

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... the Word of God is our infallible Guide Book, the absolute authority over all our lives. It is the lamp before our feet, the Light upon our pathway, the Rock upon which we stand, the Armor that protects us, the Weapon wherewith we fight. There is power, divine power, in that simple Word: "So saith the Lord!"

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MEDITATION

Of Good Courage

Rev. C. Hanko

“Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” Joshua 1:9.

“Have I not commanded thee?”

This is an obvious reminder of the command that the Lord had given to His servant Joshua in the past, and now is bringing to his attention anew.

In his farewell address to Israel, Moses reminded the people of God’s promise that He would go before them and drive out the enemy to give them the land sworn to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The man of God who had led Israel for forty years

through the wilderness urges the people on the basis of that sure promise to be strong and of good courage, not to fear, nor to be afraid of the enemy, for the Lord God Who accompanies them will not fail them nor forsake them. (Deut. 31:1-6)

Then Moses called Joshua, the new leader, spoke to him in the presence of the people, and urged him, even as he had urged the people, “Be strong and of good courage,” for the responsibility of leading this

people into the promised land rests on Joshua's shoulders. (verse 7)

Now Moses, the servant of the Lord, had died on mount Nebo. Until the day he bade them good-by his strength had not failed, his eyesight had not grown dim, his hearing had not been dulled. The Lord has sustained the old testament mediator in giving him patience with a murmuring and rebellious people as the meekest of men. Yet Moses' own weakness had shone through in that fateful hour when he had struck the rock instead of speaking to it, angrily declaring that this rebellious people was not worthy of receiving water from the Lord. He had failed to be the proper representative of the Christ, the perfect Mediator Who was still to come, in Whom God sees no transgression in Israel and no iniquity in Jacob. In spite of his own weakness, the Lord made Moses strong, even of great courage these many years. He was privileged to see the promised land from afar, but was not allowed to finish the work of leading Israel into the rest.

God had prepared another for that task. For forty years Joshua had been very close to Moses. Joshua had led the army of Israel to an early victory against the Amalekites. He had been one of the twelve spies to spy out the land of Canaan, and he was one of the two who brought a favorable report. Joshua had been schooled, not in a military academy, but in the hard school of daily experience. Now the Lord speaks to him personally, commissioning him to be the Joshua (Jesus) of the old dispensation, a type of the greater Joshua Who would come to save His people from their sin and bring them into the heavenly Canaan of everlasting Rest.

The commission is expressed in a few simple words: "Go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give unto them, even unto the children of Israel." (Joshua 1:2).

To that commission is added the encouragement: "Be strong and of good courage." (verse 6) And again, "Only be thou strong and very courageous." (verse 7) And then, as if to warn him of the stupendous task that rested on his shoulders: "Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed!"

Three times this call to courage is imprinted upon the soul of Israel's leader to make a lasting impression upon him, that he be steeled with courage in the super-human task that awaited him. What applies to Joshua applied no less to all of the army, no less to all of Israel, no less to us in whatever station of life God may place us.

A grave responsibility fell upon Joshua's shoulders. Before him lay the Jordan river swelled by spring floods, a madly raging, boiling stream of water that

could not possibly be safely crossed by two million people, including women and little children, along with all their cattle and their sheep. On the other side of Jordan the enemy awaited Israel in their strongly fortified cities, prepared to fight to the last man, while Joshua's small army consisted of nothing more than raw recruits, poorly equipped for warfare. There had been no long days of drilling and maneuvers in the wilderness. They were not equipped with battering rams to break down the massive walls of the cities, or with weapons to oppose a large army. An impossible task awaited Joshua, and he knew it.

What made Joshua's responsibility so great was the fact that Israel was no ordinary nation striking out to gain land and power by conquest. They were God's chosen people, separated from all the nations of the earth to be a peculiar people unto the Lord. Israel had been promised this land already centuries before. They were the heirs of the world and of the kingdom to come. In them the Lord had arisen, that by His might He might put all His enemies to flight in fear and consternation. On the one hand, this would seem to make the entire venture very easy; they need but rely on their God to give them the land. On the other hand, this was a faith venture. Israel had to take the land by faith, entering, marching, fighting, conquering in the Name of the Lord and by the power of His might. Not human strength or mighty hosts, not charging steeds or warlike boasts could save from overthrow. They lacked all of that. They were called to go forth in faith, trusting in the Captain of their salvation Who had appeared to Joshua and given him his battle instructions, as it is recorded in Hebrews 11:30, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days."

"Be of good courage." Natural courage under these circumstances could never serve their purpose. There are persons who have so much confidence in themselves that they can face dangers and difficulties without fear or trepidation. They are heroes in the eyes of others because of their sheer recklessness. They boldly throw all caution to the wind, to take a chance. If they succeed they find themselves in the hall of fame; if they fail they are branded as fools. These heroes seek the vain honor and praise of men. Spiritual courage is rooted in faith, faith in God. Faith gives the soldier the assurance that he is fighting the battle of the Lord, Who gives him the victory. He is not afraid of the enemy, for the One Who is with him is more than all his foes. He is not a turncoat in the face of battle; he stands firm, immovable in the confidence that the victory is the Lord's. He is well equipped, for his uniform bears the insignia of Jesus Christ, given to him at baptism and engraven in his heart. His shield of faith is capable of quenching all the fiery darts of the wicked. His sword of the Spirit

is the powerful, sharp Word of the living God, which no power of hell can resist. Faith supplies him with endurance. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ he never grows weary, never complains that too much is demanded of him. Christ's soldier is willing to bear reproach, to deny himself, to lay down his life for the cause of his God, fighting in the strength and endurance of the Lord.

This already precludes that a courageous soldier must be strong. The admonition is most proper, "Be strong," for only then canst thou be of good courage. But again, the soldier of the cross must not rely on the arm of flesh. He must not seek himself or the praise of men. He must heed the call of Scripture to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Not by human strength, human reasonings, human philosophies is the victory ever attained, but always only by the Spirit of the Lord working mightily within us, that no flesh may ever glory before the Lord. This means, first of all, that the true soldier must love his God above all, surrendering himself completely to God's cause in an evil world. He is fighting God's enemies, which have become his enemies. Saul lacked that love of God. Therefore he was afraid. When Goliath blasphemed the God of Israel and challenged Israel to fight a duel with him, Saul, who should have gone out to silence that blasphemy, sat cowering with weak knees and chattering teeth in his tent. It took a David, filled with the Spirit and love of God, to strike down the giant. Secondly, the true warrior of God must love God's people. Under-shepherds of Jesus Christ, whether ministers, elders, or deacons, or school teachers, fathers, or mothers, must be concerned about the flock. They must count it a privilege to be a part of that flock which Christ gathers and leads to the sheepfold of glory. Much more must every one consider it a privilege to show concern for the sheep, to seek their welfare, help to feed them, having patience with the stubborn sheep, showing forgiving mercies to the wandering sheep that returns, bearing the lambs in his bosom, in Christ's name. Thirdly, the true soldier must pray. Faith, love, consecration to the task are not natural gifts. They must be given to us from God. In the deep consciousness that without Him we can do nothing, and, on the other hand, that we are able to do all things in Christ Who strengthens us, our hearts and faces are lifted heavenward for daily succor. Our eyes are fixed upon the everlasting hills, from whence cometh our help.

Still there will be times of deep trouble and distress. God does not give His people the victory without their tasting the bitter anguish of the battlefield. God does not make us strong and courageous except in the hard school of bitter experience. We have our Jordans to cross, where the waters threaten to overwhelm us. We are confronted with formidable walls

of Satan's powerful opposition. We meet our Ais, because of our sins. We too often listen to the deceitful lies of our tempters. Like Joshua we know what it means to be plunged from the heights of triumph into the depths of despair. We need the encouragement of the Word of God: Be not afraid! Do not become discouraged because of the strength of the enemy and your own weakness. Do not give up when the opposition seems too strong for you. Trust in the Lord with all your might. Rely on Him. Cast all your burdens upon His mighty shoulders, and He will see you through.

Is this true, or do we only say that? Is God's Word true, or are we following cunningly devised fables? Our faith must answer these questions every day anew.

There is one more requisite for fighting the battles of the Lord. Joshua has been told by the Lord, that he must observe to do all that Moses had commanded him, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. The Book of the Law, the Holy Scriptures must be in the opening of his mouth, must be his meditation day and night. (verses 7, 8). A soldier must carry his marching orders in his hand. He must have his maps and directives clearly before his mind. He must carry out the orders of his general, no matter whether they are pleasant or unpleasant, no matter whether they seem proper or all wrong to him. For us that means that the Word of God is our infallible Guide Book, the absolute authority over all our lives. It is the Lamp before our feet, the Light upon our pathway, the Rock upon which we stand, the Armor that protects us, the Weapon wherewith we fight. There is power, divine power, in that simple Word: "So saith the Lord!"

We do this only when we have God's promise in our hearts: "For the Lord thy God (Jehovah, thy Almighty) is with thee whithersoever thou goest. We are the Lord's, for He claims us as His own. We dare not venture out without Him. Alone we are afraid. Without Him we soon become dismayed. But prayerfully looking to Him we are strong, even filled with a courage that amazes ourselves. The battle we fight is the Lord's. The victory is the Lord's, for Christ has already fought the battle and attained the victory for us. The scars, the ruins, the devastation, the horrors, of death that accompany any warfare belong completely to the enemy. We come forth unscathed, unharmed, stronger, more confident, more blessed than ever. More than conquerors are we in our Lord Jesus Christ Who gives us the victory unto the everlasting praise and glory of God's Name.

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

EDITORIALS

About That Presidential Pardon Baptism on the Mission Field (5)

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

No, we are not going to dabble in politics. Nor are we going to plead the rightness or wrongness of either the position of the Republicans or that of the Democrats in this matter. For one thing, the position of both is characterized by the fact that the motivations were pragmatic; and when it comes to pragmatic considerations, a political figure can only hope that he is gauging correctly the opinions of the half-plus-one, the majority, of the electorate. If he does, he wins; if he fails to do so, he loses the election. Besides, when it comes to presidential pardons, neither former President Ford nor our new President Carter has a clean record. The latter, as you know, has issued a blanket pardon to all draft-evaders — and this is the subject of this editorial. But the former has on his record a pardon which will undoubtedly also go down in history books, the pardon of ex-President Nixon.

We do wish, however, to pass judgment from a Christian point of view on President Carter's recent pardon of almost all violators of the Selective Service Act during the years of the Vietnam War. Why? In the first place, simply because it was an important action involving the life of our nation. This would be sufficient reason in itself to justify a Scriptural evaluation. In the second place, however, there has been a hue and cry raised in some quarters about this action of the President; and in this connection various reasons have been proposed for condemning his action. Should these be our reasons also? What is our Christian evaluation of those reasons? And, in the third place, this entire matter of obeying or not obeying the draft was in recent years a burning question especially for young people. Moreover, clergymen and church spokesmen frequently defended and encouraged disobedience, while others left it to individual conscience. It is by no means impossible that the future will bring young people, including our own covenant youth, before these same questions again. And what must their attitude be then? How must we instruct them on matters such as this? It is for these reasons that we reflect on this presidential pardon.

