdom. The lawyers hindered those who were entering. They could not prevent them from entering, for the key comes to them from elsewhere — if not from the lawyers. May your heart be set on that calling to aid others to enter. And may God give you the desire of your heart.

GUEST ARTICLES

Are You Sure of Your Salvation (2) On Vacations Mr. Carter's Religion

ARE YOU SURE OF YOUR SALVATION (2)

Rev. J. Slopsema

In the previous article, we discussed this question from the point of view of its meaning. Negatively, the question is not: have you done enough to make sure that you are saved? Have you done enough to assure yourself a place in heaven? Rather is the question to be understood: are you sure that God has saved you? This we discussed from the point of view of II Peter 1:10. This question has to do, therefore, with the personal assurance of our calling and election.

This is a very important question.

For, in the first place, it is necessary that we have this assurance. There is a two-fold necessity here.

It is necessary to have this assurance, first of all, because God demands it of us. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (II Peter 1:10.) That is a command which the Lord lays upon us. It is our obligation before God to attain this assurance.

But, in the second place, the child of God must have this assurance because of an inner, spiritual necessity within the believer himself. The question of salvation is the all important question of his life. To have and possess salvation is to have everything. To lack it is to have nothing. He may have all else: riches, honor, position, and fame. But if he does not possess salvation, he really has nothing and is of all men most miserable. Such is the spiritual attitude of the child of God. There is within the heart and soul of the child of God an insatiable thirst for the assurance of personal salvation. He must attain the knowledge and assurance of his own salvation. He must know that he is numbered among God's elect. And he will do anything and everything — cross the seven seas if necessary — to attain that assurance. He must know!

But quite often the child of God does not have the full and confident assurance of his salvation. For it is possible to be saved, to be one of God's elect, to be called out of darkness into the marvelous light of

God, and not have the full assurance of it. The child of God is not always on the mountaintops of faith when the personal assurance of salvation is strong. Quite often he finds himself in the spiritual valleys of doubt and despair, so that God seems far away and the matter of personal salvation is brought into question. The child of God has his spiritual ups and downs.

In fact there are some children of God who never seem to be able to get out of their spiritual valleys. They struggle with the assurance of their own salvation all their life. They never come to a time when they can say, "I am fully persuaded and confident that I am a child of God and that salvation is mine." There are even those who claim that such a blessed assurance is not possible at all. Rather, doubt is the norm for the child of God. It is normal for the Christian to be in doubt about his own salvation. There may be a few elite within the church who have attained this assurance. But the norm is that the child of God never attains the personal assurance of salvation in this life.

The truth of the matter, however, is that the assurance of salvation is possible and, in fact, normal for the Christian.

How often in Scripture do we not find that the saints confess their personal assurance of salvation? The Psalms are filled with such confessions, too numerous to mention. Consider the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:35,37: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Here Paul speaks not only for himself, but also on behalf of the church of Rome. He does not say "I" but "us." Both Paul and the saints at Rome were assured of the saving love of God in Christ through which they were more than conquerors. Many more examples of this nature could be mentioned.

But in the second place, it is inconceivable that

God would elect and save someone without also giving him the assurance of that fact. For what is the purpose of God's saving work? It is that His elect may glorify His name in praise and thanksgiving for the blessings He has bestowed on them. But this certainly presupposes that His people first be conscious of and have the assurance of the fact that they are saved. How can one walk in gratitude to God for His blessings if he does not have the assurance of them? Therefore, it is not only possible, but also normal for the child of God to have the assurance of salvation. If he lacks that assurance, it is abnormal. It is a sign that all is not well with him spiritually.

This leads us to consider how one attains the assurance of salvation.

We can say from a negative point of view, that we can not obtain the assurance of salvation by appealing to a past conversion. There are those who are able to point to a sudden conversion in their lives. Before they lived in sin and wickedness. But the grace of God suddenly brought them to conversion. They are able to recall the hour and the day with all its details. Their conversion was like that of the Apostle Paul or the thief on the cross. By appealing to such a past, sudden conversion, they hope to attain the assurance of salvation. But this will not bring assurance. How easy it is over the course of time for doubts to arise in one's mind! Was this a true conversion or merely a figment of the imagination? Besides, let us not forget that the experience of sudden and vivid conversion is not everyone's and certainly should not be set up as a standard for all. In some circles, if a man can not point to some such sudden conversion, he simply is not saved. But such sudden conversions are the exception, rather than the rule. Normally, in the sphere of the covenant, conversion is gradual, not sudden.

There are others who would obtain the assurance of salvation by introspection and searching for evidences of grace in their lives. The elective and saving grace of God bears spiritual fruits of righteousness within the life and consciousness of the child of God. He is sorry for his sins. He delights in the law of God, striving to be pleasing to the Most High. He loves the brethren and is not a friend of the world. Therefore, so the reasoning goes, if one but looks inward and can discover within himself such evidences of God's grace, he can have the assurance that he is one of God's own. But the trouble with this approach is that when he does this, for every evidence of grace that he finds that testifies that he is a child of God he will find a thousand evidences in his life that testify that he never was a child of God. For the child of God, as long as he is in this life, is still plagued with his sinful flesh so that even his best works are corrupted and tainted with sin. And one's sin brings a very damning

testimony to the one who will find the assurance of salvation by such self-introspection.

Finally, there are some who rely upon special revelations from God. The only way to obtain the assurance of salvation is that God somehow reveal it to them in a special way — whether through some mystical inner voice, or through some experience, or through some extraordinary event. But the problem is that God does not reveal Himself mystically through inner voices and feelings. His revelation can never be divorced from His objective Word.

How, then, do we obtain the blessed assurance of salvation?

In the first place, we must bear in mind that just as it is God Who must save us, so also is it God through His Spirit Who must give us the assurance of salvation. For according to Romans 8:16 it is the Spirit that beareth witness to our spirit that we are the sons of God. Only when the Spirit brings that testimony do we have the assurance of our own salvation.

