

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Though our country prides itself as being a nation of government by law, and though from time to time it boasts that the constitution, the law, is above every citizen, nevertheless the deepest principle — and that is, after all, the principle of the natural man always — is “every man for himself, and devil take the hindmost.”

See “The Ruthless Lawlessness
of the Strike Weapon” — p. 245

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MEDITATION

Enemies of the Cross

Rev. M. Schipper

"(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)"

Philippians 3:18, 19.

Within parentheses this text is placed, and that not without reason. For there is indeed an interruption in the thought pervading the closing part of the chapter.

The positive truth which the apostle sets forth in the preceding context, and which is picked up again in the verses following this text, may be briefly summarized. He had called attention to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The ultimate

salvation and glory of the church of Christ is the mark for which he himself presses. And the church is urged to follow his example and to mark those who are like-minded with the apostle. The ground for this exhortation the apostle sets forth in the verses following our text. Our citizenship is in heaven from whence we expect the Lord Jesus, Who will change our vile body, that is, the body of our humiliation, so

that it conforms to His glorious resurrected body. Thus in body and soul we shall enjoy the perfection of our salvation in the heavenlies forever.

It is not the intention of the apostle when he sets forth this beautiful and positive objective and urging the church to follow his example in pressing toward the prize, that we follow a mere man. That would be dangerous indeed! Rather, it must be clearly understood that the example is an apostle, one who is infallibly inspired by the Spirit of Christ to reveal unto the church all the truth, and in this sense to be an infallible guide in the direction of the prize.

But the apostle senses that there are and will be those, whom he designates as enemies of the cross of Christ, who will attempt to draw the believing church away from following after this high and holy objective. He therefore interrupts his line of thought to sound a word of warning against these enemies.

Necessary it is therefore that the church of Christ not only mark him as an example to follow shall she go in the right direction, but also to mark them who are the enemies, who would lead the church in the wrong direction. This latter is the intention of the text.

Enemies of the cross of Christ!

Who are they? Where are they? And why should we mark them?

Attempts have been made to identify these enemies. With some apparent justification attention is drawn to the opening verses of our chapter, where the apostle speaks of "the dogs, the evil workers, the concision." Here the reference is no doubt to the Judaizing teachers and their followers, who would deny the efficacy of the cross to save, and have you return to the work-righteousness of the law for your salvation. And, of course, no one can deny that these are enemies of the cross of Christ just as really as the kings of the earth and the rulers who together with Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together against the Holy Child Jesus. (Acts 4:26, 27). Others identify these enemies with the Epicurean-Antinomians described by Paul in Romans 16:17, 18, who advocated a liberty which would allow the church to indulge in the lusts of the flesh. There the apostle says of them, "for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Attention is called here to the similarity of the description to that given in our text. And it cannot be gainsaid that these also are enemies of the cross of Christ, just as really as those who were immediately responsible for Christ's crucifixion.

It should be noticed, however, that the apostle in

our text does not attempt to give these enemies a particular name, which he could easily have done if it were in his mind to do so. All he says is that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, and that concerning them he had spoken often, and even now speaks of them weeping.

Why does he speak of them now as he weeps?

Because he sees them walking in the midst of the believing church. Many walk, he says. They walk within the visible manifestation of the church of Christ in the world.

O, indeed, if the enemies were that rabble that milled around the cross crying for Christ's crucifixion, that would be serious enough; but you would have no difficulty in identifying them and taking your position over against them. Nor would you have any difficulty in separating yourselves from those enemies of the cross who flatly denied the Christ of the cross by insisting that your salvation depends on your righteousness in fulfilling the demands of the law. Nor would you even have trouble in separating yourselves from a sect that causes divisions and offences contrary to sound doctrine, such as the antinomian-libertines which raised up their ugly heads in the church.

The real enemies of the cross of Christ are not the violent opponents of Christ and His cross, though enemies they be. Rather, the enemy walks, and he walks with you!

He declares that he is a friend, while he is an enemy. He professes to believe and glory in the cross of Christ, while actually he glories in his shame. He wants you to believe he is pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus, while actually he is rushing on the way to destruction. He boasts of seeking after the living God, while his god is actually his belly. He sings with you: "In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time," while in reality he refuses to bear the reproach that comes with taking it up and bearing it after Jesus.

Among those who mark the apostle and follow his example in pressing toward the mark are others, enemies of the cross of Christ, who would have you believe they are one hundred percent with you, while they seek the things which are below. Yes, they walk, many of them, and they walk with you.

Mark them!

Mark their walk! The main characteristic, the high point of their walk is: they mind earthly things.

The earthly things pertain to the things of this world, our daily vocation, our food, drink, and shelter, our money and possessions, our body and soul, our wives and children. Of course, these things are not in themselves sinful; nor does the apostle

imply that it is sinful and corrupt when we are busy daily with these things. He is not advocating world flight, nor that we are to assume a careless attitude in respect to earthly things. Surely it belongs to our calling to be good stewards of the possessions which God in His providence lays on our pathway in life.

But mark well, the apostle says that the enemies of the cross "mind earthly things." That means that they set their heart on them. They seek these things with all their heart, in order that they may consume them to satisfy their lust. They want money to have carnal pleasures. They seek possessions so that they may be comfortably independent. They are so busy with the earthly things that they do not have time or energy to think on the things heavenly and eternal. They are so involved in gathering earthly treasures that they lose out of sight the treasure reserved in heaven. They do not eat to live, but they live to eat. Their god is their belly. They glory in their shame.

These enemies of the cross may differ from one another in their pursuits but essentially they are all alike. The one literally seeks after that which satiates his appetite, that fills his belly; the other craves earthly possessions. The one may seek the pleasures of the world; the other, name and fame. The one goes all out seeking the treasures of the world; the other, the wisdom and beauty of Athens. The one looks for ease and refinement; while the other seeks those things that satisfy his carnal lust and passion. However, it really makes no difference how you look at them, they are actually the same — they are in pursuit of and their heart is set on earthly things.

And mind you, this they do while they walk with you. They attend the same church, and hear the same sound preaching. Perhaps they may hear a sermon on the same text to which our attention is now called. They squirm a little perhaps as they sit in their pews, but what the preacher says goes in one ear and out the other. They profess to serve the true and living God. When the minister and an elder visit them in their homes and confront them with the question: Are you children of God? they answer affirmatively. When the danger of becoming worldly-minded in our affluent society is presented to them, they hesitate not to admit it, or perhaps shrug off the remark with a curt reply: Well, it seems like everybody's doing it. But they do not repent. They have just enough formal religion to escape the discipline of the church, not realizing they cannot escape the discipline of the Word spoken to them or preached.

Does this sound familiar?

The apostle saw it in his day, and he wept. Not, you understand, because he is disappointed in those who manifested themselves as enemies — for these in holy wrath he denounces; but because of their in-

sidious influence upon the real marchers to heaven.

Enemies of the cross they are!

Mark them!

And separate yourselves from them, or they will lead you to destruction.

That is their end!

The apostle speaks of their walk. And one's walk includes the whole of life as it is lived here upon the earth. But everyone who walks is going somewhere. His walk has a destination. Whether he is conscious of it or not, his way leads to an end. So it is also with the enemies of the cross.