There have been various reasons proposed for judging the presidential pardon of draft-evaders to be a wrong decision. Some have suggested that the viola-

tors of the Selective Service Act were guilty of a lack of patriotism, and that if they did not want to accept the responsibilities of citizenship, they are not entitled to the privileges of citizenship, that if they fled the country when they were needed in our armed forces, they should not be allowed to re-enter the country without penalty. Others have pointed to the alleged unfairness of pardoning these draft-evaders. They claim that this is grossly unfair toward those who obeyed the law, who served in the armed forces, who gave up some of the best years of their life, who suffered hardships, who were wounded in battle, who were prisoners of war, and who were killed in the course of the Vietnam War. Still others have warned of the potential dire consequences of this act of President Carter. It is claimed that a pardon of this kind can only serve to foment disrespect for the law of the land, that in the future there may very well be a rash of such draft-evaders in case of a military draft, seeing that it is possible to violate the law and then to go scot free. It is reasoned that many will figure that they can safely afford to disobey a new draft law in the future, seeing that the government will not punish such disobedience, but pardon it, and that then our country might have difficulty in obtaining sufficient men to defend itself in case of attack. Further, it is claimed that this entire procedure has made a farce of the existent laws and principles which always allowed for conscientious objection to military service. For those who disobeyed the draft law claimed to have done so — individualistically — for conscientious reasons; and the presidential pardon has in effect allowed them to get away with this kind of conscientious objectorship.

Now there may be some merit in some of the above argumentation, though it is not impossible to find fault with it also. However, the point must be made that none of these arguments go to the heart of the matter; none of them appeal directly to the Scriptural principles with respect to government and with respect to authority and obedience. Our point is that from the latter point of view, the draft-law violators were guilty of a wilful and flagrant transgression of the law of the land, contrary to the ordinance of

God; and the government, represented in this instance by President Carter, is guilty of a flagrant trampling of justice, also contrary to the ordinance of God.

What is that ordinance?

For rulers, that ordinance requires that they, as ministers of God, be revengers to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. It is highly questionable, to say the least, whether Scripture even recognizes a right of "the powers that be" to grant a pardon. Perhaps there is room for such a thing as "executive pardon" in instances where a person's guilt or degree of guilt is at least questionable. But that is hardly germane to this discussion. For, in the first place, there is no question of the guilt involved. It is the right and calling of the government to wield the sword. That wielding of the sword includes the waging of war. For that purpose the government has the authority to require military service of its subjects. And it is this authority — God-given authority (for the use of which the government also is solely responsible before God) — this authority was flagrantly flouted by those who evaded the draft and resisted it. But, in the second place, the very idea of pardon — if we concede that it belongs to the authority of government — implies the acknowledgement of wrong-doing and the confession of it. Now, not only has there not been a judicial finding of guilt by the courts of the land (for the simple reason that the draft violators in most instances fled the jurisdiction of our courts and went to other countries), but there certainly has been no acknowledgement of guilt on their part. There has been no plea for mercy. On the contrary, these men have defiantly continued to insist that they were right in resisting the law. They have even boldly claimed that the president's action did not go far enough, and that he should also issue a pardon to military deserters and those who received less than honorable discharges — a claim which, on *their* premises, has some merit. No, the sole calling of the government was to enforce the law and, so doing, to punish the disobedient. To do anything else is certainly to place official sanction on disobedience and to encourage rebellion.

For subjects, that ordinance requires that they "must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." This being in subjection implies, in the first place, that as long as and when the government acts within its proper sphere, i.e., the sphere of ruler-subject relationships, the Christian citizen will, for God's sake, be obedient. If it is the government's authority to wield the sword in the waging of war — and it is, and if it is the government's power to call its citizens to arms in order to wage war — and it is, then whether that war be just or unjust, and whether we consider that war proper or improper, it is our calling to *obey*. This does not preclude our testifying of our disagreement through the proper channels. Nor does

it imply that we personally and individually become responsible before God if that war is morally wrong; that responsibility belongs to the government, not to the individual citizen. Only if and when the government steps outside its proper sphere, and only, therefore, when the issue becomes one of obeying men rather than God, does disobedience become not only permissible but also mandatory. If the government steps into our homes or into our parental schools and says, "You may no longer pray here," then we must say, "We must obey God rather than men." Disobedience becomes mandatory. But even then, we may not resist and rebel, but must be in subjection and be prepared to take the consequences of our disobedience. This, you see, the draft evaders did not do. They claimed for themselves individualistically the right to decide whether or not they would render military service in any given war. And this is not only individualism; it is the principle of revolution.

The Christian, and especially the Christian youth, must not be deceived by this philosophy. We are living in times when the air is filled with propaganda for this very principle of revolution — even on the part of those who for various reasons might be pragmatically opposed to the presidential pardon of these law-breakers. And it is well that we be on the alert against this lawlessness, and that we understand our duty as Christian citizens.

The basic trouble is, of course, that our nation was conceived in revolution and born in violence. These, it is becoming more and more evident, cannot be escaped by our country. They belong to the very foundations of our national structure. But also in this respect we, as people of God, must be *in* the world, but not *of* the world.

BAPTISM ON THE MISSION FIELD (5)

There are various other aspects of this subject which are touched on by the Study Report which we must still consider. Among these are: 1) The reference to the Lord's Supper in the Form of Ordination of Missionaries. 2) The matter of using the prescribed Form for the Administration of Baptism (both of infants and adults, by the way) on the mission field. 3) The obvious conflict between the Church Order and the position of the Study Report in regard to baptism on the mission field. 4) The matter of the significance of baptism as incorporation into the church, a point at which, we ought to recognize, we come squarely into the realm of our Reformed Confessions with respect to the doctrine of the church. All these matters, I am convinced, must take precedence over any consideration of the Biblical and exegetical argumentation of the Study Report. Personally, I am of the conviction that the Synod of 1975 misled our Study Committee when it referred

them *first* to “take into account the Biblical doctrine, particularly the New Testament passages.” This has never been the Reformed method. It must be kept in mind that we already *have* an interpretation of Scripture in our confessions, both those of a major order and those of a minor order. To these we should turn *first* in the consideration of any question of this kind. This was what our churches insisted upon in connection with the Declaration of Principles, you will recall, while the pro-condition men at that time always wanted to ignore the confessions and turn to Scripture. This is a wrong method. First we turn to the confessions, and then to Scripture. Hence, in this series you will have to wait until the end before I even discuss the Scriptural passages. I am of the conviction that our fathers were well aware of these Scriptural passages, and that what is furnished us in our confessions of a major and minor order already takes into account these passages. And taking them into account, our Reformed documents nevertheless take a different position than that of the Study Report. We should pay attention to this, and not try to figure out ways and means of harmonizing that which is obviously contradictory. Yes, very frankly, I believe that the position of the Study Report is in conflict with the Form of Ordination, the Baptism Form, the Church Order, and the Confession on the doctrine of the church. This aspect of my critique I will continue in this installment.

First of all, there is the matter of the Form of Ordination mentioning as one of the duties of the missionary that of administering the Lord’s Supper.

About this the Study Report says (Acts of Synod, 1976, p. 108):

Because our mandate speaks of the “administration of the sacraments” on the mission field, we should also consider the Lord’s Supper, although our main concern is Baptism. Because the mandate of Christ in Matt. 25 (should be Matt. 28, HCH) does not command the missionary to administer the Supper; because the book of Acts does not teach that part of the missionary labor was administering the Supper; and because the Form of Ordination of Missionaries speaks of administering the Supper *after* the instituting of the church; we judge that the administration of the Supper is not an aspect of the specifically missionary task of the missionary and should be done only when a congregation is organized.

Now I can agree in part with the above paragraph: I can agree with the conclusion that the administration of the Supper should be done only after (not: when) a congregation is organized. This is surely the position of the Form of Ordination also, in the light of the fact that it speaks of this duty as *following* the duty of ordaining elders and deacons.

However, I must point out that the Study Report overlooks some important items. In the first place,

there is the fact that the Reformed position on the sacraments has always been that the two *belong together*. The sacrament of baptism *demands* the sacrament of communion, and he who is baptized is *obligated* to partake of the Lord’s Supper. This is probably most clearly stated in the fourth question asked at the occasion of Adult Baptism: “Dost thou assent to all the articles of the Christian religion, as they are taught here, in this Christian Church, according to the Word of God; and purpose steadfastly to continue in the same doctrine to the end of thy life; and also dost thou reject all heresies and schisms, repugnant to this doctrine, and promise to persevere in the communion of the Christian Church, not only in the hearing of the Word, *but also in the use of the Lord’s Supper?*” (italics added) This, by the way, is a very instructive paragraph with respect to this entire discussion. But we will limit ourselves at present to the matter of the Lord’s Supper. And then we must note that on the position of the Study Report this promise is unrealistic and impossible of fulfillment. For do not forget that under the Study Report’s position, it is possible that a person could be baptized a couple of years before a congregation is organized. And it is perfectly obvious that this “promise to persevere . . . in the use of the Lord’s Supper” does not realistically mean two years later, or even mean that a person *never* partakes of the Lord’s Supper in case a congregation is never organized. But if baptism on the mission field is permissible and mandatory according to the Study Report, it becomes necessary to tear apart the two sacraments. This we may never do.

In the second place, the Study Report fails to face an important question: why is the administration of the Lord’s Supper specifically *included* in the missionary’s task? The Report makes short shrift of this and simply states: “. . . we judge that the administration of the Supper is not an aspect of the specifically missionary task of the missionary. . . .” This is obviously not correct, for the simple reason that the Form *specifically includes* this in the missionary’s task. The Study Report simply places its judgment (“we judge”) over against the plain statement of the Form. Now *why* does the Form include this? You cannot answer this question by saying that because a missionary is a minister, it belongs to his duties in general to administer the Lord’s Supper if the occasion arises. The Form does not refer to those occasions when a missionary might happen to be visiting minister in his home church. Nor does our Form refer to the practice of our home missionaries. It has always been the practice in our churches that a home missionary *leaves* very soon after a church is organized. A church then receives classical supply, and the visiting ministers administer the Lord’s Supper. It may very well be that a home missionary *rarely* has

the opportunity to administer the Supper at all. And yet the Form includes this in his tasks as missionary! Why?