But this testimony comes only in connection with the objective Word. This is where so many go astray. They divorce the testimony of the Spirit from the Word and fall into mystical subjectivism. It is, however, only in connection with the Word, and especially the preaching of the Word, that the testimony of the Spirit comes to the child of God. The Word reveals the whole work of God's salvation, starting from election, proceeding to the cross, passing on the call of God to salvation, and ending with the glorification of His people. When the child of God comes into contact with that Word he asks whether that is for him. Am I one of those elect? Did Christ die for me? Has God called me to salvation? Does this all apply to me? Then, in connection with that Word, the Spirit testifies to our spirit. That is, He applies that Word of God to us personally so that we have the assurance of our salvation.

However, all is not yet told. We may not divorce the testimony of the Spirit from the Word; but neither must we divorce it from our calling. Peter admonishes us to make our calling and election sure. By making our calling sure, we thereby also make our election sure which is the immovable basis for the assurance of salvation. But we make our calling sure only by walking in the way of that calling. That means a walk of sanctification. For thereunto are we called. The Spirit does not testify to our spirit, does not apply to us personally the Word of salvation, apart from our daily walk and life in the midst of this world. Only when we walk uprightly in the way of our calling, fighting against our sins, striving to do that which is good before God does the Spirit give us the assurance of our salvation.

This, of course, has far reaching implications.

It implies, first of all, that we must seek out and attend to the pure preaching of the Word. It stands to reason that the Spirit does not work His testimony of assurance in connection with the lie. To the degree, therefore, that the preaching has become adulterated with false doctrine, to that degree the people of God will lack the blessed assurance of their own salvation. If you desire to have a strong and flourishing assurance, which is also the demand of God, then it is imperative that you regularly attend the pure preaching of the Word.

But, in the second place, this all implies that we must strive to walk uprightly before God according to all the commandments of His Word. We must fight against all our sin. Daily we must put off the old man and put on the new man of righteousness. Only then will we have the strong personal assurance of our own salvation, so that we can proclaim with the Apostle Paul, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38, 39).

ON VACATIONS

Rev. R. Van Overloop

Once again it is the time when most people are thinking about the family vacation. With the temperature rising and the children home from school, the summer months will find many families going on vacation.

It seems that vacations are more feasible for us today than ever before. The financial ability to go on a vacation is much greater today than in the years of our grandparents and great-grandparents. Also, there was a time when a week-long vacation was average. Today it is more common to hear of two or three weeks being the length of time the father is able to get off from his work.

We hear more about vacations because of the age in which we live. Emphasis is increasingly being placed upon pleasure. In times past it could be said that everyone was work-oriented. Today we are more pleasure-oriented. We seek to satisfy our desires for pleasure. Our children are raised with that emphasis thrown at them from every side. This due much to the affluency of our age. This affluence enables one to satisfy his desires for pleasure. Much money is spent specifically for vacations. A walk through a campground or a ride past motels in a resort area and a tally of the equipment and "no vacancy" signs in terms of dollars and cents will bear out this fact. The question of proper stewardship then arises. Where must be drawn the line which if exceeded would be

improper stewardship? The head of each family should not neglect to face this question of stewardship. Each must consider it and satisfactorily answer it for himself. That this question can be for the most part satisfactorily answered, I have no doubt. Nor do I doubt that in some instances the conscience will twinge when it is seen what percentage of the total income is spent on the vacation.

Far be it from us to condemn vacations as such. For the most part, they are beneficial, and for some are even necessary. The strain which our very busy life puts upon us is great. As time is taken to behold the wonders of God's creative hand, this strain is relaxed.

It is often said after one gets back to work, that one is less busy at work than while on vacation. Though to my mind that is not the ideal vacation, it nevertheless does serve the purpose of changing our pace. Just to get out of the shop and into the real light of the sun for a number of days is good for the body and soul. Vacations are good and necessary for the sake of our physical and mental health. There is no sin involved in seeking such relaxation.

In the quiet of some woods, sitting beside a placid lake in the early morning, watching the glories of the setting sun, counting the stars of heaven, beholding the grandeur of a mountain or canyon — all are ways in which God's hand gently calms us. Then we can take the time to hear the songs of different birds, or to see the intricate beauty of an endless number of flowers. Parenthetically, let us note that we as parents should not forget that although our children are out of school, our responsibility to train them has not diminished. Vacation into God's creation brings us into a new classroom and sets before us a rich textbook filled with wonderful lessons. "When thou walkest by the way" (Deut. 6:7), show your children God's handiwork.

The purpose of these lines is to take note of what seems to be an increasing problem, namely, that of the place of the Sabbath in vacations.

First of all, it can be noted with appreciation, that with the rise in vacations, there is also a rise in the number of visitors our churches have from other members of our denomination. This is very good and is the way it should be.

However, there seems to be a parallel rise in the number of families who take the liberty of using their vacation as a vacation from worshipping God.

We should never take our families on vacation to a place where there is no possibility for us to worship God on the Sabbath through the proclamation of His Word.

The excuse is raised that we can worship God in creation. This excuse is devilish deception. As we

have said, there is nothing wrong with worshipping God in the realm of His creation, but God never would have us to worship Him in the realm of creation RATHER THAN under the preaching of His Word. In fact, it could be said that if one continues deliberately to leave God as He is glorified under the preaching, he will soon find no God to be glorified in creation.

There is nothing wrong with vacations as such, but there is something very much wrong with vacations which are also vacations from worship services. We must not despise the rich spiritual food God sets before us on the Sabbath day, just so we can go on vacation. That is a destruction of both the Sabbath and of vacation. Then our vacation is only the blind and sinful satisfaction of our lusts for pleasure.

In that connection let us speak of the sin of returning home from vacation on Sunday. (In the past few years, instances of just this have been brought to my attention.) And why get home on Sunday? — because the father has to get to work on Monday. What other conclusion can be reached than that, in the mind of that father, Monday is more important than Sunday, that work is more important than church, that money and pleasure is more important than God. The stench of such sins rise to the highest heavens. A more terrifying thought is: what kind of opinion of God and of the Sabbath is being formed in the minds of the children of that family?

But what about attending the worship services of another denomination while we are on vacation? It will not hurt to stay away from our own services the one or two Sundays we are on vacation, will it? Is there something so special about the worship of God in our congregations? Is not God worshipped also in other denominations? Besides, we will then appreciate our own church so much more when we get back to our own churches.