Their walk ends in destruction. They may deceive the true children of God into believing they also are children of God; and that is why the apostle warns the church against them. They may even be deceiving themselves with all their superficial piety, concluding that their baptism, their confession of faith, their church attendance, will bring them at last to the prize; but their deception will become plain to them when the Lord shall say to them, I never knew you! Depart unto the place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In the meantime they have an evil influence.

We must not forget that the true children of God, who are truly spiritual, who strive earnestly to apprehend that for which they have been apprehended, who therefore would follow the example of the apostle pressing for the prize, do this while they also live in a sinful and corrupt flesh. That flesh, like that of the enemies of the cross, seeks the things below, and relishes the pleasures of the world. And when they behold fellow church members, who are really enemies of the cross, indulging in worldly pleasures they, according to their flesh, cannot help but be attracted to them, and follow their example.

How urgent then is the positive calling of the church of Christ to follow the example of the apostle!

Flee from the idolatry which would have your belly for your god, and press to the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus. Set your heart then on the things which are above, where your citizenship is.

The way to your glorious and eternal salvation is the way of self-denial, not self-indulgence.

That way Jesus trod, yea, He opened the way for you that you might walk safely in it unto the glory of God's everlasting covenant.

Walking in that way, you shall never be ashamed, world without end.

Amen!

Amen!

Editor's Notes

RFPA Book Club Progress. Our Business Manager informs me that as of Saturday, February 11, Book Club membership had reached a total of 93. That's only a fair beginning. It's a far cry from our goal of *at least 500!* Come on! Get those membership cards in our RFPA box!

* * * * *

Questions About The Book Club. In personal contacts with some of our readers two questions have popped up in connection with Book Club membership. Perhaps the answers to these questions will encourage more responses. The first question asked me was: if I sign up as a Book Club member, how many books will I be committed to buy? The motivation of this question was a fear on the part of some that they will be over-extending themselves and be committed to buy more books than they can afford. My answer to this question, based on past experience and knowledge of the mechanics of publishing, is that you would be committed to buy, at the most, two or three books per year. For example, I wrote in the last issue that we have three new projects on the front burner at present. However, we would be doing very well indeed if we succeeded in getting all three projects completed this year. The second question was: does Book Club membership bind me to buy educational books, such as the new Bible manuals and workbooks? The answer is: No. We realize that these

are not books for *every* reader, but have a limited purpose. As a Book Club member you *may* buy these books at the club discount. We hope that many of you *will* buy them. But it is not required. And now get your membership cards mailed!

* * * * *

Australian Business Office. If you watch our masthead, you will have noticed that it no longer lists a separate business office for Australia. The Reformed Literature Centre, of Rockhampton, Queensland, informed us that they could no longer continue to handle this work for us, due especially to the fact that all their help is volunteer. Hence, all business correspondence for Australia should be sent directly to our home office. We thank the Reformed Literature Centre (connected with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Rockhampton) for their past help.

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The Day of Shadows. These notes were almost ready for the printer when we received word from Rev. John Heys that he will undergo open heart surgery around the 22nd of February, according to present plans. This means that we will miss his department in the *Standard Bearer* for some time. Our prayer is that the Lord will sustain our brother in this experience, and, if it be His will, may this surgery be a means for Rev. Heys's restoration to health and strength.

EDITORIALS

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

The Ruthless Lawlessness of the Strike Weapon

As these lines are written, our nation has been victimized by a coal-miners' strike now for some seventy days. According to news reports, a proposed settlement has been rejected by the miners' bargaining council by an overwhelming vote. No new proposed settlement is yet in sight. In many areas a shortage of electrical power threatens to become a reality in a matter of days; in some places cutbacks in power have already been ordered. In others man-

datory power blackouts, in an effort to conserve and to make available for as long as possible a minimal amount of power, are being planned, and the public is being warned to expect them. Industrial plants are warning that in case of such cutbacks, they will be compelled to shut down, with the result that thousands will be thrown out of work.

In short, the current miners' strike is a graphic illustration of the power and the willingness of an

organized group of workers to bring, if necessary, a whole nation and an entire economy to its knees, all in order to gain its own ends.

This I characterize as *ruthless*.

The miners and their union simply do not care. They do not care for anyone, except, perhaps, themselves and their own ends. They do not care whether the wheels of industry are brought to a grinding halt. They do not care whether millions of people may be left without heat and light. They do not care whether the economy of the nation is seriously impaired. They do not even care whether thousands upon thousands of their fellow workers, their union brothers, are thrown out of work. And is this not ironic, when it is one of the boasts of unionism that it cares for the worker, seeks the welfare of the worker, aims to improve the lot of the worker? But the miners do not care. It is even doubtful whether they really care for themselves in an economic sense: for not in a lifetime will they recover in terms of benefits gained by this strike the millions of dollars lost by the prolonged strike itself. They are simply out to gain their own ends, no matter what the costs. They are ruthless!

And they are *lawless*!

No, I am not saying that they are violating the law of the land. I am well aware that under the law of the land it is lawful to strike; in fact, the law recognizes the strike-weapon or the threat of the strike as the only real weapon which a labor union has. In the thinking of our country so-called collective bargaining is always bargaining with a pistol at your head.

Neither am I referring to the fact that there have been numerous instances of violence reported. Not only did the union miners refuse to work, but they tried by force to prevent non-union miners from working and to shut down non-union mines. And more than once it has become necessary for the police to employ force to protect the lives and property of those not even involved in the current dispute. This, too, was lawlessness on the part of the miners; and it only serves to underscore how ruthless they will be in their lawlessness.

But I am referring to the fact that the very principle of the strike is lawless. It is the principle of "might makes right." It is violation of the God-given authority of the employer to exercise control in his own sphere, over his own property, over his own

capital, and over his own goods. Yes, I am well aware that "capital" can sin and does sin, that it can oppress the worker and has oppressed him; for this the employer is responsible before God, too — whether he is a godly or an ungodly employer. But this is not the point. One wrong does not justify another. The wrongs and injustices of the employer do not justify the rebellion and lawlessness of the employee or group of employees. Both are responsible before the Judge of heaven and earth. And in this particular instance it is my purpose to emphasize that the strike is lawless because it is violation of the law of God — the law that stands above any law of the land. Its principle is the principle of revolution!

The ruthlessness of the current strike only serves to underscore the lawlessness of the strike weapon.

I suppose it may be said that such lawlessness is only to be expected. For not only do we live in an era of increasing lawlessness in every sphere of life today, but our very country was founded in revolution, and is founded on the principle of revolution. That is, of course, the deepest reason why the strike-weapon is recognized by the law of the land, too. Though our country prides itself as being a nation of government by law, and though from time to time it boasts that the constitution, the law, is above every citizen, nevertheless the deepest principle — and that is, after all, the principle of the natural man always — is "every man for himself, and devil take the hindmost."

Of these things the Reformed Christian should be keenly aware. He should have a keen eye for the increase of lawlessness among men. For that lawlessness is a sign of the times! And he should be reminded of the wickedness of the strike-weapon by this concrete example, lest as a Christian worker he be tempted to join forces with the world. It is our calling also in this respect to keep ourselves unspotted from the world!

Meanwhile, our "evangelical" President has shown himself as weak and as unwilling, thus far, even to invoke what little power he has against this lawlessness. For he has refused to invoke even the very weak tool of that provision of the Taft-Hartley Act by which an 80-day cooling off period can be ordered. Is he afraid of "big labor"? Or is he afraid, perhaps, that the miners are so lawless that they would not heed such an order?