The answer lies in the history of this Form which I sketched for you at the beginning of this series of articles, and in the fact that this Form and its entire outline of a missionary's duties was originally designed with a view to a missionary to the heathen. such a missionary would be the only one capable of and authorized to administer the Lord's Supper *on the mission field, but in a newly organized church*. The reason is that the missionary is the only available minister of the Word and Sacraments; at that early stage there are no native pastors as yet.

And all this simply serves to confirm what I stated earlier about the meaning of the Form. It all fits together, you see. This is the order:

- 1) The missionary preaches the gospel.
- 2) The Lord not only grants fruit on his labor in the form of some individual converts, but He makes the work *fruitful unto the gathering of a church*. In other words, the Lord makes it plain that He will establish His church in that locality.

3) At that point in time the missionary baptizes — primarily confessing adults, and secondarily infants of these believers. Through this very process the church is established in that mission field. Even as baptism is incorporation into the church, so when such baptism takes place *initially* on the heathen mission field, essentially the local congregation is constituted.

4) Thereupon elders and deacons can be ordained: for they must needs be adult, confessing, baptized believers.

5) And then, under the supervision of the new consistory, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper can be administered by the only available minister at that point, the missionary.

This, I repeat, is the plain meaning of the Form.

And principally all of this must be applied, in so far as necessary, also to the labors and duties of a home missionary.

If we bear this in mind, there will be no difficulty in harmonizing the position of the Form of Ordination with the Church Order, with the Baptism Form, or with our Confession. About this, however, we must write later.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of the Book of Galatians

(4)

Rev. G. Lubbers

PAUL'S GOSPEL NOT ACCORDING TO MAN (Gal. 1:10, 11)

It must have been with great feeling and intensity, that Paul wrote in large, forceful letters the beautiful address "brethren." (Gal. 6:11) What earnest appeal there is in this term "brethren"! They are still so very dear to Paul in spite of their begun aberration. Paul addresses the Galatians as brethren in Chapter 3:15 with great force in connection with the meaning the covenant in Abraham. Notice the earnest plea in Chapter 4:12! And do not overlook the appeal in Chapter 5:13, where they are reminded that they have been called unto liberty in Christ Jesus. To call them to their senses that they should not war and walk with chips on their shoulder, he addresses them as "brethren" in Chapter 6:1. All these passages should be carefully viewed in their setting.

Paul will call their attention to a very important fact about the Gospel which he preached in their midst, and which they had received. Writes he, "I

make known unto you." There is something causative in this type of verb, like the Hebrew Hiphil form. He would *cause* them to know. He is not imparting to them something of interest merely; he informs them of something, which has bearing on the very nature and authenticity of the Gospel which Paul preached to them. Let erring angels and men give heed! This is an apostolic "making known" in God's name. Let the Galatians heed and listen carefully and believingly. Not to do so will be fatal.

The form of the verbs and the sentence here are such that Paul emphatically calls attention to his own personal, apostolic preaching in Galatia, and not to the preaching of one of his co-workers in the Gospel. He speaks of what was preached *by me*. The Greek personal pronoun "me" (emou) is emphatic. His preaching is not according to man, as is the so-called preaching of those who would pervert the Gospel of Christ. O, Paul preached the word of the Cross as good news. He indeed did preach (herald as a town-

crier), but in so doing he was a true evangelist. This preaching of justification by faith in Christ was the only good news for a poor sinner, who seeks peace with God and a free and good conscience. He preached so that the prisoners were set free from their captive bars of Satan's hellish bondage and fearful accusations. Paul is not contending for mere trivial things. He is making his grand apology for the truth of the only Gospel under heaven, and the only Name given by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

The truth of the matter is that every *other* Gospel which is not what Paul preached in Galatia is "according to man." When Paul affirms of this Gospel which he has preached that it is not according to man, he is making an implied positive affirmation that it is according to God and according to the glory of His grace. (Eph. 1:6) Meyer interprets this phrase as meaning, "not according to the estimate of man," and Lightfoot, "after human fashion and standard." Luther interprets this affirmation to mean, "Paul learned not the gospel by the ministry of men." It is our considered judgment that Paul is here not referring to how he received it, which he will also tell us here, but that Paul is speaking of the *very nature* of His Gospel. It was a divine Gospel in the most exclusive sense of the word. It could only be known by revelation, by being uncovered, disclosed by God Himself in Christ. We see this is the words of Jesus to Peter in the regions of Caesarea Philippi, after Peter had made the profound confession, the rock-bottom confession as to identity of the Son of Man, namely, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:16) Such a confession could only come from the lips of Peter and from his heart because "flesh and blood" had not revealed this to Peter, but "my Father who is in heaven." This Gospel truth concerning the Son of God, his dying on the Cross, being raised the third day, and the building of the church overagainst all the gates of hell, could never, never arise in the heart of any man. These are the things which make Isaiah write, "for from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God besides thee, who worketh for him that waiteth for him." (Isaiah 64:4) Paul applies this word in I Cor. 2:9 to the Mysteries of the Gospel, which the unbelievers in the church could not understand when they crucified the "LORD of glory." For these are mysteries which are only known when God by His Spirit, Who searches all things, even the deep things of God, reveals them. Such are the very nature of these Mysteries in God from the ages and revealed in these last times.

Well may the Galatians give ear! And we, too, must perceive and see!

Paul's Gospel is not according to man. He has it by revelation of Jesus Christ Himself!

That is the *inner essence* of the Gospel itself! Thus too it is interpreted by Dr. S. Greijdanus in his *Korte Verklaring* on Galatians. Paul is here not speaking of how the Gospel was received in the first instance, but he is emphasizing in a negative way that the Gospel is entirely Divine in nature.

SERVANT OF MAN OR OF CHRIST?

(Galatians 1:10)

There are but two alternatives for Paul. It is an either-or matter. If Paul preaches the Gospel of God, then he is a servant of Christ, but should he preach the gospel according to man, then he is not in Christ's service at all, but in the service of the arch-foe, Satan. To establish that he is not at all attempting to please men, seeking to please them, he has but to appeal to the Gospel which he preached.

But now Paul stands alone in the service of Christ, the risen and exalted Lord Who revealed Himself to him on the road to Damascus. He only asks: what wouldst thou have me do, Lord? He stands at his Lord's bidding. He is a servant of Jesus Christ in all the world. He has a dispensation intrusted to him. Paul often refers to this in his letters and enlarges upon it very much, magnifying his office, his ministry. It is a great grace of God to Paul that he may be a minister, a servant of Christ in His church. It is Paul's humble boast that he is such a minister. It is for this purpose that Paul more than once begins his letters presenting himself to the church as such a "servant," a slave of Christ, even in chains. (See Romans 1:1; Phil. 1:1, and Titus 1:1) He glories in the "dispensation entrusted to me" even though he is "less than the least of all saints." This grace was given to him that he might preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. (Eph. 3:7, 8) Woe is me, says Paul, If I do not preach! For then there is a dispensation assigned to him anyway. But now he runs the race in his preaching of the mystery which from before the ages was hid in God Who created all things. (Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:25)

Dr. John Eadie writes in his commentary on Colossians, page 93, on this subject of Paul's ministry and being a servant of Christ, as follows: "In the divine arrangement (*oikonomia*) (Eph. 3:2) of the spiritual house, the apostle held a function which has special reference to the Gentile churches. Paul regarded this as his distinctive office, and how he gloried in it. It had a breadth which suited his mighty mind, and it necessitated the preaching of an unconditional Gospel and it especially delighted his ample heart. He would not be confined to the narrow circuit of Judaism . . ." Thus wrote Eadie, Anno 1856.

In I Thes. 2:4 Paul avers that he writes that he did not preach as "pleasing men, but God which trieth

the hearts.” On this passage Dr. W. Hendriksen has some excellent observations, which are worthy of the time of anyone who desires to pursue this matter of Paul’s seeking only to please God in his preaching of the Gospel.

That Paul desires only to please God requires a “sufficiency from God” he tells us in II Cor. 3:5. For Paul does not try and seek to please men with itching ears who will not hear the Gospel. He is in his preaching a savor of life unto life in those who are saved, and a savor of death unto death in those who perish. He is not like many who corrupt the Word of God, but he speaks as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God. (II Cor. 2:16, 17.) He handles the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. He does not seek to please men but the living God!

PAUL’S FORMER WALK IN JUDAISM

(Gal, 1:13, 14)

It was a mighty change which took place in Paul’s life when God took him, as in one moment, out of the ignorance of a follower of the “traditions of my fathers” to be a preacher of the Son of God among the Gentiles!

That transition was a wonder, a real miracle of grace!

To see this, Paul shows what the real nature of his former walk had been. He states that these Galatians had “heard” of this former walk. It was well-known the world over. It had gained world-wide notoriety! Then why does Paul bring up the subject here of his “past” in this connection? Was it to talk about something painful in his life and of which he was ashamed? Not in itself, but in the manner of his having been

called into the office and dispensation of the gospel of the manifold riches of Christ.

Paul had been a persecutor of the church of Christ. He had made havoc of the church. He would have the Galatians understand that his entire former walk and conversation had been once entirely in Judaism, the very Judaism that now came once more in false pretense to pervert the Gospel of Christ. Paul had been delivered from this false teaching and walk, by God Himself. And what a zealot Paul had been. He had outdone many of his own country men of his own age. He was an outstanding Jewish student, and ardent advocate of the tradition of ‘my fathers.’ These “traditions” were not the sacred Scriptures at all, but they were the handed down interpretations and applications of the “law,” and were sad to say, corruptions of the law. A good case in point we have in Matthew 15:4 where Jesus points out the corruption by the traditions of the fifth Commandment concerning “honoring father and mother.” Such corrupters are those denounced by Isaiah 29:12 as those who make void the law of God by their “traditions.” These traditions allowed a son “to curse” his father and mother under certain circumstances when it pertained to giving the temple-Corban in the treasury. These are blind leaders of the blind, who both fall into the ditch.

Such was Paul in the highest sense so that he brought men and women into prison for the faith in Christ. Paul was enroute on exactly such a terribly evil mission, when Christ from heaven arrested him on the way, saying, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” Three times Luke relates this in the book of Acts. (Acts 9:1-9, 22:3-21; 26:9-20)

But it pleased God to reveal His Son in Paul at his own time!

GUEST ARTICLES

Prayer

Rev. Rodney G. Miersma

The subject of this article as seen in the title certainly is not new to the believing child of God. Prayer occupies a very large part of our lives. This is true of all the saints of all ages, from the beginning of time to the present, till Christ’s return upon the clouds of heaven. That the saints of the Old Dispensation were a praying people is evident immediately upon looking in God’s Holy Word. Already in Genesis 4:26 we read, “and to Seth, to him also there was born a son;

and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.” After this we have mention of many prayers, of which we draw to your attention only a few: Abraham and Moses, Hannah, David and Solomon, Elijah and Daniel.