Yes, God is most certainly worshipped in congregations outside of those who have affiliation in the federation of the Protestant Reformed denomination. However, why is it that we have our church membership in the congregation we do? Is it not because we confess that the three pure marks of the true church are best reflected in that congregation (Belgic Confession, Art. 29)? Is it not because we believe we receive the best spiritual food there? Hence, is it not because we believe God is the best worshipped there; that He is more highly glorified and praised where His Word is purely proclaimed?

Does this make something special of the worship of God in our denomination? Yes, it does. The fellow-congregations with whom a congregation willingly affiliates, possess that same wonderful reflection of the pure marks. We can believe that in all of them,

the same Word of God is faithfully preached from Sabbath to Sabbath.

Does this mean that we should go on vacations only near one of our churches, or at least so that we can reach one of them by Sunday? Yes, that is true. Then we cannot go anywhere we desire. The physical desire to visit far away lands must be curbed in the light of our spiritual obligation to glorify God in the highest possible way.

Sometimes the Lord Himself creates circumstances which make it such that we cannot worship Him as we should or as we would like to do so. We may be sick and have to stay home on the Sabbath. Or we may be called to a distant city due to the sickness or death of a relative. In such cases we should eat the best spiritual food available, even though it may be meager. We will do so, being sure that our reason for attending such services is not for our own convenience.

Does it hurt, if we willingly stay away from the best reflection of the pure marks of the true church? It most certainly does.

First, it is a slap in the face of the Almighty. By such action we express to our heavenly Father that in that worship service He should be satisfied with less praise and glory. And the reason He should be satisfied is because we want to go on vacation to an area of the world where the best known proclamation of His Word does not exist.

Shame on us for even letting such a thought into our heads. How terrifying such a thought is.

Secondly, it hurts us and our families spiritually. We would not have our children be fed with just water for one week, would we? We must also be sure that we and our children receive the sincere milk of the Word whenever God sets it before us. We worry if our child refuses to eat and we wonder what ails him. Something is ailing when a child of God makes it impossible for himself to drink the sincere milk of the Word. To say it will not hurt to be gone for one Sunday, reveals a lack of appetite for the sincere milk of the Word and shows a touch of spiritual sickness.

Beloved believers, does not our church membership show that a vow has been made? Do not we say, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Psalm 137:5,6).

MR. CARTER'S RELIGION

Reverend E.C. Case, Pastor
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Mr. Jimmy Carter is running for President of the

United States. In that respect, he is no different from a dozen or so other politicians across the country. What sets Mr. Carter apart from the rest is the fact that he has gone out of his way to declare himself to be a Christian. As a result, the religious issue, absent for some sixteen years from national politics, has once again appeared on the political scene. The last time so much was said about a candidate's religion was in 1960, when the Romanist, Kennedy, was elected in spite of his religion, which many thought would be a severe handicap in "protestant" America.

Mr. Carter brought this matter up himself. So, even though we might have otherwise not given much attention to the question, it now seems imperative that some evaluation of his claims be made. Some, perhaps, are grateful for this renewed interest in religion, especially since the one sparking the interest is a professed "evangelical" Christian who claims to have had a personal experience with Jesus Christ. Also, some Reformed people seem to be enthused over Carter and his professions. Frankly, however, this writer is skeptical for a couple of reasons.

First of all, we take note of the fact that Mr. Carter is a politician from a state in the Deep South. The opinion of this writer, naturally, is that this is no liability. Where better to be from than the South? There is a problem, a religious problem, in regards to this, however. People in the South, whether wrongly or rightly, are considered to be more "religious" than people in other parts of the nation. Consequently, politicians have often found it expedient to make political capital of their religion. In times past (and even now in most local elections), the political handbills advertised, among other things, the church of which the candidate was a member. There is even a story about the famous Louisiana Governor, Huey Long, to the effect that he campaigned in that state (heavily Protestant in the north and heavily Catholic in the south) by telling of hitching up the old family horse to the buggy to carry his Catholic grandparents to Mass early in the morning, and his Baptist grandparents to church later in the day. When one of his aides later remarked that he was not aware of Long's Catholic heritage, the Governor snorted: "We didn't even have a horse."

Mr. Carter is not as crass as Gov. Long was, but one cannot help wondering if similar motivations are not present; if he is not, in fact, a politician who has found it helpful in the past to portray himself as a religious man and is now trying to advance even further by playing that tune. This might seem, perhaps, to be an unjustified, cruel thing to say, were it not for something else which is quite disturbing.

A major network news show recently interviewed Mr. Carter on the subject of his religion. A number of the views he expressed were quite agreeable. But then, the interviewer quoted from Ephesians 5:22-24, about wives being in subjection to their husbands, and asked the candidate his view on that. At first, Carter refused to answer. Then, he finally stated that he just couldn't go along with that teaching. Mr. Carter, it seems, has a bit of a problem with St. Paul. Or, more precisely, Mr. Carter, candidate, would have a lot of trouble with the women's libbers if he did agree with the Biblical statement.

Does this not suggest, at the very least, that Mr. Carter's view of the authority of Scripture is defective? Is this not typical of the neoevangelicalism which largely characterizes the denomination of which Mr. Carter is a member? To say as much is to be generous to Mr. Carter. One could go as far as to question whether or not Mr. Carter is one of those who holds to those parts of Scripture he likes and discards those he dislikes. That too, is something common among those who hold to the "Folk Religion" of the South. We could also get into the matter of Carter's "preaching," faith-healing sister, but a man should not have to bear the responsibility for his kinfolk. Still, we have never heard that he is opposed to her "ministry."

Remember, Mr. Carter brought all of this up when he started talking about his religion on the campaign trail. Ordinarily, we would not pay much attention to what politicians say. But when a man runs for President as an avowed Christian, he is open to our scrutiny. Mr. Carter does not, it would seem, stand the light too well.

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QUESTION BOX

About the Battle Pictured in Revelation 9:13-21

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Question

From the Men's Society of our Randolph congregation I received the following question in connection with the sixth trumpet of Revelation 9:13-21: "Does the battle pictured in this section take place before the final development of the Antichristian kingdom, or are we to understand the section as a prefiguring of the last great battle, the Battle of Armageddon?"