Lest We Forget: A Silver Anniversary

This year of 1978 marks an important anniversary, a silver one, for our Protestant Reformed Churches.

"What?" you say. "It is only three years ago that we celebrated the Golden Anniversary of our de-

nomination. And now you speak of a Silver Anniversary?"

That is correct.

But this is the anniversary, of course, not of the birth of our denomination. That would be impossible.

However, count back twenty-five years — those of you who can remember, at least — and you will discover that this year marks the Silver Anniversary of a very important event in the year 1953 in the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches.

You ask, "Do you mean the 'split' of 1953?"

My answer is: No!

Put in terms of a "split," this is an anniversary which I, for one, would rather forget. I would prefer not to designate it as "silver." In fact, I would not have to reminisce very long before I would be in a proper mood, even twenty-five years later, to hang some crepes. For no one who at all had an active part in the life of the churches at that time, whether at consistorial, classical, or synodical level, would care to relive the events of that period of the history of our churches, unless he had a completely warped sense of what is enjoyable; and for the same reason, no one would care to celebrate the anniversary of the troubles, the struggles, the suspicions, the doubts, the distrust, the deceit, the plotting and conniving, the disappointment, the pain of separation, the covert and open attacks on the truth, the vicious slanders of faithful officebearers and defenders of the truth by one's own familiar friends, in whom he trusted, and all the other sad aspects of that period which are too numerous — and too distasteful — to recall. No one who experienced those years would willingly agree to relive the aftermath of the "split," with its struggles for survival, its painful attempts to bring order out of chaos, its battle to salvage something out of the wreckage wrought by the enemy, its valiant attempts to bring the life of the congregations on an even keel and to return to the positive work of the church and the positive development and proclamation of the truth; and for the same reason no one would care to *celebrate* this anniversary from that point of view. None who had a part in these things would willingly pass again through the agonies of fighting for ecclesiastical name and place before the civil magistrate, spending wearisome hours and days and weeks on labors which as such were of no positive benefit for the cause of church and kingdom. And for the same reason, again, no one would care to celebrate an anniversary of these events — not from that point of view.

And I know: for though it was the early years of my ministry, I experienced all these things, along with several of my colleagues who are still living and

along with a good many present and former elders and deacons, as well as many of the older generation of our people. I had a part in the struggle, and I witnessed the ecclesiastical warfare, and I saw something of the fierce struggles of others, and I can bear testimony as to the heart-wrenching effects these events had on my colleagues, on our leaders of those days, and on our churches. In fact, as I write these lines, I have to struggle to bring them to the forefront of my memory. I would rather, much rather, forget.

No, not as the "split" of 1953 ought we to celebrate it in this twenty-fifth anniversary year.

But there is another aspect.

Properly speaking, the so-called split of 1953 was the Reformation of 1953 for our Protestant Reformed Churches.

Yes, it was a different kind of reformation. Only too often in the history of the church events have proceeded to that point where reformation has demanded separation on the part of the faithful element and the instituting of the church anew. This time it was, by God's grace, a reformation from *within*. We remained the Protestant Reformed Churches. We, through that admittedly painful struggle of the "split," were cleansed of a large element which did not want to be truly Protestant Reformed. And thus, through this process of reformation, our Protestant Reformed Churches, as they represented and still represent today the cause of God's church in the world, were preserved.

It is not my intention in this editorial to go into detail as to either the issues or the events of that reformation. In condensed form the history is recorded in our Fiftieth Anniversary commemorative volume, *God's Covenant Faithfulness*. You would do well to refresh your memory from that source, or, if you have them, from the volumes of the *Standard Bearer* of the 1950s. And some day, the Lord willing, there will be an updated version of the *History of the Protestant Reformed Churches* in which both the events and the doctrinal issues will be dealt with in proper detail. This is something highly necessary for the new generation of our churches.

For the present, I wish to stress only three items.

In the first place, through the Reformation of 1953 our distinctive heritage of God's sovereign grace and of His sure and unconditional covenant and promise was preserved. For that was surely at stake in the battle. It was not a matter of a couple of relatively insignificant heretical statements, though the ecclesiastical battle came to center on these. But it was a matter of that heritage of the truth which constituted and still constitutes the very reason of

our existence as Protestant Reformed Churches. Further, not only was our heritage preserved, and we preserved in its possession; but the Lord also used this history to sharpen us in our understanding of these truths and their implications. Also in this respect the struggle of 1953 was the Lord's refiner's fire.

In the second place, history has vindicated us as churches. We are still here! Not only so, but by God's grace we are strong and vigorous and faithful to the truth of our Reformed heritage. The Lord revived us and made all things well with us! And where is that element which sought to lead our churches away from the truth and sought our destruction as Protestant Reformed Churches? As we all know, though for a time they tried to claim a Protestant Reformed identity, they soon were swallowed up and lost their ecclesiastical identity in the amalgam of the Christian Reformed Church. History has vindicated our cause as God's cause. And that "history" has vindicated us

means, you understand, that the Lord of history has vindicated us. We represent God's cause in the world!

In the third place, we must not forget! This is a very real possibility and a very real danger, simply from the point of view of the passage of time and generations. Have you ever stopped to consider that there is a large portion of our constituency which does not know of the Reformation of 1953 by experience? There are many of our people who are now adults, but who were only children and toddlers, or even unborn, in 1953. Do you realize, for example, that of our living ministers there are only six who were ordained prior to 1953, and nineteen who were ordained after the crisis of 1953? I suppose the proportions are not the same among our elders and deacons and our membership at large; but you may be sure that there are many who can know the facts and the issues of that history only secondhand. And this means that we must *instruct*. Lest we forget!

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

March 1, 1978

Dear Timothy,

In our discussion of the offices in the Church we are about ready to talk about the subject of how these offices came into existence after Pentecost, and what their significance was for the Church of all ages. You will recall that we emphasized especially the fact that Christ is the true and only Officebearer in His Church as the fulfillment of all the typical offices of the Old Dispensation. So the question really is: How did *Christ* institute the New Testament offices?

There are especially three things to remember in connection with the establishment of the offices in the New Testament Church. In the first place, God did not, so to speak, hand the early Church some kind of early edition of the Church Order of Dordrecht in which were a number of rules laid down for the operation of the Church in her institutional form. If this had been the case, all the Church would have had to do was consult certain pages and articles from time to time in order that they might learn what the will of God was in any particular instance. But God never works that way.

In the second place, along with all the principles of church government, the principles concerning the offices in the Church arose *organically* out of the life of the Church. This is a very important point, and we cannot emphasize this enough. As the work of the Church progressed, certain needs arose in the life of the Church. These needs could only be met by the institution of particular offices in the Church. And, in

connection with these needs, the special offices were instituted in the Church. The institution of these offices, therefore, is always in connection with the history of the Church itself.

In the third place, all this was done under the direction of the apostles. We must understand clearly the implications of this. The apostles occupied a special office in the Church. This was a special office because it was the office which God used as a vehicle for divine revelation. This is why Paul can write to the Ephesians that the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. Through the apostles was given the truth of revelation, which contained all the will of God for His Church for all ages; and they were the means by which this truth was recorded infallibly on the pages of Holy Writ.