This calling upon God’s name continued in the New Testament times. Chief among those that prayed was Jesus Christ Himself. In fact, it was this life of prayer of our Lord which influenced the disciples to

come to Him and ask, "Lord, teach us to pray." Thus, we too are enjoined by the Word of God to pray. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7); "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26:41); "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:18); and, "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms" (James 5:13).

The reason behind the fact that the church is a praying church is that the church throughout the ages is in the midst of a spiritual battle of faith in which she needs strength, guidance, and comfort. Very formidable are the forces of darkness against which she must constantly wage war. Three-fold is the enemy: Satan and his evil host, the wicked world, and our own sinful flesh. We all know about the devil, that old serpent, and the myriad of angels that fell with him. Thousands of years of experience he has had, giving him every opportunity to study all the angles with respect to deceiving us.

As a close ally of the devil, the wicked world continues to entice the believer with its sweet siren song proclaiming the virtues of its pleasures and treasures, its wealth and fame. And the time is quickly coming in which the world will no longer merely entice, but also coerce, using the arm of persecution and the like. Finally, there is that old man of sin and of our flesh to contend with, which, in many respects, is our worst enemy. Readily it obeys the dictates of the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

So the position of the child of God is not an easy one. Not only must he suffer in general such afflictions as sickness, sorrow, famine, drought, and war, but he must also suffer what the world does not, that is, suffering for Christ's sake. The world hates God, hates His Christ, and hates anything that has to do with His kingdom. In order to stand and persevere while he is thus engaged in battle, the Christian must have strength. And since the battle that he is fighting is a spiritual battle, each child of God must have spiritual strength, for the strength from below will not help him in this case. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). This strength can not be bought, earned, or merited, but is the gift of God's sovereign grace in Jesus Christ our Lord Who earned everything for us by His death on the cross. The means which God has ordained whereby we receive this strength is prayer.

There are different ways in which the children of the kingdom of righteousness pray. Each Sunday God's children as a congregation gather in the church institute and bring their needs before the throne of God's grace. This is a very important aspect of our

worship. It is this prayer that perhaps is the least neglected by us. Regularly we come to church and we pray as part of our regular worship. However often this is not true with respect to the second way in which we pray, as a family. Very often the hustle and bustle that is generated by the fast pace of modern day living leads us to neglect this important part of our family life. Generally, the time set aside for family prayer is that during which we are gathered about the table for meals. But the picture often looks like this: in the morning the father has already left for work by the time the children are up and ready to come to the table, the school children are hurried off to school, often without breakfast, and later on the mother sits down to catch her breath and to feed the baby. Certainly that is not an atmosphere conducive to family prayer. At noon the family is still separated by work and school. Hence, one would conclude that in the evening an effort would be made to worship together. But again, often this does not work out either. Mother has the meal prepared, but each member of the family has to hurry so that this or that activity may be attended. Or perhaps the television is on and remains the focal point throughout the meal. But whatever the case may be, the opportunity and obligation to pray together has been neglected. This is, of course, to our shame.

The third way in which we can pray is the way of individual prayer. Here too we are often remiss in our duties. We simply have no time for these quiet moments when we can be alone with ourselves and with our God. Our busy schedule will not allow it. The alarm rings in the morning, having been set so that one can squeeze in that last minute of sleep. There's no extra time for meditation, only enough time for a dash to the bathroom, a quick bite to eat, and off we go. The evening, when we retire from a day of labor, is no different. The warm bed beckons us, for to kneel on the cold floor beside the bed is not at all appealing. And so it goes, day after day, year after year, until we have lost virtually all communication with God.

This is a sad commentary on our lives. Something against which we must always fight. For in neglecting prayer we do not experience the peace that surpasseth all understanding. For as we are carried upon the wings of prayer to God's throne of grace we receive a calm of the soul arising from the consciousness that God is our Father in Christ Jesus, that He cares for us, that the fulness dwelling in Christ is our priceless possession, that therefore all things are for us. Outside of Christ there is no peace. The ungodly have no peace, their souls being restless like chaff driven before the wind. But the believer prays and receives this blessed fruit of peace because his prayer was the work of the Holy Spirit within him.

In order to receive this fruit of the cross, this blessed peace, we must pray aright. And to pray aright we must do so in accordance with God's Holy Word. The Scriptures tell us how to pray, for they are the self-revelation of God concerning Himself and also concerning His will for us. Thus, a knowledge of the Scriptures is necessary to pray as we ought. Prayer and reading of Scripture go hand in hand. We must pray according to the Scriptures, and we must read Scripture prayerfully. Humbly and prayerfully we approach God's Word as revealed in these Scriptures and let them speak to us under the influence and work of the Holy Spirit. Then, and only then, do we come before God properly, in praise and thanksgiving.

This leads us to the proper content of our prayers: praise. Praise Him, His virtues, His salvation in Christ. Praise Him for all His ways with you, for they are the ways of peace that terminate in your complete salvation unto His eternal glory. Praise Him for His wonderful and tender care over you. Praise His sovereign rule, His power to cause all things to work together for good to them that love God. Praise Him for rain and sunshine, but also for the heat that burnt your crops. Praise Him for His hand that is heavy upon you, for the rod with which He smites you, and for the wounds that He inflicts. This praise must be forthcoming or our prayer will not yield that blessed fruit of peace.

This peace follows the prayer that desires that His will be done, His counsel realized: the prayer that we may receive grace to praise Him for His ways with us. In that light we do not pray for a new car, or for a fancy house in the elite section of the city, or for

land that yields two hundred bushels of corn to the acre, or for so many other things which we think we need but really do not. Rather we pray for grace that we may stand in the midst of whatever God pleases to send us. The luxuries of the earth we do not need, but grace for our spiritual battle is an absolute necessity. Jesus instructs us along these lines when He says, "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:31-33).

When we pray in this manner we have evidence that we are one of the sheep of His pasture. Oh, what comfort and peace this affords our weary souls, to know that everything, even the forces of darkness, yea, even death, must work unto our salvation under the guiding and ruling hand of our God. The happiest moments of our lives are when we can praise His holy name.

And we need not fear, for when such a prayer rises to God's throne of grace we have the confidence that it will be heard. How so, you say? Simply because it is the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the only kind of prayer that we may bring to the Lord, and it is the only kind that He will hear. This kind of prayer John had in mind when he wrote, "And whatsoever we ask we will receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (I John 3:22). The right kind of prayer, then, will be heard because He promised. We will receive grace and power. Our faith *will* be strength-

CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies this fall in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, located at 4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418 are hereby notified of the Theological School Committee meeting to be held on March 17, 1977 at 7:30 P.M. in the Theological School Building.

Pre-seminary Department:

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

Seminary Department:

Permission to pursue the Theological course in the seminary shall be granted by the Synod, upon recommendation of the Theological School Committee, to such an aspirant only who

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

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

All applicants for enrollment in the seminary department must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before enrollment. In the event you cannot be present at this meeting, please notify the undersigned secretary of your intentions, prior to the meeting. Mail all correspondence to the Theological School.

Richard H. Teitsma, Secretary

ened and we *will* have peace and joy in our hearts, a joy that knows no bounds.

In conclusion, therefore, it can not be emphasized enough that we must pray. In prayer we come before the throne of God's grace and presence and receive from Him all that is necessary for our sojourn here on this earth as pilgrims and strangers. Here we receive the peace that we so desperately need as the time for the return of our Lord comes closer and closer and

the world makes it harder and harder for us to stand. Let us not shun this most beautiful and important part of our inward lives, but strengthen it and nourish it before the face of God. Little children, older children, teen-agers, fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, all of us, we can begin in a very humble way with the small petition, "Lord, teach thou us to pray."

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to the Members of the Church at Philadelphia

February 15, 1977

To the members of the church at Philadelphia,

It is time to continue our discussion of the wrongness of separating from the church institute to form small groups of believers who pursue, on their own, the study of Scripture. You will recall that we were discussing particularly the importance of the church institute for the salvation of the people of God. And, more particularly yet, we were discussing the offices of the Church. We talked about the fact that Christ is the chief and only Officebearer in the Church; that His office is reflected in the office of believers; and that the office of believers is exercised through the special offices in the local congregation. The result of this is that each local congregation is a manifestation of the whole body of Christ. One cannot claim to belong to the whole body of Christ without membership in a local congregation.

What has all this to do with the subject under discussion?

In the first place, I must emphasize to you once again that the regenerated and converted child of God who functions in the office of believers can only *exercise* that office through the special offices in the church. There is a knotty problem here which is not understood as it ought to be by people even of Reformed persuasion. Yet the principle stands as the central point in all true scriptural and Reformed Church Polity.

There are two sides to this matter. In a certain sense of the word the office of believers is the primary office in the Church. The individual believer, after all, is prophet, priest, and king. In this way he reflects the three-fold office of Christ his Savior and Head. He alone has the anointing of the Holy One. He alone functions in the office which Christ has given him. He is a *Christian* only when he lives all his life as

an officebearer. This is true in the Church institute as well. The believer, holding the office which he does, must exercise that office within the congregation of which he is a member.

Perhaps we can drive this point home by pointing out several practical implications of it.

All the work of the church as institute (in preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and exercising Christian discipline) is really done by the believers in their office which they hold. This is why they must also be directly involved in all this work. This is why they have the right to reorganize the institute when officebearers do not do their work faithfully.

The Roman Catholic Church, especially prior to the Reformation, refused to recognize the office of believers. The clergy constituted the church; the believers were shut out of it. The believers had no part whatsoever in the affairs of the church, no role to play, no voice in church matters, no right even to investigate the Scriptures to learn directly from them what God revealed. Only the clerics, from the parish priest to the pope, functioned in any kind of office. This same state of affairs is going on today. This is also the case within many different Reformed and Presbyterian Churches. You have, e.g., the fact that the people of God have no more access to ecclesiastical assemblies to air their grievances. One hears again and again that the ecclesiastical channels are blocked, that the common man is ignored, that his voice is silenced, and that only the ministers and leaders in the church have any voice in church affairs. This happens too when much (if not most) of the work of the church is done by committees and boards, by leaders and ministers without the "laity" even being informed of what is going on. But, most

importantly, this is happening in the whole area of Bible interpretation. Learned men form committees appointed by one or another ecclesiastical assembly and study matters which directly influence the life of the church. They are mandated to study the extent and meaning of Biblical authority, the question of women in office in the church, the interpretation of Genesis 1-3, etc. They produce lengthy and verbose reports which are written in such a way that no one can understand what they mean — perhaps not the committee itself; no one really knows what they are trying to say; and no one can really tell in which direction they are steering the church. And it all comes down to interpretation of Scripture. In an effort to establish some kind of position, these learned committees monkey with Scripture, invent various Hermeneutical approaches, come up with verbose explanations of simple texts — all of which is meant to leave the impression that the people of God who hold only the office of believer cannot really understand the Scriptures. Scriptural interpretation must be left to the “experts.”