Reply

In the passage mentioned we have the account of the sixth trumpet and of the vision of the dreadful host of cavalry, two hundred million in number and of fearful description. This fearful host is let loose at the great river Euphrates; and the result is a plague symbolized by fire, smoke, and brimstone, which kills one-third part of men. I cannot go into detail with respect to the interpretation of this sixth trumpet. For a detailed explanation I refer the reader to H. Hoeksema, *Behold He Cometh!*, pp. 322, ff. Assuming that this vision speaks of the plagues of war, famine, and pestilence which shall be let loose upon the world when the river Euphrates, the ideal and symbolic boundary line between the nominally Christian and the heathen nations, the civilized world and Gog and Magog, is dried up, I offer the following answer to this question:

1) As to its idea, this sixth trumpet takes us to the very end of history, to the time immediately before the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. This stands closely connected with the entire scheme of the seals, the trumpets, and the vials in the Book of Revelation.

And that this is true will be plain especially from a comparison between this sixth trumpet and the sixth vial in Revelation 16. From that point of view it can be said that there is here a prefiguration of the last great battle, the battle of Armageddon. The full realization of what is symbolized by this sixth trumpet is found in the sixth vial.

2) Nevertheless, the sixth trumpet as such cannot refer to that final battle, but must refer to something which takes place before the final development of the Antichristian kingdom. My reason for saying this lies in the fact that in this vision the destruction pictured is not complete. One-third of men shall be killed as a result of these plagues. This one-third is more than the one-fourth that is connected with the seals, but it is not the total destruction connected with the vials. More than average, more than ever before, shall be killed as a result of the sixth trumpet. I will conclude my answer, therefore, by quoting the following paragraph from *Behold He Cometh!*, p. 332: "In brief, therefore, we have the picture of a war that is still to come, in which not only the Christian but also the heathen world shall be involved, and the outcome of which shall be that one-third of men, that is, more than ever before, shall be killed. Faint indications of this we have in history when the nations of the east at the time of the destruction of the Roman Empire rise against it and flood Europe. And more definite indications of this war that is prophesied in the Book of Revelation we have in our own time. Nevertheless, the full realization also of this trumpet is still in the future. Also this second woe we must still expect."

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

Election And Reprobation As Taught By John Calvin

Prof. Robert D. Decker

In the previous two articles we have expounded the truth of election and reprobation as taught in Article XVI of the *Belgic or Netherlands Confession of Faith*. In the present issue we shall examine something of what the great Reformer, John Calvin, had to say concerning divine predestination. The passages we have selected are all taken out of Book III of Calvin's *Institutes Of The Christian Religion*. We present them without comment:

"But before I enter into the matter itself, I need to mention by way of preface two kinds of men.

"Human curiosity renders the discussion of predestination, already somewhat difficult of itself, very confusing and even dangerous. No restraints can hold it back from wandering in forbidden bypaths and thrusting upward to the heights. If allowed, it will leave no secret to God that it will not search out and unravel. Since we see so many on all sides rushing into this audacity and impudence, among them certain men not otherwise bad, they should in due season be reminded of the measure of their duty in this regard.

"First, then, let them remember that when they inquire into predestination they are penetrating the sacred precincts of divine wisdom. If anyone with carefree assurance breaks into this place, he will not succeed in satisfying his curiosity and he will enter a labyrinth from which he can find no exit. For it is not right for man unrestrainedly to search out things that the Lord has willed to be hid in himself, and to unfold from eternity itself the sublimest wisdom, which he would have us revere but not understand that through this also he should fill us with wonder. He has set forth by his Word the secrets of his will that he has decided to reveal to us. These he decided

to reveal in so far as he foresaw that they would concern us and benefit us." (Chapter XXI, 1)

"There are others who, wishing to cure this evil, all but require that every mention of predestination be buried; indeed, they teach us to avoid any question of it, as we would a reef. Even though their moderation in this matter is rightly to be praised, because they feel that these mysteries ought to be discussed with great soberness, yet because they descend to too low a level, they make little progress with the human understanding, which does not allow itself to be easily restrained. Therefore to hold to a proper limit in this regard also, we shall have to turn back to the Word of the Lord, in which we have a sure rule for the understanding. For Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which, as nothing is omitted that is both necessary and useful to know, so nothing is taught but what is expedient to know." (Chap. XXI, 3)

"Profane men, I admit, in the matter of predestination abruptly seize upon something to carp, rail, bark, or scoff at. But if their shamelessness deters us, we shall have to keep secret the chief doctrines of the faith, almost none of which they or their like leave untouched by blasphemy. . . . But for those so cautious or fearful that they desire to bury predestination in order not to disturb weak souls — with what color will they cloak their arrogance when they accuse God indirectly of stupid thoughtlessness, as if he had not foreseen the peril that they feel they have wisely met? Whoever, then, heaps odium upon the doctrine of predestination openly reproaches God, as if he had unadvisedly let slip something hurtful to the church." (Chap. XXI, 4)

"As Scripture, then, clearly shows, we say that

God once established by his eternal and unchangeable plan those whom he long before determined once for all to receive unto salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, he would devote to destruction. We assert that, with respect to the elect, this plan was founded upon his freely given mercy, without regard to human worth; but by his just and irreprehensible but incomprehensible judgment he has barred the door of life to those whom he has given over to damnation. Now among the elect we regard the call as a testimony of election. Then we hold justification another sign of its manifestation, until they come into the glory in which the fulfillment of that election lies. But as the Lord seals his elect by call and justification, so, by shutting off the reprobate from knowledge of his name or from sanctification of his Spirit, he, as it were, reveals by these marks what sort of judgment awaits them. Here I shall pass over many fictions that stupid men have invented to overthrow predestination. They need no refutation, for as soon as they are brought forth they abundantly prove their own falsity. I shall pause over only those which either are being argued by the learned or may raise difficulty for the simple, or which impiety speciously sets forth in order to assail God's righteousness." (Chap. XXI, 7)