In this sense of the Word, the apostles incorporated all the special offices in the Church in their office. Because they were the instruments of divine revelation, they were emphatically prophets. Thus they were used by God to bring His Word to the Church. But in the early history of the Church, they were also the elders and deacons in the Church. The rule of the Church fell upon them, and the care of the poor fell also upon them. All the work of the Church was done by them. But as the Church developed, and as various needs arose, the other offices arose out of the office of apostles. They were, so to speak, new shoots which

grew out of the stem of the office of the apostles. By the time, therefore, that God's revelation was complete and the office of apostles had served its purpose, the three offices of minister, elder, and deacon were firmly established in the Church.

There is, therefore, a close relationship between the special offices in the Church and the office of apostles. On the one hand, we can almost say that the office of apostles was subdivided into the three special offices which Scripture tells us ought to function in the Church. On the other hand, the three offices which are in the Church are guided in an absolute way by the Scriptures which were given by the apostles. The power of the offices in the Church is the power of the *Word*. And that Word was given to the Church through the apostles as the infallible record of the will of God. So there remains that connection between the special offices in the Church and the office of apostles through the Word of God.

In connection with this it must also be remembered that there is here too continuity between the Old and the New Testaments. That is, when the special offices were ordained in the Church in the New Testament, this was not something radical and new in the sense that it was something wholly foreign to the thinking of the Church. It must have been true that the Church immediately sensed that this was a part of the Church's life which grew directly out of the Old Dispensation. The Church must have sensed that the office of deacon, e.g., was a New Testament fulfillment of the office of priest; that the office of elder was the New Dispensational counterpart of the office of king; and that the office of minister was the realization of the office of prophet. There was no absolute break between the Dispensations. There was only fulfillment and perfection. It is the book of Acts particularly which tells us how these offices rose in the Church. We are all familiar with the history which is recorded for us in Acts 6 and which tells of the institution of the office of deacon. There are, however, a few things we ought to notice about this passage. In the first place, it is evident that the care of the Grecian widows who were being neglected in the daily ministration was, before this time, the responsibility of the apostles. This is clear from the words of the twelve: "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." The point is that the apostles found themselves too busy to take care of this work which needed to be done, and believed it important that they concentrated their attention on the Word of God. The office which was instituted, therefore, arose out of the office of apostles.

In the second place, the institution of this office arose organically out of a need in the Church. No one doubted for a moment that these widows had to be cared for. There was no question about this. It was a

question who would care for them. The apostles were too busy. A special office was therefore instituted to provide for this need. And, in connection with this need, we have given to us information also as to the specific duties which were entrusted to this office.

In the third place, the office was instituted and men were chosen for this office by the Church at Jerusalem, but under the direction and control of the apostles themselves. The role of the apostles, described in vss. 3, 4, 6, indicates that the idea came from them and that the men were ordained into office by the apostles with the laying on of hands. The role of the congregation, described in vs. 5, was the actual choice of the men who were appointed by God to fill this office.

In the fourth place, the role of the deacons was, during this apostolic era, somewhat broader than the role of deacons is today. We read of both Stephen and Philip, two of the deacons, that they were also men who preached, performed miracles, and did great wonders among the people. Because these offices were arising out of the Church in the era of the apostles, the lines were not as sharply drawn as they are today. Nevertheless, there was really no essential difference. I would like to return to this a bit more in detail in a later letter, but for the moment it ought to be observed that, because all the offices share the prophetic office, all the offices in the Church essentially preach the Word. So there was no *essential* difference from the office today.

We do not really read of the office of elders until the time of Paul's first missionary journey. In Acts 14:23 we read: "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." But in 15:4 we read: "And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them." From these two passages it is evident that the Church in Jerusalem had elders before the apostles departed on their first journey, and that Paul, in ordaining elders in every city where a church was established, was only doing what was already commonly accepted practice in the Church. It is striking in this connection to note that the reference to the Jerusalem meeting which is recorded in Acts 15 is a reference to a council that was composed of apostles and elders. The two are repeatedly mentioned together. See vss. 2, 6, 22, 23 as well as 16:4. And the point is that the apostles and elders functioned together in a matter which concerned the rule and government of the Church.

That there is no special mention made of the institution of this office seems also to indicate that the office arose rather spontaneously in the life of the

Church under the leadership and as an offshoot of the office of apostles.

There are two words which are used in the New Testament for “elder”: *episcopoi* and *presbyteroi*. Later, in the history of the New Testament Church, these two words became an occasion for disagreement. As the hierarchical system of Roman Catholicism developed, a distinction was made between *episcopoi* and *presbyteroi*, which distinction developed into a distinction between bishops and priests. But this is really contrary to the Scriptures. Scripture looks at the office of elder from two different viewpoints: *episcopoi* emphasizes the aspect of the *oversight* which the elders have of the Church; *presbyteroi* means “older” or “elder” and looks at the office from the viewpoint of its continuity with the Old Testament Church in which there were elders, and from the viewpoint of the qualifications for office.

That there were ministers also in the apostolic Church is clear from the writings of the apostles — especially the letters to Timothy and Titus, both of whom were ministers of the gospel. Of this office too we read of no special institution. It appears that also this office arose because of the consciousness of continuity with the Old Testament, because of the pressure of the work of the apostles (they could not,

obviously, be ministers of every congregation which was established), and because of the fact that the office of apostles quite spontaneously shot forth the shoot of this office in the Church. There are other references to ministers in the Scriptures, but to these we shall pay attention at a later date.

What is interesting to note is that the ministers were also considered elders, although they were elders who were busy in the preaching. This is clear from a passage such as I Timothy 5:17: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” Here, though elders and ministers are both designated as elders, a distinction is made between those that rule and those that are busy in the Word and doctrine. That this should be the case in Scripture is not surprising when we consider the fact that there was in the New Testament a reflection of the offices as they existed in the Old Testament, especially the fact that the prophetic office was shared by the other offices.

But we must bring this letter to a close for this time, Timothy. We shall return again to this subject in our future correspondence.

Fraternally,
H. Hanko

TRIUMPH THROUGH TRIALS

Our All-Sufficient Savior

Rev. J. Kortering

Frustrating, isn't it, how we can have good days and bad days.

Good and bad, that is, regarding faith.

One day we can be so strong, we smile; the next day we can be so cast down, the whole world is shrouded with clouds.

Sometimes we may experience this when the circumstances of our lives change. Our health may become shattered with the intrusion of cancer. Our marriage may be broken by the cold hand of death. The routine of our lives may be brutally interrupted by the “tragedy” of an accident. Of course, our response is drastic. We cry; we are crushed; we groan in our distress. And soon we rise above the blow and begin to see life in a different perspective. Life is

never the same, but we go on. Soon the sunshine breaks through the clouds.

Our deepest frustration, however, is not at such times. Far more difficult for us is the up and down, the good and bad days, when the circumstances in our lives are the very same. For some of us it may be that our lives are filled with goodness from the Lord. We are healthy; we have work to do so that we are not bored with life; we have a happy marriage; we are blessed with healthy, active children. Yet, within the framework of so many blessings, we can one day be exhilarated, our faith life shines with the lustre of heaven, we are thankful — and anyone looking at us can see it. Yet, a short time later, for no apparent reason, we can be down, depressed; we can't seem to

get ourselves together, and we walk around as if the whole world is crushing us to pieces.