All this is very dangerous business. God’s people are all officebearers. They need not that anyone should teach them. They have the anointing of the Spirit. Upon them falls the responsibility to preach the gospel, to administer the sacraments, to exercise discipline within the church.

And yet, on the other hand, the office of believers is exercised through the special offices in the Church. The congregation preaches — but it preaches through the minister. The congregation rules — but it rules through the office of elder. The congregation cares for the poor — but it does this work of mercy through the deacons.

And, therefore, officebearers hold authority in the congregation. Scripture is clear that the authority of officebearers is authority over God’s people. God’s people must submit themselves to the rule of their officebearers. They must submit to the preaching, to the rule of the elders, to the mercies of Christ.

There is a kind of delicate balance here which is the real genius of Scriptural Church Polity. It is not always so easy, perhaps, to maintain this balance; but it must be preserved for the welfare of the church. And when this balance is preserved, then Christ rules over His Church. He rules through His Word which is authoritatively preached by those who are ministers and elders and deacons.

And it is precisely here that the trouble arises in those who turn their backs on the instituted church. These people seem to have the notion that they can function in the office of believers apart from the special offices in the Church. For whatever reason they may do this, they ignore these special offices

and separate that which Christ has joined together.

And having made this separation, they cut themselves off from the rule of Christ. If it is true that Christ rules His Church by His Word and Spirit, and if it is true that the Spirit of Christ never works apart from the Word, and if it is true that this Word comes to the Church only through those offices which Christ has ordained, then to cut one’s self off from those offices is to cut one’s self off from the rule of Christ Himself. One loosens himself from the Word of Christ, frees himself from the work of the Spirit, and has no longer the rule of Christ in His life. This leaves the door open for the rule of sin.

What I am saying is that the preaching of the Word is indispensable for the life of the child of God. That is, the preaching of the Word in the ministry of the Word, in the rule of the elders, in the exercise of discipline, in the administration of the sacraments, in the dispensing of the mercies of Christ — the preaching of the Word through these special offices is a *conditio sine qua non* for the life of the child of God.

This is the God-ordained way of saving His people. There really is no other way. We must not make ourselves wiser than God and find ways for ourselves which God has not ordained. We must not think that we can break God’s rules for us and retain what God promises only by means of His Word.

We must not be deceived into thinking that this is possible, by listening to glowing accounts of the marvelous edification and spiritual vibrancy which comes through such unofficial meetings apart from the church. God has spoken concerning His way of working. He has told us how Christ rules over our lives. He has said that in this way, in obedience to Him, He will bless His people. It is disobedience to do anything else.

In the second place, this brings up some interesting and important questions which have to be answered. Essentially these questions boil down to one central question (and it is a question which is often asked): If Christ speaks to us and rules over us only through the official ministry of the Word, does not Christ also speak to us in “unofficial” Bible study whether that be in individual Bible study or in Bible study with other saints of God?

We shall have to wait with answering this question until the next letter; but I want to remark now that the relationship between preaching and our personal Bible study is a very rich relationship with many different ramifications.

Another aspect of the whole question which often arises is: How does the preaching of the Word by the church institute stand connected to the Christian’s calling to witness?

Yet another question is: Does God ever save any-

one apart from the preaching of the Word?

While these questions are only indirectly related to the issue we are discussing, they are important

enough, also in the context of our discussion, to spend a little time with them.

And so we must close for now.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

“And Knowledge Shall Be Increased”

Rev. Mark Hoeksema

The words of this title, taken from the book of the prophet Daniel (12:4), are generally agreed to refer to the time preceding the end of all things, and to characterize that time. There can be little doubt that Daniel speaks here of what we call one of the signs of the times. And when we are aware of the events in the world of our day, then we can see plainly that there is such an increase of knowledge. And in turn, when we perceive this increase of knowledge, then that perception strengthens our conviction that we are surely in the last times, and that the end of all things as Scripture describes it is fast approaching.

Undoubtedly the meaning of the prophet Daniel is that knowledge itself shall be increased, that is, the quantity of knowledge will grow. Exactly this phenomenon we are able to observe taking place in our world at the present time. We are told that the sheer quantity of knowledge increases proportionately every few years, so that the knowledge of today is several times as great as it was a generation or even a few years ago, and are told at the same time that this process will continue at a progressively faster and faster rate. Whatever the reasons and implications of this may be (and there are many), the point is clear: the knowledge of mankind is rapidly increasing.

But knowledge never stands as an entity by or of itself. Rather, it is applied to the world in which we live and to the problems which we face. Knowledge applied becomes technology. Thus, Daniel J. Boorstin, writing in *TIME* magazine of January 17, 1977, speaks of the “Republic of Technology.” While the author certainly does not write from anything approaching a Christian perspective, he makes several observations which we as the people of God ought to notice, evaluate, and apply.

For example he says this:

We have reaped myriad benefits as citizens of the new Republic of Technology. Our American standard of living is a familiar name for these daily blessings.

Our increased longevity, the decline of epidemics, the widening of literacy, the reduced hours of labor, the widening of political participation, our household conveniences, the reduction of the discomforts of winter and of summer, the growth of schools and colleges and universities, the flourishing of libraries and museums, unprecedented opportunities to explore the world — all are by-products of the New Obsolescence and the New Convergence. They have become so familiar that they are undervalued. But some strange fruit is apt to grow in the fertile orchards of our technological progress.

Certainly all of this is true, although not exactly in the sense in which the author evidently meant it. Mankind has taken all of the good gifts of the Creator and has turned them to the service of sin. There are wonders in our world today of which our fathers could not even conceive, let alone bring to pass. And all of these things are in themselves good, the gifts of God; never must they be seen to be inherently sinful. But yet these wonders are invariably turned to the service of sin, twisted as to their purpose and function to fit the needs and intentions of sinful man under the control of the devil. And have their fruit they will, as the writer observes. He calls it “some strange fruit.” But to the child of God this fruit will not be strange. For it is exactly this “Republic of Technology” that will help to bring forth the anti-christ and speed him on his rise to power and world domination, and, when that is achieved, to serve as his means to perpetuate his rule of darkness and at the same time provide him with the instruments with which he will attempt to annihilate the church of Jesus Christ.

That this conclusion is the truth will become clear if we look carefully at some of the observations made in this essay and evaluate them in the light of the Scriptures as they are being fulfilled before our very eyes. For example, Boorstin observes that “technology creates momentum and is irreversible.”

“Driven by ‘needs’ for the unnecessary,” he says, “we remain impotent to conjure the needs away. Our Aladdin’s lamp of technology makes myriad new geni appear, but cannot make them disappear.” Here is the spirit and rise of antichrist, which are irreversible and unstoppable. We as Christians, of course, understand that this rise and power of antichrist are not sovereign, and we may not take a deterministic or fatalistic view of them. We understand that such is the counsel of God which He is pleased to work out for the salvation of His people and the glory of His name.

But to go on: “The supreme law of the Republic of Technology is convergence, the tendency for everything to become more like everything else.” To illustrate and prove this assertion, the author makes these points:

Technology is the natural foe of nationalism. With crushing inevitability, the advance of technology brings nations together and narrows the differences between the experiences of this people. The destruction of modern warfare tends to reduce the balance of advantage between victor and vanquished. The spectacular industrial progress of Japan and Germany after World War II was actually facilitated by the wholesale destruction of their industrial plant.

Is not this strikingly similar to the portrait that the Scriptures paint of the world rule of antichrist over all nations, accomplished in such a way that through their uniformity they give to him willingly their allegiance? And is it not also striking that according to this author even wars, themselves a sign of the last times, serve the cause of antichrist and his universal dominion? Or still more pointedly:

Broadcasting is perhaps the most potent everyday witness to the converging powers of technology. The most democratic of all forms of public communication, broadcasting converges people, drawing them into the same experience in ways never before possible. The great levelers, broadcast messages and images, go without discrimination into the homes of rich and poor, white and black, young and old.

Surely you as the people of God are familiar with what Scripture calls the mark of the beast, without which it will be impossible to buy or sell. Of precisely what this mark consists we cannot say, for that is not revealed to us. But is not the potential of broadcasting, and especially television, remarkable as a possible means of realizing the universal control of antichrist over all things? And remember, that purpose is not neutral or harmless, but dangerous to the church, for the intent of this “convergence” or “leveling” is uniformity under the rule of antichrist, which means

that there will be no room for the people of God. Exactly how this technology will be utilized for this purpose we cannot now say, but the very fact that the technology is present and is being developed is a sign of the coming of the end. Even more concisely does the author make this point as he speaks of the characteristic of technology that it assimilates: “The Republic of Technology, ruthlessly egalitarian, will accomplish what the prophets, political philosophers and revolutionaries could not.” What will it accomplish? Assimilation, the attempted erasing of all difference among mankind, something which is indispensable to the rise and the power of antichrist. Without such assimilation he could never achieve the goal of world rule and domination. Of course, that is not the answer of the world; it should be, in the light of Scripture, but it is not, due to the blindness of sin. The rise and power of antichrist is so plain and clear that even those of the world can perceive it with startling clarity, but still they will not acknowledge the counsel and hand of God. That is to be expected, for that is the nature of sin, that is, deliberate and conscious denial of the revelation of God in the Scriptures, and in the kingdom and coming of Christ His Son.

But for the child of God all of this is clear. Clear, that is, if you are aware, if you have your eyes, both natural and spiritual, open. Oftentimes we are inclined to ignore these signs of the times, undoubtedly because especially in the area of technology they have become so commonplace and everyday. But we must be awake. The world is consciously and knowingly striving to realize the Republic of Technology, which, when it is realized, will be the kingdom of antichrist. And the world makes no secret of its intentions, as is evident from the essay to which I have referred in this article. The obligation of the people of God is, therefore, to take seriously the prophecy of Daniel; to be observant, to teach their children to be observant, to evaluate perceptively the signs of the times. But above all the calling of the people of God is to be faithful in the maintenance of the antithesis between the church and the world, so as not to be caught up in and become part and parcel of the Republic of Technology, the kingdom of antichrist. This does not mean that we may not make use of the fruits of technology or that we must withdraw from the world, but it does mean that we must use all things with discretion, and to the service of the kingdom of Christ, at the same time keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.