"Many persons dispute all these positions which we have set forth, especially the free election of believers; nevertheless, this cannot be shaken. For generally these persons consider that God distinguishes among men according as he foresees what the merits of each will be. Therefore, He adopts as sons those whom he foreknows will not be unworthy of his grace; he appoints to the damnation of death those whose dispositions he discerns will be inclined to evil intention and ungodliness. By thus covering election with a veil of foreknowledge, they not only obscure it but feign that it has its origin elsewhere. And this commonly accepted notion is not confined to the common folk; important authors of all periods have held it. This I frankly confess so that no one may assume that if their names be quoted against us, our case will be greatly damaged. For God's truth here is too sure to be shaken, too clear to be overwhelmed by men's authority. . . . Now it behooves us to pay attention to what Scripture proclaims of every person. When Paul teaches that we were chosen in Christ 'before the creation of the world' [Eph. 1:4a], he takes away all consideration of real worth on our part, for it is just as if he said: since among all the offspring of Adam, the Heavenly Father found nothing worthy of his election, he turned his eyes upon his Anointed, to choose from that body as members those whom he was to take into the fellowship of life. Let this reasoning, then, prevail among believers: we were adopted in Christ into the eternal

inheritance because in ourselves we were not capable of such great excellence.

"This Paul, also notes, in another passage, when he urges the Colossians to give thanks because God has made them fit to share the inheritance of the saints [Col. 1:12]. If, to make us fit to receive the glory of the life to come, election precedes this grace of God, what will God find in us now to move him to choose us? Another statement of Paul's will express even more clearly what I mean, 'He chose us,' says he, 'before the foundations of the world were laid' [Eph. 1:4a], 'according to the good pleasure of his will' [Eph. 1:5], 'that we should be holy and spotless and irreproachable in his sight, [Eph. 1:4b, conflated with Col. 1:22]. There Paul sets 'God's good pleasure' over against any merit of ours." (Chap. XXII, 1)

"That the proof may be more complete, it is worth-while to note the individual parts of this passage [Eph. 1:4-5], which, coupled together, leave no doubt. Since he calls them 'elect,' it cannot be doubted that he is speaking to believers, as he also soon declares; therefore those who misinterpret the word 'elect' as confined to the age when the gospel was proclaimed disfigure it with a base fabrication. By saying that they were 'elect before the creation of the world' [Eph. 1:4], he takes away all regard for worth. For what basis for distinction is there among those who did not yet exist, and who were subsequently to be equals with Adam? Now if they are elect in Christ, it follows that not only is each man elected without respect to his own person but also certain ones are separated from others, since we see that not all are members of Christ. Besides, the fact that they were elected 'to be holy' [Eph. 1:4b] plainly refutes the error that derives election from foreknowledge, since Paul declares all virtue appearing in man is the result of election. Now if a higher cause be sought, Paul answers that God has predestined it so, and that this is 'according to the good pleasure of his will' [Eph. 1:5b]. By these words he does away with all means of their election that men imagine in themselves. For all benefits that God bestows for the spiritual life, as Paul teaches, flow from this one source: namely that God has chosen whom he has willed, and before their birth has laid up for them individually the grace that he willed to grant them." (Chap. XXII, 2)

"Now a word concerning the reprobate, with whom the apostle is at the same time there concerned. For as Jacob, deserving nothing by good works, is taken into grace, so Esau, as yet undefiled by any crime, is hated [Rom. 9:13]. If we turn our eyes to works, we wrong the apostle, as if he did not see what is quite clear to us! Now it is proved that he did not see it, since he specifically emphasizes the point that when as yet they had done nothing good

or evil, one was chosen, the other rejected. This is to prove that the foundation of divine predestination is not in works. Then when he raised the objection, whether God is unjust, he does not make use of what would have been the surest and clearest defense of his righteousness: that God recompensed Esau according to his own evil intention. Instead, he contents himself with a different solution, that the reprobate are raised up to the end that through them God's glory may be revealed. Finally, he adds the conclusion that 'God has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills' [Rom. 9:18]. Do you see how Paul attributes both to God's decision alone? If, then, we cannot determine a reason why he vouchsafes mercy to his own, except that it so pleases him, neither shall we have any reason for rejecting others, other than his will. For when it is said that God hardens or shows mercy to whom he wills, men are warned by this to seek no cause outside his will." (Chap. XXII, 11)

"Now when human understanding hears these things, its insolence is so irrepressible that it breaks forth into random and immoderate tumult as if at the blast of a battle trumpet.

"Indeed many, as if they wished to avert a reproach from God, accept election in such terms as

to deny that anyone is condemned. But they do this very ignorantly and childishly, since election itself could not stand except as set over against reprobation. God is said to set apart those whom he adopts into salvation; it will be highly absurd to say that others acquire by chance or obtain by their own effort what election alone confers on a few. Therefore, those whom God passes over, he condemns; and this he does for no other reason than that he wills to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines for his own children. And men's insolence is unbearable if it refuses to be bridled by God's Word, which treats of his incomprehensible plan that the angels themselves adore. However, we have by now been taught that hardening is in God's hand and will, just as much as mercy is [Rom. 9:14ff.]. And Paul does not, as do those I have spoken of, labor anxiously to make false excuses in God's defense; he only warns that it is unlawful for the clay to quarrel with its potter [Rom. 9:20]."

From the above passages two facts are clearly evident. The first is that Calvin dealt with the same objections against predestination that we deal with today. Secondly, no one who denies election and reprobation has the right to call himself a Calvinist.

IN HIS FEAR

How Do We See Ourselves in the Light of the Beatitudes

Rev. M. Joostens

(Note: The following is the substance of a speech Rev. Joostens delivered at the Men's League Meeting held in Southeast Church on April 5 of this year. We think that it is worthy of publication under the above rubric.)

By way of general introduction this evening I want to say that I am honored that you asked me to speak to you. For this, in and of itself, always shows a certain confidence in that which a minister has to say, or, better, in the way he interprets the Scriptures. It is my prayer that we may enjoy one-another's fellow-

ship for an hour, and above all that we may profit from His Word.

I was immediately attracted to the topic which your chairman announced for this evening. As is customary, you gave me three topics to choose from: "The Signs of Christ's Second Coming," "The Third World and Its Affect Upon the Church," and the topic as announced this evening. I exercised my prerogative and chose the last of the three in your order of preference. It is not that I have anything against the first two. They are fine topics and could be made

very interesting. But as some of you know, I have done a little work with Christ's Sermon on the Mount. I have preached on it in my congregation. I find in the words of Christ a beauty that is overwhelming, as well as a profound simplicity that goes very deep in meaning. We do well to apply the words of Christ, as we find them in the beatitudes, to our lives.