That's frustrating!

The same is true for many of you who have grave trials in your lives. You are weeping because you are lonely, death has struck your home. You have known pain because of disease or surgery. You have to carry a great burden either because of your affliction or because you have to help a loved one who is afflicted. Sometimes you have days when the light of heaven shines upon you and you know contentment. Oh, not that it is easy on those days, but your outlook is bright and that makes such a difference. And, before you know it, maybe the very next day, you are crushed beneath the load. The circumstances are the very same, yet you feel gloom; you cry with self pity; it seems too much; you are discouraged.

That's frustrating!

What must we do?

The Word of God gives us direction.

It is true that we may console ourselves to a certain degree that such is the character of our life as long as we are on this side of the grave. We can certainly turn to many examples of Scripture to see God's saints in their ups and downs, Jacob from Bethel to Peniel, Elijah from Carmel to the juniper tree, Jonah from Nineveh to sulking under the withered vine.

There really is no comfort in this. It helps us to understand that such trials are common to God's people, but it doesn't solve the problem.

Let me suggest that you read again Matt. 14:22-33.

We see in this experience of Peter a spiritual lesson. He walked on the water. He had "good days." The storm didn't make him afraid; the waves didn't seem to bother him; he walked to Jesus.

But, when he looked at the wind and waves, he became afraid, verse 30. He began to sink and he cried, "Lord, save me." And Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him and said, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" verse 31. In other words, Peter's down days were due to his lack of faith. He was preoccupied with the storm rather than with the presence of Jesus. It was a time of "little-faith."

The outstanding truth in this entire passage is that salvation is completely in the Lord Jesus. He Himself walked upon the water! He is the Lord of life; He is our Redeemer and Savior Who has also become our Lord. He died for our sins. He made complete satisfaction so that the billows of God's wrath are forever taken away from us, His people. He has received of the Father the Holy Spirit whereby He is able to impart to us a living faith.

Whether we are up or whether we are down, He saves us.

There is more, however, to instruct us.

We also learn of our relationship to Him. We like to have strong days, we like to be "up." How can that be? Only one answer is obvious: "Look to Jesus!" Concentrate upon the Lord, learn His will, contemplate His great salvation, search the Scripture, and prayerfully ask for His presence and strength, and will walk upon the water. Grace and wisdom and all spiritual blessings come from Him through faith. Faith looks upon Jesus. There is no boast when we are "up." We are able to do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth us.

We also learn what to do when we are "down." There is something wrong with our faith; it is weak. Rather than looking at Jesus our Savior, we are looking at our own problem, we are feeling sorry for ourselves, we are engrossed in the hardship of life rather than looking at Jesus Who promises to give us strength no matter what the need. That really is sin. Listen to Peter, "Lord, save me!" Oh, yes, when we are "down" we need salvation! We need our faith strengthened, we need grace, we need the Holy Spirit. Do you do the right thing when you are down? We must turn to Jesus, read His Word, pray for salvation, for a lifting up of our souls to the God Who loves and cares for us. And He does just that, Jesus reached down and lifted Peter and gently reprimanded him.

We have an all-sufficient Savior.

"In doubt and temptation I rest, Lord, in Thee;
My hand is in Thy hand, Thou carest for me;
My soul with Thy counsel through life Thou wilt
guide,
And afterward make me in glory abide."

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

Everyone's Duty to Join the True Church

Prof. Robert D. Decker

"We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and that out of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself, to

live in a separate state from it; but that all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with it; maintaining the unity of the Church; submitting themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof; bowing their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ; and as mutual members of the same body, serving to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them. And that this may be the more effectually observed, it is the duty of all believers, according to the Word of God, to separate themselves from all those who do not belong to the Church, and to join themselves to this congregation, wheresoever God hath established it, even though the magistrates and edicts of princes were against it, yea, though they should suffer death or any other corporal punishment. Therefore all those, who separate themselves from the same, or do not join themselves to it, act contrary to the ordinance of God."

— *The Belgic Confession*, Article XXVIII

Speaking of the Church and the fact that there is no salvation outside of it, John Calvin said:

"We may learn even from the title of *mother*, how useful and even necessary it is for us to know her, since there is no other way of entrance into life, unless we are conceived by her, born of her, nourished at her breast, and continually preserved under her care and government till we are divested of this mortal flesh, and 'become like the angels.' For our infirmity will not admit of our dismissal from her school; we must continue under her instruction and discipline to the end of our lives. It is also to be remarked, that out of her bosom there can be no hope of remission of sins, or any salvation, according to the testimony of Joel and Ezekiel . . . In these words the paternal favour of God, and the peculiar testimony of the spiritual life, are restricted to his flock, to teach us that it is always fatally dangerous to be separated from the Church."

Institutes: IV, i, 4

These words are certainly apropos to the situation of our times. We hear an increasing chorus of voices rising in criticism of the Church. More and more, so it seems, people are less than impressed with the necessity of being joined to the true Church. Calvin says unequivocally that no one can be saved outside of the Church and that is the point of this Article of our *Confession*. This simply means that the matter of one's church membership may not be treated in cavalier fashion. To put it bluntly, where one goes to church is of crucial importance and has eternal consequences.

There has been over the years no little disagreement as to what the *Confession* means by the Church or the true Church. The *Confession* calls the true Church, a "holy congregation" and an "assembly of those who are saved." Because of this and especially because the *Confession* states concerning this assembly of those who are saved that "out of it there is no salvation," there are some who insist that the reference is to the Church as organism. It is evident, however, that the *Confession* is referring not to the organism as such but to the organism as it becomes manifest in the institute of the Church among all nations of the world in time and history. This is why the *Confession* declares it to be the duty of believers to: "join themselves to this congregation, wheresoever God hath established it. . . ." No man of himself

is able either to separate himself from or join himself to the organism of the Church, the true spiritual Body of Jesus Christ. One either is a member of the Body of Christ by virtue of divine election or he is not. On the other hand it is entirely possible to sever relations with or to join the Church as institute.

We must not conclude from this that there is only one true institute of the Church in the world at any given time. It would not be proper to say, for example, that the Protestant Reformed Churches are the one, true Church and all other churches are false. God gathers His people out of the nations of the world and establishes His Church among the nations. Nevertheless it remains true that the true Church exists throughout the world and is easily distinguished from the false by the marks of the true Church. (Cf. Article XXIX)

This institute of the Church is "an assembly of those who are saved." This cannot mean that all the members of the Church institute are saved. We know both from the Word of God and from experience that there is always a carnal element in the Church. This is one reason why the Church must have the pure preaching of the Word and the exercise of discipline in order that these may be expelled. We also believe and confess that outside of this assembly there is no salvation. The institute of the Church is the visible manifestation in the world of the Body of Jesus Christ. To that one Body of which Christ is the Head belongs the one Spirit of Christ. The saving operation of the Spirit is within the Body of Christ and, therefore, outside of that Body no one has any part with Christ.