THE STANDARD BEARER is a thoughtful gift for a “Shut-in”.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Little By Little

Rev. John A. Heys

When God destroyed the world with the flood He destroyed thousands upon thousands of sinners. But He did not destroy sin. He did not even destroy all the sinners. There were eight sinners saved in the ark. And while they were safely harbored there in the midst of the storm, they were still sinners. The enemies, the sinners outside of the Church were destroyed by the flood; but sin went into the ark in the hearts of Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives. The evidence of that we see in what happens after they came out of the ark. And then we must not think only of Noah's drunkenness and Ham's filthy mind and shameful deed. We must realize that all the violence and crime of today, all the idolatry and corrupt speech of today, all the disregard for the things holy, all the atheism, evolutionism, modernism, all the worship of the devil and of the things of this earth, all the sin in every form and shape that we see today came out of that ark and in principle was in the hearts of those who went into that ark before the sinners of the world were destroyed.

Had He desired to do so, God could certainly have made an end of all sin on this earth and wiped these also off from it and into the pit of hell where they cannot practice their evil any more. But the question is not as to what God could have done but as to what it pleased Him to do. And it pleased Him to destroy the sinners who were at that time fierce enemies of His Church, and to save some who still had sinful flesh with all the vile motions of that sin within them.

A similar work of God we see when He overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and wiped out all the sinners who were outside of His Church and were residing in these cities and their environs. He saved Lot, but not because Lot had no sin in his soul. He saved Lot but not from all the power of sin. And that whole sad incident that we read of in Genesis 19:30-38 gives evidence of this fact. Lot's daughters reveal no more spirituality than his wife. They did not look back to Sodom literally by a turning of their physical necks and focusing of their fleshly eyes, but spiritually they did look back, remembered the sins of Sodom and were not hesitant to tailor them to fit their own

wicked purposes. And Lot himself revealed that there was in his flesh the power of sin and that he was very much under its dominion.

There is even the foolishness of unspiritual thinking on the part of Lot. When the angel hastens him and warns him to hurry and not look back, Lot pleads for entrance into little Zoar rather than to have to flee to the mountains, which were a goodly way farther away. We say foolish reasoning because we must not think that there is no sin in little cities. Our bigger cities have their dens of iniquity, their red-light districts and areas of high crime, their hold-outs of gangsters and the like. In a large city crime is better organized; and quite naturally there is a greater assembly of sinners. There are more sinners, and they develop sin together to a greater degree of execution and godlessness. But just because a city is little does not mean that one is going to be free from sin in it, or that there is only minor sin in it. We are not told why Lot did leave Zoar, but he did somewhat later and made his abode in the mountains to which the angel had referred. Could it be that Lot himself realized that the world is always wicked even though the form of sin is not always the same? Or is it that Lot with the little spark of spiritual life that still burned in him was simply being obedient to the command of the angel? He asked to be allowed to flee to Zoar rather than to the mountains till he could rest, and the evil which would take his life would not occur. He does at least go to the mountains which the angel had pointed out to him.

We do well to beware of Zoars as well as Babylons. We are wise when we take the position of the Word of God that the world is corrupt wherever we find it. Both the little city and the big metropolis are full of sin. Both sin to their full capacity as well. There is not a restraining power of the Spirit in the hearts of the little city that without regenerating its citizens causes them to do good. All do not have the same circumstances. All do not dare to sin to the same degree. But the Word of God in very simple yet powerful words declares that there is none that doeth good, no not one! There may be and there are ex-

ternal restraints. There are fears that grip men's souls so that they do not practice fully what is in their hearts, but the sin is there, and they practice it as much as they dare, are able, and in their sinful hearts and minds think it wise at the moment to do. And forget not that when these external (not spiritual) restraints are there, it is like the water restrained by the dam. It builds up, spreads out, and, when a little opening does appear, rushes forth as a torrent far more devastating than it would at first have been. That happened at the tower of Babel. This was no spiritual restraining work of God's Spirit, even though it was in the souls of men, so that they thought differently and used different words to express their different thoughts. But sin simply spread out behind that dam and today displays itself in so many forms that it could not have assumed without that confusion of tongues.

Let us also note in the life of Lot that it was one series of little things that finally led him so far from God. It was the little thing of seeking water and food for his cattle. We would say, a necessary thing. But it led him to friction with Abraham. It was a little thing, relatively, to stay in the promised land and yet to move toward, not into Sodom. It was then a little step to move then into the city, to marry a Sodomite and to stay there because business demanded it. We have to live, we have to eat, we have to work, do we not? Now it is a little city and a little journey away from Sodom and not getting too far away. It was a little wine and a little relaxation (also of his morals) and then the awfulness of all those little steps is seen in double incest!

What shall we say about his daughters? With them, too, it is a matter of a "little" infraction, and that for a carnal reason. Let us remember this as we approach the days of the Antichrist when we will have to accept the mark of the beast or not buy or sell. The argument is raised so quickly today, and it was mouthed by the daughters of Lot, that this or that is a necessity for us. Men link up and agree to breaking the fifth commandment in their strikes of the labor unions they join, because it is their duty to provide for their families, is it not? We need to eat, do we not? And Lot's daughters said, "We need to preserve seed for our father, do we not?" Lot never told them that. He may have expressed some sorrow and disappointment to them that they had to leave the men of Sodom to whom they were betrothed, and now he could see no grandchildren, and the blessing of God's Word that we shall see our children's children could not be for him. But who said that he had to have seed? And who said that he still could not find another wife? And they new husbands? Those kinds of deductions and excuses make us ripe for the mark of the beast. The man who today uses the excuse that as

head of the house he has a calling to provide for his family, and therefore he has no choice but to join the ranks with the unbelievers in dishonouring those God placed over them in the field of labor, have their excuse already for the mark of the beast. And even more so, for in that day it will not be a question of getting a poorer paying job and living way down the scale, but of getting no job at all and having nothing to give to the family. Watch out for little things. Watch out for the tip of the iceberg that sticks up just a bit above the surface and has a tremendously big destructive power that does not yet meet the eye.

It happens over and over again. And you hear people say it even very emphatically: "No one will take my faith away from me." They say that when they leave the sphere of where the truth is preached. They say that when they move into the world for business reasons and earthly gain. They may mean it. They may think that they will remain faithful. But look again a few years later. Or, if you will, look at their children and try to find a semblance of that faith that could not be taken away!

Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife." That is good advice; but while we are at it, let us also observe closely Lot and his daughters. Let us note what a little wine did to Lot to cause him to commit the same sin of incest twice! But especially let us look at what God said about the whole filthy business. He does not always say what He thinks at once. And years went by. Generations came and went. But who were some of the fiercest enemies of the Church? Who withstood Moses and the Israelite in the wilderness as Lot's descendants, the Moabites and Ammonites, did? And how true today! The children of those who forsake the truth for the flesh's sake and join forces with the world become the fiercest and most bitter enemies of the Church of Christ on this earth. God is not mocked. These daughters said that they had to preserve seed for their father, Lot. But what kind of seed did they preserve for him? The friction, the warfare that was threatened between Abraham and Lot before they separated was as nothing compared with what now became true in the descendants of Abraham and Lot.

Lot's daughters as unmarried women knew too much of Sodom's ways for their own good. And what filthy minds they had in spite of their seemingly pious concern for their father's name and seed. This was no ordinary adultery under the power of a tremendous sexual appeal. It was not that result of what the world likes to call the strength of "body chemistry." This was a cold, calculated perpetration of incest in which they are not at all averse to sharing the same man! There is no love here. If they had had love for their father they would not have led him into sin. They were driven by their own godless upbringing

in a filthy city where their father for material reasons insisted on keeping them. And what a warning that ought to be to all parents who try to bring up their children away from the Church and the truth because they can get a dollar or two more among these ungodly!

What did we say about little cities having big sins? Lot and his daughters are not even a city, nor do they live in the city. They are by themselves in the mountain. And these few, spared the destruction of Sodom, these few not destroyed when the sinners of Sodom were destroyed, did not have the sin in their hearts destroyed. Instead, Sodom's sins come gushing

forth out of that mountain to produce in the world nations of enemies of God's Church. Let us beware of "little" departures from the truth, "little" enemies of the Church, and "little" changes from the God-ordained way prescribed in His Word. Whether these be in the Church and its offices and polity, or have to do with our walk of life before the world. Little things lead to big enemies. Little by little, bigger and bigger things come to pass. Fear the big things, but watch out for the little ones. Little by little Lot drew farther and farther away from Abraham and from God; and now in this incest he is indeed far removed from where a child of God ought to be. Let that be a warning for us today.

BOOK REVIEW

THE GENIUS OF PURITANISM, by Peter Lewis; Carey Publications, Haywards Heath, Sussex, U.K., 1975, 144 pp. (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema]

Written by a Baptist who has a lively interest in the writings of the Puritans, this little book gives the author's overview of the preaching of 17th century Puritan pastors. In the first chapter, short biographies of several of these men are followed by the author's resume of the characteristics of Puritan preaching, liberally sprinkled with examples and quotations from 17th century writings. The next chapter is about the Puritan in the pew, and it describes the more formal aspects of Puritan worship. The rest of the book treats the subject of spiritual desertions and depression — the causes, the cure, and the role of the minister, both as preacher and as pastor, during these times of trial.

The note of sincerity, the use of appealing anecdotes and native wit, the appeal to Scripture, and the author's quotations of Puritan writings contribute toward making this book a bit of interesting and edifying reading for the Reformed reader. It may be said that the author succeeds in achieving the purpose stated in the preface: "I have sought to show pastors of our own day the way in which that most biblical race of men . . . applied a deep doctrinal sense and spiritual wisdom to the various problems, especially depressions and discouragements under which God's people have always had to labour in this life."

There would appear, however, to be an imbalance both in the book and in the genius of Puritanism with which the book is concerned. More than half of the book is devoted to the subject of the Christian's assurance. Worse than this, the subject of assurance is approached, as it were, from the back door, or from the viewpoint of the abnormal rather than the normal. I refer to the preoccupation with the subject of spiritual depressions and discouragements as these arise from the knowledge of our sinfulness and the sorrow we experience when our sins mount up day

after day. In a day when sin's sinfulness is de-emphasized, and when also the sins of God's people do not receive due attention, it is well that we be reminded to take sin seriously. And surely, we would make no plea for the perfectionism and superficiality of "happiness" religion. Nevertheless, to be preoccupied with spiritual depressions and discouragements in the Christian life is to be preoccupied with the *abnormal* rather than the normal. The assurance of faith, though it may differ in degree in various children of God, is normal. Besides, the method with which the Puritans treated these discouragements smacks of subjectivism. On each page the believer is told to "search himself," to "reason with himself," to "ponder within himself" about his sin and his sorrow for it. This introspective approach the author sums up as follows: "...it is very significant that the Puritan pastors laid much stress upon mental acts as being of vital practical use to the Christian.... Thus the terms 'meditate,' 'consider,' and 'reflect' were . . . terms belonging to the vital . . . activity of the Christian." This emphasis on spiritual depression and on subjectivistic introspection lays one wide open for the error of sickly mysticism, of which the Reformed believer must beware.