But with your consent, I want to change the topic just a bit. I believe that this is a necessary change — necessary, because the question as stated in our topic is unanswerable for me. Not that I cannot answer it for myself — this I can do. But I cannot answer it for you. The question under consideration is an intensely personal one. We must all answer it, this evening and from day to day. Yet, I can tell you what the Word of God says about this question, and in that light, how you and I *ought* to see ourselves in light of the beatitudes. That leaves you and me personally with the question, "How Must We See Ourselves in Light of the Beatitudes?"

There are basically two things which we must understand in order to answer this question intelligently. First of all, we must understand the nature and characteristic of the beatitudes. They must be interpreted in their immediate context. This is true because Christ never spoke without rhyme or reason. He did not, as it were, shake sermons out of His sleeve. The beatitudes stand intimately related to the whole of the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, they are the introduction to this sermon. An important point is made here, for, as you know, an introduction leads an audience into the sermon or lecture. It prepares the audience to receive the main thrust of the speaker. And the main point of the Sermon on the Mount is the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, if we misconstrue the beatitudes, we cannot understand our place in the kingdom of heaven. It is especially for this reason that a consideration of the beatitudes is worthwhile and even incumbent upon us.

In the second place, we must not only understand the beatitudes from a general point of view, but also specifically. This is going to present a problem this evening, for one could profitably spend the entire allotted time on each of the beatitudes. Ministers often preach once on each of them. This luxury of time we are not afforded this evening. Therefore we will move right into the main thrust and practical implication of each beatitude. Forgive me if I gloss over all the necessary, logical connections; and perhaps you can save your questions for afterwards.

Let's first understand the place of the beatitudes in the discourse of Christ. They are, as we said, an introduction to the Sermon on the Mount proper. It is

general knowledge that Christ in this sermon expounds the truths of the kingdom of heaven. This is the kingdom that was foreshadowed in the Old Testament type of the theocracy of the nation of Israel. Especially as we see it manifested during the reigns of David and his son Solomon. David, who was a type of Christ, went forth conquering and to conquer, and so subdued all Israel's enemies under his feet. He established the bounds of Israel as they were originally promised to Abraham, from the northern river Euphrates to the great river of Egypt, the Nile. It was during the reign of Solomon that peace prevailed in the theocracy. In that kingdom God dwelt with His people in a typical way, in the tabernacle atop Mt. Zion. It was a picture of heaven. In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ instructs us regarding the reality of this type. The reality stands diametrically opposed to the earthly that characterized the type. He spoke of the kingdom of heaven in which He would be the Lord supreme. He would sit as King, not in the earthly Jerusalem, but as *the Son* in the heavenly Jerusalem.

And that kingdom, explains Christ, is based upon righteousness. That's true because its very origin and conception was in the mind of the Righteous One, God Himself. It is a kingdom in which He will rule through His Son, Christ Jesus. You understand that that kingdom, in all its perfection, is the final reality of God's covenant fellowship with His people.

That, in light of our topic, brings us to the more important aspect of that kingdom, namely, its subjects. I think, we all understand that the subjects of a particular kingdom have to fit the characteristics of that kingdom. An illustration will suffice to point this out. We are Americans. The kingdom (or republic, it makes no essential difference) to which we belong is our country. Therefore, we are citizens of this land. Yet there are others that are not Americans and are aliens to this country. So it is with Christ's kingdom. Those who are citizens of the kingdom of righteousness are righteous. And those who are unrighteous have no part in the kingdom. Or, to become more plain, those who are the heirs of the kingdom of heaven are God's people who have been made righteous in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. It is precisely here that we hit upon the significance of the cross of Calvary. The citizenship of the child of God has been purchased for him with the blood of the Lamb. The kingdom belongs to those who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. In short, this is the whole point of the beatitudes.

You see, it is in this introduction, the beatitudes, that Christ delineates very carefully the subjects of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, what Christ does in effect is this, that in His very introduction He says to some, "You are going to understand what I have to

say to you," while to others He says that they will not perceive the truth of the kingdom. He causes a division in His audience between those who are carnally minded and spiritually minded. It is for this very reason that some read this passage under consideration and cannot grasp its truth, while others are spiritually uplifted by it. Is it any wonder, therefore, that some men consider these beatitudes to be nothing but a bunch of paradoxes? They tell us that the beatitudes are contradictory in and of themselves. And they mockingly illustrate: The poor are rich? The meek shall inherit the earth? The mourning are comforted? Those who are hungry are at the same time satisfied? And the thirst of the thirsty is quenched? How can this be? You see, this is the division which Christ creates. Some perceive His words while others shake their heads in disgust. The words of Christ are a sharp two-edged sword, a savor of life unto life and of death unto death. That's why the beatitudes effectively introduce the Sermon on the Mount. Christ dealt with the spiritual reality of heaven. His instruction would apply to some and be foreign to others. The beatitudes have no universal application as the "social gospellers" like to have us think. Spiritual principles cannot be applied to the carnal heart.

This brings into clear focus the ultimate question for this evening. How do we see ourselves in light of the beatitudes? As the light of the beatitudes shines upon us, it reveals one of two things. It shows us to be either citizens of the kingdom of heaven or aliens. Let's examine the light of the beatitudes.

It is often debated as to exactly how many beatitudes there are. There are some who wish to include verses 10, 11, and 12 among the beatitudes of Christ. It seems to me that there is but little justification for doing this even though they have the characteristic, "blessed," in common. Quite obviously, they do not belong with the foregoing verses. This is evident from the fact that they do not describe a particular characteristic of the citizen of heaven but rather the lot of those who do possess these distinctive characteristics. Their lot in life is one of persecution. There are seven beatitudes which we find in verses 3-9 inclusive. The number seven, of course, cannot be accidental. It is the number of the covenant of God. How beautiful, therefore, to have seven beatitudes or characteristics of God's children, descriptive of the christian! We have in the beatitudes a complete and essential description of God's people, the citizens of the kingdom of Christ. These seven words of Christ are the mold, into which those who have a place in heaven fit.