Hence no one, "of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw himself, to live in a separate state from it; but . . . all men are in duty bound to join and unite themselves with" the visible manifestation of the Body of Christ on earth. That is where Christ is in the office of believers and in the special offices of minister, elder, and deacon. Through the institute of the Church the means of grace are dispensed. To the Church the ascended Christ gave pastors and teachers: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11, 12) It pleases God "by the foolishness of preaching to

save them that believe.” (I Corinthians 1:21) Romans 10:13-15 teaches that in order to be saved one must call upon the name of the Lord. In order to call upon the name of the Lord one must believe in Christ and in order to believe in Christ one must hear Him. In order to hear Christ one must have a preacher who is sent. Thus to leave the Church where the Word is purely preached is to despise the God-ordained means of salvation. It is in effect to leave the fellowship of Christ Himself, and that is terribly serious! John Calvin, speaking to this point, gave this warning:

“Hence it follows that a departure from the Church is a renunciation of God and Christ. And such a criminal dissension is so much the more to be avoided, because, while we endeavour, so far as lies in our power, to destroy the truth of God, we deserve to be crushed with the most powerful thunders of his wrath. Nor is it possible to imagine a more atrocious crime, than that sacrilegious perfidy, which violates the conjugal relation that the only begotten Son of God condescended to form with us.”

Institutes, IV, i, 10

This would also imply that there are manifestations of the institute of Church which are corrupted and have departed from the truth. It falls upon believers to sever relations with such a corrupt institute and join that institute which is pure and holy. If men do not do this they act contrary to the ordinance of God. And, it may be added, they will reap the harvest of their error upon themselves and upon their generations. It is well to note at this point the viewpoint of the *Confession*. The *Confession* considers this whole matter from the point of view of the obligation which rests upon all believers. They are in duty bound to join themselves to the true Church and not to withdraw from it. That is done through the outward sign of baptism, either of infants or of adults and through public confession of faith. Thus through the union in public worship, the celebration of the sacraments, and in general, participation in the organic life of the Church one joins the true Church. Again, let it be emphasized, that is where Christ is. There through the preaching of the Word the voice of the Good Shepherd is heard calling His sheep so that they follow Him. Outside of it there is no salvation.

The *Confession* also speaks of the demands which rest upon believers as members of the Church. They must maintain the unity of the Church. They may not commit the sin of schism, a sore evil which has plagued the Church from the very beginning of its history. John Calvin warned against this sin repeated-

ly. Just as one must join the true Church where the Word is purely preached, so the only reason one may justifiably sever relations with a Church is when the preaching and doctrine are corrupted and discipline is no longer exercised in obedience to the command of Christ. Always his duty remains to walk worthy of his calling in the love of God, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-3)

Believers must submit themselves to the doctrine and discipline of the Church. They must bow under the yoke of Christ. The point is, and this will be further developed in Article XXX, that Christ is the chief and only officebearer in the Church. Christ has appointed officebearers in the Church: ministers, elders, and deacons. Through these officebearers, who represent Christ, Christ speaks His Word, governs His flock, and ministers His mercies to the poor. Thus by submitting to the Christ-ordained officebearers believers “bow their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ.” Obviously this implies a responsibility on the part of the officebearers. They must speak only the Word of Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and they must rule the congregation and dispense the mercies of Christ according to the Word. Then and only then are they faithful and obedient to the Church Who called them. Then they truly represent Christ and have the right to demand obedience in His name.

Believers must, “as mutual members of the same body, (serve) to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them.” Christ through His Spirit has graced the members of His Body with a wide variety of spiritual gifts. No man in the Church has received these gifts for his own selfish interests, but has been given them in order that with them he may serve the welfare of the Church of Jesus Christ and the cause of the Kingdom of Heaven. (Cf. Romans 12:5-8) Believers must use their gifts for the benefit of their fellow saints so that the Church may be built up in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God.

Finally the obligation to join the true Church wheresoever God has established it is so serious and so sacred that one must obey it regardless of the consequences — “even though the magistrates and edicts of princes were against it, yea, though they should suffer death or any other corporal punishment.” This was emphatically true at the time when the *Confession* was written. Guido de Bres himself was hanged on account of the faith. It will, no doubt, be true again, probably in the not too distant future.

Know the standard and follow it.

Read The Standard Bearer

IN HIS FEAR

Praying For the Church

Rev. Meindert Joostens

About this time each year we set aside a day of prayer. Sometimes we call this day the Day of Prayer for Crops and Industry. It is this title that brings to light the true emphasis that our Prayer Day must have. The Annual Day of Prayer is to ask the blessing of Jehovah our God upon the fertile fields that they may bring forth a harvest of good things for us. And, although most of us are far removed from the land and agriculture, we do well to pay attention to the emphasis of Prayer Day. However, in this article, without doing violence to or destroying the aforementioned emphasis, I want to depart a little from tradition and call your attention to another petition which must have a chief place in our prayer. We must pray for the peace of Jerusalem. We must have delight in the prosperity of the Church. God's people spoke in the captivity of Babylon, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." (Psalm 137:5, 6) So, as we live in the midst of the bosom of the antichristian world, must we regard the church in our prayers.

Often we find this love for the Church revealed to us in the Psalms. Many times we read of the dear place that Zion, God's holy hill, and Jerusalem, the city of God had in the hearts and prayers of God's people in the old dispensation. I think for example of one of the Psalms of degrees, Psalm 122. We could do no better than to have this Psalm resound in our soul when we approach unto God's House from Sunday to Sunday. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." (verses 1 & 2) But then notice especially verses 6-8: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee."

The terminology of the Psalms deal of course with the figures of the old dispensation. This Psalm focuses upon Jerusalem as it is the Old Testament type and picture of God's covenant and church. Jerusalem was

the spiritual center of the promised land of Canaan. All the physical attributes that speak of the beauty of Zion only point to its true spiritual grandeur. It was a city compact and fair with towering defenses, the city of the king. It was unto the city of Jerusalem that God's people journeyed, for there was the Most Holy Place. On Mt. Zion God dwelt with His people in covenant communion and fellowship. There the ark of the covenant was found under one roof with the Holy Place where the children of Abraham might bring their sacrifices. Zion was the place of God's delight! There He chose to live with His chosen people.

The true beauty of Jerusalem is designated in its very name. Jerusalem designates the habitation, dwelling, or possession of peace. It was the city of peace. Not primarily an earthly and physical peace, for this was only true in part. During the reign of Solomon peace reigned in Israel, and Solomon was able to execute the delight of his father David in the building of the temple. But Jerusalem saw much war, as anyone at all acquainted with Old Testament history knows. Yea, the city of peace was even destroyed in 586 B.C. But the peace of Jerusalem was the tranquility that God's people enjoyed with Jehovah. The peace of Jerusalem was the peace of God's covenant. It was the result of God's gracious forgiveness of sin. The peace of Jerusalem was found in the many sacrifices that all pointed to the Christ Who would truly establish peace for His people.