This is not the place for an exposition of the subject of the assurance of faith. But had the author of this book and the Puritans themselves approached the whole subject of assurance and of self-examination for the positive viewpoint and followed the lead of our Reformed creeds, which teach us that assurance is a spontaneous thing which is obtained from the promises of God's Word and the testimony of the Spirit in the way of sanctification and in the fellowship of God's people, they would have been closer to the healthy spiritual balance of the Reformed truth and practice.

Though the book leaves the Reformed reader somewhat depressed, he may derive benefit and instruction from it, if he remembers to be more critical of the emphasis of the Puritans than the author was.

ALL AROUND US

The A E C L' s Constitution

“Led by specialists. . . in Christian ethics”

Rev. G. Van Baren

The AECL'S Constitution

The new Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, consisting principally of those who left the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod in the dispute about the inerrancy of the Bible (and other things), has presented to it a proposed constitution. This is of interest because it sets forth the position of this body on the question of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. The constitution begins:

We are persuaded that the Church's one foundation is our Lord Jesus Christ, proclaimed and celebrated in the Gospel. Upon him and him alone our faith rests. Every approach, no matter how well-intentioned, that makes faith in Christ depend in any way upon something other than the Gospel alone — such as rational proof, ecclesiastical authority, religious experience, or a doctrine about the Bible — in effect lays another foundation and asks us to put our trust in something other than Christ alone. . . .

We believe that the Scriptures are God's written Word, recorded by people of faith and inspired by the Holy Spirit, to give us the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

God reveals himself in history and through history, as we see most crucially in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the Word of God made flesh. The Scriptures are also historical documents: the Old Testament is our heritage from God's people Israel, and the New Testament was written and collected in the early Christian community. We

cannot understand the Scriptures apart from that historical context, and any interpretive approach is inadequate which does not take it fully into account. We acknowledge in humility that our understanding of the Scriptures is only partial, and that we need to grow constantly in our knowledge of them, using every insight which the Holy Spirit grants to his Church.

As to the use of Scripture, it is false to say that faith in Jesus Christ depends on a particular understanding of how the Scriptures were inspired. Our trust in Christ does not flow out of some prior faith in the book which tells us of him; it is the gift of God through the Gospel, proclaimed and celebrated in many ways, including our Holy Baptism.

On the contrary, it is the other way around: our expectation that the Holy Scriptures will import to us the infallible Word of God flows out of our faith in Christ who is the Bible's center. Among those who treasure the Scriptures in this way there are differences of interpretation and varying views of the nature of the Scripture's inspiration; but these differences in no way undermine or destroy faith.

Our faith is not dependent upon rational theories about the Bible; it is dependent solely on the grace of God, who calls us by the Gospel, enlightens us with his gifts, and sanctifies and preserves us in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. Any teaching other than this betrays the chief treasure of Lutheranism.

With faith in Christ, with reverence for the Scriptures which testify of him, and with awareness of our limited understandings, we need to search the Scrip-

tures continuously to learn more of what they say about God's gracious acts on our behalf and his will for our lives. That is the purpose of Bible study: to seek out God's living Word for us. We will not disdain any tool which helps us in that search.

Thus does this body manage, piously, to deny a fundamental tenet of the Christian faith. Let us likewise be warned concerning this great evil which threatens even now most of the denominations of our land.

"LED BY SPECIALISTS . . . IN CHRISTIAN ETHICS"

Some ten years ago, the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church (1966) received a lengthy report concerning the "film arts" and adopted a number of resolutions for the guidance of the church that "good" movies might be enjoyed by the membership. We have had occasion, in the past, to call attention to this report and its sad consequences. Bear with me while I do this again. Among other things, the report pointed out that television viewing made movie attendance acceptable too:

The advent of television, which is an essential combination of radio and the film industry, is, from a practical point of view, forcing us in this direction. TV is found in 89% of our homes. This is tantamount to a *de facto* acceptance of the film arts and the film industry as a legitimate cultural enterprise. It is therefore incumbent upon Synod to acknowledge this if it is to make any relevant and fruitful deliverances with respect to the use of the film arts by the members of the Church. (pg. 339)

The report continues by pointing out that the presentation of sinful acts is permissible in the film arts under certain circumstances:

It is also possible, however, to incorporate sin in a dramatic presentation in such a way that it occupies the proper place it has according to God's revelation, as a reality that must be overcome. Such a presentation serves a cathartic purpose and has redemptive value. It helps in the struggle against evil and is morally acceptable. The film critique and reviews of Christians of other church groups have helped promote this type of film. For this we must be grateful, but we must also ask if there are not qualified members in our own Church who could make valuable contributions. There is a positive task of claiming this area of the film arts for the Kingdom of our Master, Jesus Christ. It is a strategic area and the time is short, but of this task also it is true: Blessed is the servant doing the work of the Master when He comes!

The following is part of the concluding statements, adopted by the 1966 Synod, concerning the cultural task of the church in the field of the film "arts":

1) There is a large educational task that must be initiated by responsible agencies at the various levels of life in the Church.

a. The membership of the Church must become more sensitive to what is good and what is evil in the film arts so as to come to a meaningful evaluation and a discriminate use of the same.

b. It is imperative that the Christian community should engage in the constructive critique of the film arts, being led by those who are specialists in art and in Christian ethics.

c. The fruit of this effort (b) should be presented to and shared with our modern society and the Church in general as a cultural and moral witness: for we are the "salt" of the earth and "light" in a secular world.

Of course, there are many things wrong with the report and its recommendations. It is, admittedly, based upon the view of "common grace." It repeatedly speaks of "film arts" — placing a beautiful front on the film industry. And it assumes that it is correct to conclude that since most Christians watch television dramatics, therefore it is not possible to refuse movies in the theatre to them. Yet the report presents the clear suggestion that the calling of the Christian is to watch movies with "Christian" discernment. And who must guide in all of this? The leaders and educators in the church.

One is, however, appalled at the "leadership" which is provided. Repeatedly, the worst of films are recommended for viewing by the Christian. Calvin College, the leader and innovator in the field, has a terrible record in this regard. I have observed repeatedly in their *Chimes* that movies of the worst sort are presented at Calvin. Some college courses require the student to observe movies as part of the course. The *Chimes* of Dec. 10, 1976 describes one of the films which is scheduled for presentation:

The Film Arts Committee of Calvin College will present a three-day festival of films directed by Stanley Kubrick during the upcoming Interim. Three films by Kubrick, one of America's most recently established auteurs, will be shown between Thursday, January 6 and Saturday, January 9. . . .

Carl Byker, chairman of the Film Arts Committee, comments on the committee's rationale for presenting the Kubrick festival, saying, "Given that each film establishes a world of its own, the Film Committee attempts to present films which relate to the history of cinema and the direction cinema will take in the future, and which comment on the nature of things in the real world.

"The Film Arts Committee thinks that Stanley Kubrick satisfies these objectives in a way which few other modern American directors do. . . ."

Byker states that "*A Clockwork Orange* is timely to the Calvin community in that it speaks to moral and esthetic problems which we face. The film discusses the question of the stability of society versus the suppression of its dissidents, the nature of behavioral modification, the nature of religion in

society — all of which, the Film Arts Committee thinks, are relevant to the Christian Community.”

Now *Clockwork Orange* is one of the most pornographic, devilish of films produced by a degenerate world. I have not, obviously, seen the film. I do not attend movies — and believe viewing them on television is also not in harmony with the Christian life. But I have checked reviews in other magazines on this film. In the *Christianity Today*, July 6, 1973, a review is given of this (and similar) film by Harold O.J. Brown. He writes:

Most significant is the apparent feeling that what is coarse and degrading when produced for *hoi polloi* (peep-show pornography on skid row) is elevating and liberating when it successfully exploits the jaded bourgeoisie (“art” pornography, from stage shows like *Oh! Calcutta* through “social commentary” pornography such as *I Am Curious (Yellow)* and *A Clockwork Orange* to the crass but lucrative self-prostitution of Brando in *Last Tango*). . . .

The Christian has a biblical mandate to think about and concern himself with what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and gracious, with what is edifying and imports graces (cf. Phil. 4:8, Eph. 4:29). Such a mandate effectively rules out the frequenting of such spectacles as *A Clockwork Orange* . . . where one is not merely degrading oneself, but is in effect paying the wages of prostitutes and their promoters.

But even the secular public, which does not feel itself bound by the biblical injunction, can only be debased by productions of this type. The medium of the film, especially in the hands of a brilliant director, is uniquely gifted to impress images on the beholder’s mind that can continue to affect or even to obsess him long afterward. *A Clockwork Orange* has only evil characters, ranging from the contemptibly despicable to the violently vicious; it is difficult to imagine a full-length feature film dealing with so many different kinds of people and situations without a single character who is in any sense worthy of approval or respect, but *A Clockwork Orange* does it. The implication is clearly that everyone is corrupt; one has only to choose his corruption. . . .

I’m sorry to have to report the above. It is a matter of public knowledge. It points to the sad consequences of “common grace” applied here to the “film arts.” The late Rev. H. Hoeksema warned years ago that this fruit would be evident. He also warned the C.R.C. that when they began showing such apparently innocent films as *Martin Luther*, they were opening up the flood-gates. Let us, too, be warned. Increasingly one hears within our own churches the argument that since most of the people watch dramatic presentations on T.V., there can be no reason for condemning movie attendance. Rather, I would suggest that there be a serious re-evaluation of television viewing, to see if perhaps we are not following the same path as the C.R.C. Let us not kid

ourselves about watching only the “good” movies. Those willing to return to such “vomit,” will find pleasure in all manner of corruptions.

POSTSCRIPT TO THE ABOVE

After preparing the above material, a large article caught my eye in the *Grand Rapids Press*, Jan. 7, 1977. It reports a cancellation of the showing of the film, *Clockwork Orange*. Among other things, the article stated:

The film, *A Clockwork Orange*, can’t get the time of day at Calvin College.

Originally scheduled to be shown Saturday night, the film was canceled by Calvin President Anthony Diekema.

The action may become Diekema’s most controversial since he took over administrative reins at the college last year. The cancellation is the first of its kind in the 10 years the college has sponsored a film series.

“About every two years, there’s a controversy over one of the films,” says Carl Byker, a junior, who chairs the Film Arts Committee at the college. “But any trouble was always after a film had been shown. This is the first time a film has been vetoed. . . .”

The cancellation followed the film’s endorsement by both the Film Arts Committee and the broader Cultural Affairs Coordinating Council. The two groups composed of students and faculty, supported the scheduling of the film by votes of 5-2 and 6-1, according to Byker.

Irvin Kroeze, a professor of English and film studies and a member of the film committee, said he was “comfortable” with Diekema’s decision, but added he thought the film worthy of a screening at the college.