Of necessity, we must be brief in the discussion of these beatitudes individually. But let us proceed. We find the first beatitude in verse three of the fifth chapter of Matthew. "Blessed are the poor in spirit

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The paradox which carnal men find here is quite apparent. Poor people are not blessed or happy but wretched and miserable. The carnally blind, when considering this beatitude, have dollar signs in their eyes and cannot fathom the spiritual reality here. Note, Christ says "Blessed are the *poor in spirit*." He is not speaking of earthly riches, power, or fame. No, not at all! Christ is speaking of our spiritual liabilities and assets before God. He who boasts in his own spiritual riches is essentially the pharisee, who says to God, "I thank thee that I am not like my neighbor who prostrates himself in the dust." The pharisee is able in his own carnal self-conceit to stand erect and boastful before the Almighty in order to tell God how rich he is spiritually. But Christ says that he who finds himself upon his knees before God, confessing his sin and spiritual poverty, is blessed. I am reminded in this connection of the general outline of the Heidelberg Catechism. What three things are necessary for me to experience comfort? First of all, that I know the greatness of my sins and misery. You see that we are able to see our spiritual poverty. Then, secondly, we will be driven to the cross, and, finally, express our gratitude to God for His riches of Christ's righteousness that fill our poverty, making us heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

The second characteristic is, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Here again there is the distinction between the carnal and the spiritual. The world also mourns. They bemoan sickness, death, all kinds of disasters, etc. But Christ again speaks specifically about the child of God who is a citizen of heaven. We mourn because of our spiritual poverty, as we spoke of that just a while ago. We mourn because sin ever cleaves to us! An excellent scriptural passage that is illustrative of this is Romans seven. Here Paul bemoans the sin which he has according to the flesh. He cries out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" For those who so mourn, there is comfort. Yea, for them there is the Comforter, the Spirit of God, Who reveals unto us the mystery of salvation.

Then we have the third beatitude: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." This beatitude certainly is utter folly according to man's thinking. If you are meek and humble you will never acquire anything here below. In fact, say they, the exact opposite is true. Those who are unscrupulous in their dealings, and forward, own large estates. But Christ is speaking of His own! An example will suffice to point out the folly of carnal thought. We read in the Scriptures (Numbers 12:3), "Now the man Moses was very meek . . ." And what do we find out about Moses in Hebrews eleven, the chapter of the heroes of faith? We find that he forsook the riches of Egypt and all

that was his in the household of Pharaoh's daughter to cast his lot with the people of God who found themselves in persecution. This he did because with eyes of faith he perceived that God had made a covenant with this people and made them the heirs of heaven. The meek shall inherit the earth! The wicked, bold, and unscrupulous have no claim to it even now. They are usurpers. But God's people, who are meek, shall inherit the earth, not as it is but as it shall be!

The fourth beatitude is, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Again the world laughs. For the hungry and thirsty, as well as the poor, are wretched. After all, happiness is to have our belly full and our thirst quenched. But, again, notice the spiritual distinctiveness. They who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. O, the child of God who is aware of his sin and the reward due him for it, hungers and thirsts after righteousness. We know that there is only one way to be right with God, and that is to stand in the righteousness of His Son. "As thirsts the hart for water brooks, so thirsts my soul, O God, for Thee." (Psalter No. 114)

And, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." The world stands utterly outside this blessedness. They in no way whatsoever experience God's mercy, because their hearts are filled with hatred and they operate according to the principle of selfishness. They know only of a warped kind of "pity" which they manifest to their own profit. This is behind all the philanthropy of this world. It is done out of self-esteem and self-glorification, if not solely for tax purposes. That is no mercy! But Christians who experience their own spiritual poverty in the misery of their sin and have tasted of the great mercy of God toward them as manifest in His Son, know how to return mercy. For it is the feeling that we are recipients of the compassions of our God that spurs us on to pity regarding our neighbor. It is nothing but a vicious cycle. Even as fire must consume to be fed, the body must take in in order to excrete. So we receive mercy for mercy!

The next to last beatitude is "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." The world always judges by external deportment. They judge a man by his outward appearance and pay no attention to that which is inside. His performance is what counts. They overlook the hatred and filthiness that revels within. But the spiritual truth is that no one who is characterized by mere "outward good" will even enter into the kingdom of heaven. The eyes of the Most High God are all pervading. There is nothing that remains hidden before His eyes. He knows the very intention of our hearts. Those who are pure of heart in the sight of God are blessed. And the filthiness which besets our hearts by

nature, though it can be glossed over by the world, can only be eradicated by the regenerating Spirit of God. They shall see God. Imagine that, to stand before the face of God. We shall see God in the face of Jesus Christ and forevermore walk in the light of His countenance. That is blessedness!

The last of the characteristics of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven is, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." If any beatitude has been abused, as far as its true meaning is concerned, this is it. Seemingly there is no text which better fits the philosophy of the world, especially in our day. Those who work toward peace are hailed as the heroes of our day. But the kind of peace that the world seeks is nothing but a peaceful co-existence, whether among nations, labor and management, or marriage partners. And, regarding the aims of the world, God's word has this to say: "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." (Is. 48:22) God's children are peacemakers. They alone can be peacemakers, for in them God has taken away all hatred, enmity, and strife. They can seek after the true peace that passes all understanding, which is found at Calvary, by bringing the Scriptures to bear upon all rivalry and hatred. And in the application of that Word, God through us makes peace. In so doing we are His children. We may call Him, Abba, Father!

Now that we have arrived at this juncture we must return to our initial question. How do we see ourselves in the light of the beatitudes as we have just discovered them to be? Are these our characteristics? Oh, don't brush this question off too lightly. After all, they are the declarations that proceed from the lips of the Master. And the King ought to know the requisites for entrance into His kingdom. Happy are those who fit the criteria and definition of the beatitudes. Consider them, will you? Don't say, "Oh, but they apply only to special Christians." This is not true. Every child of God conforms to the beatitudes; else he is a hypocrite. Nor may we pick and choose from among the seven. Don't console yourself by saying, "Five out of seven is not too bad." All of them must apply. We don't stack up too well, do we?!