But the typical, though beautiful, must ultimately fail and give way to the real which it foreshadowed. The city of Jerusalem and Mount Zion as we just spoke of it was no exception. The church and covenant of the Old Testament becomes universalized in the new dispensation. Jerusalem becomes the catholic church. Zechariah prophesied of this already in the times that belonged to the shadows and pictures. He said "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls. . . ." Isaiah spoke of enlarging the tent, lengthening the cords, and strengthening the stakes. (54:2) Since the veil of the temple was torn in twain, the Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel has taken up His covenant abode in the hearts of His people in

every nation, tribe, and tongue. Since the Priest, who was priest *par excellence*, offered Himself as the atonement for the sins of His own, we are the temples of God. And even as the name Jerusalem depicted the characteristic of the peace of God that belonged to that typical city, so the church today is tranquil in peace, for her warfare has been accomplished. Though the Devil, the world, and all the powers of evil threaten against us, we shall not be greatly moved! For there is nothing that can separate the church from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But let us understand that the complete peace of Jerusalem will be ushered in only when she finally descends from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. Though her warfare has been accomplished, the church is still militant. That is our experience. Quite obviously, we know this to be the case from an external point of view. The church is plagued by persecution and oppression. Though we do not as yet experience this in the country in which we live, the church is and will be persecuted for righteousness sake. So terrible will this persecution become, that the days will be shortened for the sake of the elect of the Church. Things must get worse before we see the better of the eternal peace. But there is also an internal aspect to the peace of Zion, the Church. Not only do we as members of the Body of Christ have to suffer the lashing of the world, but we also struggle with ourselves! The members of the flesh war against the spirit. Our souls are not always calm but sometimes in great upheaval, knowing that our warfare has been accomplished, our flesh is still often lured by that which no longer has a hold upon us, and, worse yet, is sometimes overcome. Among the saints, the citizens of Jerusalem, we find much worry, anxiety, distress, and littleness of faith. It is not always peaceful in Zion.

Therefore, pray for peace! Such a prayer is motivated by a true love and concern for Zion. The Church of Christ as it makes itself manifest here upon the earth must be dear to our hearts. The cause of the kingdom must be uppermost in our minds. Our situation is analogous to that of the Babylonian captivity. There they could not sing the songs of Zion. It was altogether too painful for them. Yet, this was a result of their deep love. If I forget Zion, let my right hand forget her cunning. These are powerful words. As the Church in the new dispensation has been made catholic, so the type of Babylon is universal. Today the Church lives in the clutches of the world that has no use or love for the Church. There must be a special place in the heart of the child of God for the Church. We must see her beauty and spiritual significance for us. We are told in our confession that the Church is chiefly characterized by

the preaching of the Word of God. Paul described the proclamation of the Word as "Preaching Christ crucified." This is the same gospel which was manifest in a typical way in the temple at Jerusalem through the priesthood and sacrifice. It was this that made Jerusalem the spiritual center of the land of Canaan and the love of God's people. So it is with the church today. We repair to God's house each Sabbath to be invigorated spiritually by the Spirit through the preaching of the Word. It is for us an oasis in the dry desert land of this pilgrim's journey. We have a longing to be so instructed and uplifted, do we not? Let us pray for the peace of Zion that we may have the doors of our churches open each Sunday morning. What a wealth immeasurable is ours! "Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good." (verse 9) Jerusalem without the temple was of no consequence. The people who returned from the captivity of Babylon realized this very keenly. We seek the Church because there God delights to dwell. In the Church He takes His abode in the midst of His people! We must be careful not to seek Jerusalem because of her beautiful buildings and magnificent palaces. We may not love the Church of God simply because of its outward appeal. All too many churches have forgotten the sacrifice in the temple, Christ crucified, and made their drawing power a social gospel and physical attraction.

And we pray for the peace of Zion, "for my brethren and companions' sakes." Our prayer is never selfish or egotistical. There are those who join us as we approach the house of the Lord. They are my companions. They too are God's covenant people that have the same delight for the church in their heart. They too seek Jerusalem because it is the house of the Lord our God. Together we have itching ears for the pure gospel of Christ. We are one in the body of Christ and unified by the bond of faith that ties us to Christ Who is Head of the Body of the Church. We pray for peace that our brothers and sisters may worship with us, singing the songs of Zion and hearing the Spirit address the Church. That's why it bothers and we are filled with concern when pews are empty. We join in the joys, sorrows, and problems of our companions. We seek the welfare of Zion before our own!

And the encouragement in all this is that they who love Zion shall prosper. I must point out the original here. The word prosperity here is the same word that the Psalmist uses with regard to Jerusalem's peace. So really the idea is that those who seek the peace of the Church shall themselves experience peace. If our sincerest desire is not for Zion, if the Church is not chief in that which we seek, then we must not expect the blessing of peace in our heart and life. But for those who seek the good of Jerusalem, who love the

Church and show it in very deed, God gives abundant prosperity. We shall see God's kingdom prosper and increase all our days here below.

We pray for the peace of Jerusalem now and that it may come in all its perfection on that great day of days. As those who prosper in Zion, we shall abide in His fear.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Prenatal Perplexity

Rev. John A. Heys

When you deal with matters over which you have no control, you often have to hurry. Because we have no control over the approaching storm we hurry to get into a sheltered place, if not to escape the killing lightning bolt, then to be safe from the drenching rain. Because we have no control over the minute virus that causes the fever to rise dangerously near the fatal mark, we rush our loved one or friend to the nearest hospital. When we see the days roll by and old age approaching relentlessly, and we know that we cannot make the day stay with us, we often hurry to get a matter accomplished which we know should wait and be done more leisurely, and perhaps not at all. A young woman may rush into marriage. A young man may speed down the highway at a reckless rate of speed. But an older couple may invest without investigation to get rich quickly so that retirement may be reached before the days arrive when they cannot enjoy that retirement.

The God Whom we serve and Whose we are never hurries. And this is true exactly because He has all things at all times completely under His control. He created time and has perfect control of every split-second of time. He created space and rules every nook and cranny of it with almighty power.

And so it is that after Isaac and Rebekah became man and wife, when Isaac was forty years old, twenty years went by before God gave them their first child. It would seem to us, and it may have seemed to Abraham, that for the fulfillment of His covenant promises they should have a child at once. After all, Abraham did not send for a wife for Isaac simply so that Isaac would quit mourning for his mother and have a companion in life. He had his eye on a child, on children, on seed as the sand upon the seashore. And did God not make the woman as she is so that she might bring forth children? Does not the little girl in time develop exactly in such a way that she is made ready for bearing children? God does not bring her to her maturity so that she may be a shapely

model, an object for the artist to paint or sculpture because of grace of line and proportion. He made her not for the lust of man and so that contraceptive factories might employ men and keep the economy going. She was made, as Solomon also in his wisdom points out in Proverbs 5:15, to be the fountain out of which the human race would flow, the cistern, or if you will, the well, out of which the man receives his children. He writes, "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well." And that Solomon is referring to the woman is evident from verse 18: "Let thy fountain be blessed; and rejoice with the wife of thy youth."

But God is in no hurry to give Isaac a child out of that fountain. He need not be in a hurry. For He has all things completely under His control. He had shown in Abraham and Sarah that even when *they* came to the point of being completely incapable of bringing forth children, He could still do so. With God it is never, "Hurry up before it is too late." What is more, God has His calendar and His stop-watch. He has all things scheduled for a particular moment of time and knows the end from the beginning. He is in no hurry because there is nothing and no one that can hurry Him. There never is at any moment of time an emergency and therefore no situation that requires haste on His part. There never is with Him a moment that if this or that does not happen just now, it cannot and will not happen. On time, according to God's unchangeable calendar, what He knew and decreed before the foundation of the world occurs with clock-like precision, not hurried, not delayed, but at the exact second in time that it was decreed before time began.