“I think it’s a good film,” said Kroeze, who has seen it three times. “It’s explosive and offensive in some ways, but it has a positive message. . . .”

Diekema, who had not seen the film before canceling it, told faculty members in a memo that “this is an especially strategic time” to evaluate the degree to which “Calvin College has met its mandate as set forth by the Christian Reformed Church Synod of 1966. . . .”

The cancellation, claimed Byker, was precipitated by a petition circulated among Calvin students in November and December that objected to some of the choices made by the film council this year.

The film council, made up of four students and three faculty members, selects films each spring for the next academic year. The petition, which netted 600 to 700 signatures, Byker said, isolated the selections of: “Chinatown,” “Women in Love” and “A Clockwork Orange.”

“The president let himself be pulled along by the pietists at Calvin,” says Byker.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Faith Church, Jenison, Mich.

Clerk: Mr. Fred Hanko
2315 Chippewa Dr.
Jenison, Mich. 49428

Treas.: Mr. Andrew Brummel
2381 Oak Hollow Dr.
Jenison, Mich. 49428

First Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Clerk: Mr. T. Looyenga
1125 Adams St., S.E.
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49507

Treas.: Mr. J. Feenstra
3695 Giddings Ave., S.E.
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49508

First Church, Holland, Mich.

Clerk: Mr. Terrence Elzinga
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Phone: (616) 772-4036

Treas.: Mr. Edward Cammenga
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Hope Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Clerk: Mr. J. Kalsbeek
4132 Hall St., S.W.
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49504

Treas.: Mr. Leon Garvelink
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Hudsonville, Mich.

Church
Address: 5101 Beechtree Ave.
Hudsonville, Mich. 49426

Clerk: Mr. Harry Zwak
3985 Van Buren
Hudsonville, Mich. 49426

Treas.: Mr. Gerald Miedema
2088 Timberlane
Jenison, Mich. 49428

Jamaica Benevolence Fund:
Mr. Ben Wigger
3560 Barker
Hudsonville, Mich. 49426

Kalamazoo, Mich.

(not received as yet)

Covenant, Prospect Park, N.J.

Clerk: Mr. Tom Nelson
12-64 Burbank St.
Fairlawn, N.J. 07410

Treas.: Mr. Clarence De Groot
176 Prescott Ave.
Prospect Park, N.J. 07508

Southeast, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Clerk: Mr. John Flikkema
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Grand Rapids, Mich. 49505
Phone: 454-1615

Treas.: Mr. Tim Pipe
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Grand Rapids, Mich. 49508

Southwest, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Clerk: Mr. Gerald Feenstra
7643 Cardinal Dr.
Jenison, Mich. 49428

Treas.: Mr. Kenneth L. Kuiper
1820 Berkley, S.W.
Wyoming, Mich. 49509

Doon, Iowa

Pastor: Rev. Marvin Kamps
P.O. Box 311
Doon, Iowa 51235
Phone: (712) 726-3382

Clerk: Mr. James Hoogendoorn,
Doon, Iowa 51235
Phone: (712) 726-3192

Treas.: Mr. Minard Van Den Top
Doon, Iowa 51235
Phone (712) 726-3184

Edgerton, Minn.

Clerk: Mr. Andrew Brummel
228 Park Ave.
Edgerton, Minn. 56128

Treas.: Mr. Ronald Brands
241 Mill St.
Edgerton, Minn. 56128

Ebenezer, Forbes, N.D.

Clerk: Mr. Lorenz Bertsch
Forbes, N.D. 58439

Treas.: Mr. Gus Streyle
Forbes, N.D. 58439

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Pastor: Rev. R.G. Moore
12324 134th St.
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Phone: (403) 455-9803

Clerk: Mr. Dave Zylstra
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Phone: (403) 474-4483

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Hull, Iowa

Pastor: Rev. Mark H. Hoeksema
1214 Third St.
Hull, Iowa 51239
Phone (712) 439-1326 (res.)
or 439-1283 (office)

Clerk: Mr. Egbert Gritters
R.R. 1
Hull, Iowa 51239
Phone: (712) 439-2194

Treas.: Mr. Peter R. Westra
R.R. 2
Hull, Iowa 51239
Phone: (712) 439-2407

Hope, Isabel, S.D.

Clerk: Mr. Art Reichert
R.R. 1
Isabel, S.D. 57633
Phone: (605) 466-3723

Treas.: Mr. Milton H. Collmann
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Isabel, S.D. 57633
Phone: (605) 466-4522

Loveland, Colorado

Clerk: Mr. Milton J. Alsum
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Pella, Iowa

Clerk: Mr. Bernie Menninga
608 E. 2nd St., Apt. 215
Pella, Iowa 50219

Treas.: Mr. Vernon De Vries
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Knoxville, Iowa 50138

Lynden, Washington

(not received as yet)

Randolph, Wisconsin

Clerk: Mr. Gary Buteyn
R.R. 2, Box 133A
Randolph, Wis. 53956
Phone: (414) 326-5666

Treas.: Mr. Jack Regnerus
444 Grove St.
Randolph, Wis. 53956
Phone: (414) 326-3734

Hope, Redlands, California

Clerk: Mr. Edwin Gritters
934 College Ave.
Redlands, Calif. 92373

Treas.: Mr. Christian Van Uffelen
25867 Mission Rd.
Redlands, Calif. 92373

South Holland, Illinois

Clerk: Mr. Louis R. Regnerus
15562 Langley Ave.
South Holland, Illinois 60473
Phone: (312) 596-0599

Treas.: Mr. Gilbert F. Van Baren
15921 Parkside Ave.
South Holland, Illinois 60473
Phone: (312) 331-3818

The Protestant Reformed Christian School, South Holland, will be in need of two teachers for the 1977/78 school year. Applications can be made by writing to (The Educational Committee, Mr. Adrian Lenting, Jr., Secretary, 16511 South Park Avenue, South Holland, Illinois 60473).

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 5, 1977, our beloved parents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN MANTEL SR., commemorated their 40th Wedding Anniversary. We, their children, are thankful to God for them and express humble gratitude to our Father in heaven for the Christian home they have provided us and for the Christian education that has been given us through them. Our prayer is that God may continue to bless them in the coming years both for each other and for us.

Their grateful children,

Mr. and Mrs. Glenn Greeley
Mr. and Mrs. Roger Hofstra
Mr. and Mrs. John F. Mantel
Mr. and Mrs. Jim Hoogendoorn Jr.
Mr. Marvin Mantel

Mr. and Mrs. Glen Mantel
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Mantel
Mr. and Mrs. Gary Anker
Mr. and Mrs. Alan Thielvoldt
and 17 grandchildren

NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Hull, Iowa, on March 2, 1977, at 8:30 AM, the Lord willing. Delegates in need of lodging should notify the Clerk of the Hull Consistory.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk
Classis West.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 24, 1977, the Lord willing, our beloved parents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN HOEKSTRA will celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our Heavenly Father who gave them to us to lead us in His ways and for preserving them these many years. It is our prayer that God may continue to bless them in their remaining years.

Their grateful children, Miss Beverly Hoekstra
Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Driesen
Mr. and Mrs. John J. Hoekstra
and 8 grandchildren.

Box 176
Boyden, Iowa 51234

News From Our Churches

Quite a few items of interest have accumulated concerning the places in which our various congregations hold their worship services. Previously reported was the news that our Hudsonville congregation was now worshipping in their new church building. Even the church building committees which have a new building under their care have their problems. There was no water in the new Hudsonville church one Sunday. It seems a pipe was frozen. Redlands is holding services in a temporary place of worship beginning this January. As of the 1st of the year, our congregation in Edmonton, Alberta is meeting in the Anglican Church at 122 Ave. and 139 St. in Edmonton. Worship services are scheduled at 9:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. Our church in Isabel, South Dakota installed new pews in their church last November. Isabel printed a thank you note to Mr. R. Ezinga from our church in Loveland, Colorado for his help in installing the new pews. Our Holland, Michigan congregation decided to make some major changes in their church building. The Holland auditorium will be enlarged by reclaiming the hall space to the south. The present society rooms will be converted into a new hall. An addition will be added to the building on the south to include a new consistory room, a nursery, a large assembly room and a new kitchen. Both our Faith and Southwest churches are making plans for new church buildings which they hope to construct sometime in the future. Our Hull, Iowa church has established an organ fund, looking forward to the time when they can install a new organ in their church.

A committee of Classis West has scheduled classical appointments for our vacant church in Forbes, North Dakota as follows: Rev. G. Lubbers will preach for them on January 9, 16, and 23. Rev. Miersma is scheduled on February 13, 20, and 27.

The congregation at our Hope Church in Walker, Michigan expressed congratulations to their pastor (Rev. R. Van Overloop) and his wife in the birth of a daughter on January 22. Mother and baby are well.

A bit of news has been received from Skowhegan, Maine. You may recall that Rev. Dale Kuiper labored in Skowhegan for a time under the supervision of the Mission Committee of our Churches. Two families with whom Rev. Kuiper met and occasionally some

others, gather together to listen to tape recorded sermons from 1st Church in Grand Rapids. They also meet together on Wednesday evenings to study Rev. Hoeksema's book *Behold He Cometh*.

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema sent along some information about his visit to Iowa in December. On the 17th he preached an installation service for his son Rev. Mark Hoeksema. On Sunday morning he preached in his former charge at Doon. Rev. Mark preached his inaugural sermon in Hull that morning. For the afternoon services, the Hoeksemas switched churches. It seems Rev. Kamps was down with the flu in Doon! Prof. Hoeksema says this was the first time he preached in Hull since he officiated at Rev. Heys' installation in 1955.

Rev. Van Baren placed the following interesting note in the 1st Church bulletin: "Last year the series of the pastor's sermons on Genesis 1-3 were recorded. These were later submitted to The Family Stations, Inc., a network of religious FM stations — the same stations which earlier aired Rev. D. Engelsma's sermons on Ephesians. We have been informed that this series will be used, beginning on February 9. This is a network of seven stations (and four additional affiliates) located in California, New Jersey, Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Nevada. One of the stations is shortwave, broadcasting to Europe and Africa. There is no charge for this ministry. The pastor has also received a request from the shortwave division to help them prepare a chapter-by-chapter study of one or two books of the Bible for a half-hour broadcast to be beamed overseas. The opportunities to perform this work arose through the efforts of Rev. Arie den Hartog (pastor of our Covenant Church in Prospect Park, NJ) who sought to obtain broadcast time on these stations. We thank our heavenly Father for the possibility of performing this ministry."

Recently, Rev. Van Baren's sermons on Romans 9 were recorded, and presently the series on Genesis 4 and following are also being tape recorded for possible broadcast by the Family Stations.

A Quiet Thought from Redlands' bulletin: "The Church is not an art gallery for exhibition of eminent Christians, but a school for the education of imperfect ones."

K.G.V.