Thanks be to God! These characteristics are spiritual ones. They have their root in the grace of God and never in ourselves. They come to us through the working of His Spirit. You see, they describe the new man in Christ. It is according to the new man within us that we can claim the description of the beatitudes to be ours. Then, to work them out in our daily lives remains a struggle. But, rest assured, if the struggle is there, then some day in glory these attributes will be put into perfect practice.

I thank you.

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.

NOTICE

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Loveland, Colorado, on Wednesday, September 1, 1976, the Lord willing. Material for the Agenda must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk thirty days before Classis convenes.

Rev. David Engelsma
Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere sympathy with one of its members, Mrs. June Van Overloop, in the recent loss of her mother, MRS. H. WUSTMAN, who went to join our Lord and the saints before the throne. With the Psalmist we are privileged to confess: "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

The Ladies Society of the
Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church
Mrs. B. Bruining, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies' Society of the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church of Wyoming, Michigan expresses its deep sympathy to the John Van Beek family in the loss of their wife and mother, Mrs. Grace Van Beek. May the God of all grace comfort their hearts in their sorrow and enable them to stand upon the Rock that is higher than they (Ps. 61:2b).

Rev. H. Veldman, Pres.
Mrs. John Faber, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 31, 1976, the Lord willing, our beloved parents, MR. AND MRS. TED MIEDEMA, SR. celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We, their grateful children and grand-children, are indeed thankful to our ever faithful covenant God for the many years of love and Christian instruction they have given us. Our sincere prayer is for God's continued blessing on them in the years which lie ahead of them.

Henry and Freda Zwak
Erne and Kae Miedema
Edward and Lorraine Miedema
Sidney and Donna Miedema
Ronald and Delores Miedema
Ted and Gloria Miedema
Gerald and Marcia Miedema
Robert and Jane Hoven
and their grandchildren.

NOTICE

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in regular session on July 7, 1976, at Hope church.

Rev. M. Joostens, Ass't. Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mr. and Mrs. Society of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to their fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. James Kuiper, in the loss of her mother, MRS. JOHN (GRACE) VAN BEEK. May Christ comfort them with the promise — "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26).

Mr. P. Lotterman, Pres.
Mrs. G. Moelker, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of First Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to Prof. and Mrs. Robert Decker in the loss of her father, Mr. Albert Poelstra. May our God comfort her and her family in their sorrow, with the assurance that "if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Cor. 5:1).

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.
Mrs. R. W. Pastoor, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

As the copy for this column is being assembled, the 1976 Synod of our churches has completed its work in South Holland, Illinois, our schools have conducted their annual graduation exercises, and most of the seasonal meetings in the churches have recessed

for the summer. Some of our churches have already had their church picnics. Many of our western churches schedule their church picnics on the 4th of July. At least this is true in Hull and Doon, Iowa, and Randolph, Wisconsin.

We might take special note of two graduation exercises this Spring. According to the First Church bulletin the senior pre-seminary students of our Seminary graduated on May 28 in ceremonies at the Seminary building. We extend to them our congratulations and prayer for God's blessing as they begin their seminary labors this fall. Also, one could detect a certain note of joy in the announcement which appeared in the Redlands, California, church bulletin, "The Graduation Program for the first graduates of our new school will be held Friday, June 4, at 8 PM in our Church. As parents we may indeed be thankful to God for the truths and love of His covenant with us and our children. Rev. Kamps will speak on 'Shew Me Thy Ways' from Ps. 25:4. Let us all plan to attend and enjoy this evening together in the love of Christ."

Since mention was made in an earlier issue of new additions to the families of three Protestant Reformed pastors, the latest arrival is duly noted: Rev. and Mrs. Marvin Kamps (Redlands) were blessed with a baby boy, John Marc, this past May 27th.

First's bulletin also reported that Rev. R. Van Overloop has declined the call from Doon, Iowa. Rev. W. Bekkering has received the call from our Kalamazoo, Michigan, congregation. We might also report that the First Church bulletin has been coming out on blue paper of late (just like that of Faith Church). Whether there is some special significance in the color or whether the printer ran out of white paper has yet to be determined.

During the time when the Synod of our Churches meets, many of our churches in Classis East are treated to pulpit exchanges. For instance, on June 6th, First Church listened to Rev. C. Hanko of Hudsonville in the morning and Rev. B. Woudenberg of Lynden, Washington, in the evening service. Both pastors brought greetings from their respective congregations. Rev. Woudenberg also extended greetings from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, where he had the

pleasant task of installing Rev. R. Moore as Edmonton's first pastor about ten days previously. Rev. Moore's departure from Doon, Iowa, to Edmonton was 'touch and go' up until the very last moment. His Canadian work permit arrived in the mail the very morning the Moore family planned to depart for their new home.

Digging into the drawer we find quite a pile of bulletins giving notice of many events in our churches this spring. Loveland was treated to a Congregational Soup Supper sponsored by the Ladies' Circle on April 23. South Holland scheduled their Annual School Fund-Raising Dinner on April 9. After dinner there were exhibits to see in the school and a short lecture by Rev. Engelsma on "Scripture in the Schools." \$1,337.79 was raised at this dinner. The Western Ladies' League met on April 22 at Edgerton Church. Rev. Slopeema spoke on "Mental Depression in the Light of Scripture." On May 14th Prof. H. Hanko lectured in Randolph, Wisconsin, on "Did Calvin and Luther Disagree?" And in Southeast Church in Grand Rapids the young people of the church sponsored a talent nite to raise money for their young people's convention this summer. Rev. Kortering spoke on "Evangelism" in Redlands on the same date. The annual Spring Protestant Reformed Lecture sponsored by the Protestant Reformed Churches in Michigan was held on April 29 in First Church. Prof. Robert Decker spoke on "The Woman's Place in the Church." If you were not among the church full who heard Prof. Decker that night and would like to hear this interesting speech, you can. Write to the *Standard Bearer* business office for details on how you can obtain a tape recording of this lecture or of many others which are available.

A Quiet Thought from Southeast's bulletin: "In the days when a woodshed stood behind the American home, a great deal of what passes as juvenile delinquency was settled out of court."

K. G. V.