From the point of view of man, for whom these things occur and around whom they revolve in God's mystery as it is in Christ, there are reasons why events seem delayed. So often we need such "delays" and deliberate withholding of what God promised. We need to be taught to pray, and to pray more

earnestly. Never in this life do we reach the point of perfection in our prayers. Never do we learn to pray as zealously and earnestly as we ought. And what we call delays are used by God to cause us to fix our eyes more intently upon Him, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. All too often we live as though we *are* like God and we need Him only in dire emergencies. We sing of needing Him every hour while actually we need Him every heartbeat. We think in terms of years and days when we do not know from one second to the next what will befall us. The moments when we look up to Him, the moments when we are really asking Him — rather than just reaching out and taking what we see before us — are so few and far between. And in our hectic rush to get out of this life what we can and to enrich ourselves with as many of the treasures of this world as we can, we need to be taught to wait upon the Lord and to begin to reckon with Him.

Isaac did. O, not at first. We just expect children; and just for a brief moment after their birth do we stop and say that a miracle has happened. For the rest it is just a biological process that usually works. Often it happens to the dismay of husband and wife, often filling a young unmarried couple with fear and desperation; but usually it is just the thing to expect. God has been doing this for centuries, and why pray? When He is in no hurry it becomes a different matter. When we are in a hurry we begin to look up, to pray and to recognize the fact that after all He does have something to do with it. And receiving children is by no means the only area wherein we have to learn to look up, to pray and to wait patiently for God's counsel to unfold and for Him to send those things that will work together for good to those that love Him.

But, as we began to say, Isaac did make it a matter of prayer. He "entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren." We may believe — even though it is not stated — that Rebekah also prayed. This was no mixed marriage in which the one is spiritual and the other carnal, so that the one prays for a child, and the other's secret hope is that nothing will come of this; the one entreats God and the other is already contemplating an abortion-murder if He is entreated. Rebekah came from her own home this great distance to be Isaac's wife in order to bear him children. She also wanted a child. And more importantly she too was interested in God's covenant.

And when He was entreated she had great discomforts and could not understand what was going on in her womb. This is her first conception. She had never felt life within herself before. And this was no mere gentle movement that assured her that there was life and hope of a child being born. There was a struggle. Her womb was a battlefield! The Hebrew

word has various meanings. Among them is break, bruise, crush and oppress. Unborn Jacob and Esau were not engaged in a friendly wrestling match. It was a struggle for mastery, even though they could not yet consciously do such a thing. And although we find a different word in Genesis 3:15, we do have here a fulfillment of that prophecy and prediction of God that seed will bruise seed, and enmity will exist between seed and seed. Here amazingly enough we have it between children of one conception, children of one father and one mother. Yea we have it in twin brothers of two devout, believing children of God.

Now, however, we do read of Rebekah praying to God, "And she went to enquire of the Lord." Genesis 25:22. And her question is, "Why am I thus?" However, she precedes this question with, "If it be so." And this has been translated in different ways. Combined with "Why am I thus?" it receives some striking interpretations. Calvin explains that Rebekah despaired of life and wanted to die rather than bring forth two sons that would be at each other's throats. There are also those who shrink from the word struggle and want to temper it to mean jostle. Yet that cry of Rebekah ought to indicate that it was more than a mere movement, a normal nudging of two in such close confinement, the one moving and quite naturally jostling the other. There just was not room enough to move without touching the other. With all this we cannot agree. Rebekah, even though this was her first conception, and she had not felt life in her before by a previous conception and birth, knew that this was something unusual. She did not even know when she cried out that there were twins within her, and by all means that they were sons and would be heads of nations. But she knew that a struggle was going on, that there was more than normal movement of a developing child.

Although there may be some reason for believing that Cain and Abel were twins, since we read of only one conception in Genesis 4:1, this is not at all conclusive. It is not at all impossible that here we have the first set of twins — at least that Rebekah had known none before — and that Rebekah has every reason to wonder what was going on within her, what actions this *one* child was performing. The older women in Abraham's house — for Isaac and Rebekah were still in Abraham's house — told her that at such and such a time she would begin to feel life; but such a violent, such a definite struggle she did not understand. If it be so, if a developing child flexes its muscles and moves about, why is this such a pronounced and strong movement that suggests conflict? And we do Rebekah injustice to say that she wanted to die. No, she wanted this "child" and went to God not to ask to die but to ask what it all meant.

And yet, the context demands more. It cannot be

doubted that the older women told Rebekah what to expect. But the text and context says nothing about this and does not connect her words up with such a construction. These words follow at once upon the statement that "the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived." The full idea then is this, Isaac and Rebekah prayed not simply for a child but for a covenant child, one in whom the promises of God to Abraham would be fulfilled. They looked forward to such a child, expected a believing child with the same meekness and spirituality that God had given them. They looked forward to a child that would patiently walk as a pilgrim and stranger with them in the land of promise, one who would not fight for the land but wait for God to give it. If that be so, if God has now heard their prayer and this is the

child, why am I thus — torn with an inner struggle by that child?

And it takes the revelation of God to explain that this is not one child but two, and not only two children but two nations, two seeds with opposite loves and hatred, two who will struggle and fight, and — as we read in Romans 9:12 also — the elder shall serve the younger. Something unusual is taking place in her because something unusual will take place in the lives of these children: the elder shall serve the younger.

Once again God is entreated and He comes with revelation and assures us as well as Rebekah that the world will serve the Church, the chaff will serve the wheat. There will be a struggle. Our heel shall be bruised and crushed. But be of good cheer, the head of Satan shall be crushed!

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of the Book of Galatians

Rev. G. Lubbers

THE LAW DOES NOT CONFLICT WITH THE PROMISES OF GOD (Galatians 3:21)

If the law did not add anything to the terms of the promise of God to Abraham and to his seed, and if it could not disannul the terms of the promise, and if the law was only added for the sake of bringing out the sinfulness of sin in horrible transgressions, then there seems to be a conflict between the law and the promises. God was then performing a conflicting work at Ur of the Chaldees and on mount Sinai. That seems to be the legitimate inference and conclusion.

To this the apostle replies with the strongest denial: *God forbid!* (Gal. 3:21) For a similar denial see Rom. 6:1 where the seemingly legitimate conclusion is warranted concerning the "added law that the offense might abound." (Rom. 5:20) Let that conclusion never even arise in our hearts to subscribe such folly to the most wise God, Who does all things in wisdom and prudence, (Eph. 1:8, 9) making known unto us the mystery of His will! The law cannot, in the divine wisdom, be "against" the promises of God! God is too great a Teacher and Pedagogue of His saints to perpetrate such folly and injustice.

What then?

Such folly could only be true if God had given the

law the same life-giving powers which He has reserved for the operation of the Holy Spirit. If the law were of *such a nature* that it had the innate power (*dunamos*, compare our English: dynamite) to make a dead sinner alive, a rebellious sinner willing, then it would be doing what the Holy Spirit does in the risen Christ at God's right hand. (Eph. 2:5-7) Then the law could and would be doing what grace now does, the rich mercy and love whereby we have been made alive with Christ and whereby we have been set with Christ in heavenly places. But that is as unthinkable, in the light of Scripture, as it is untrue. Then righteousness would have been by means of law and Christ would have died on the Cross unnecessarily. The law would have made the Cross redundant, superfluous! But such a law was not given. God did not save us both by law and by grace. And, therefore, the law is not against the promises of God. God forbid!

Now we look for the highest wisdom and beautiful design of the architect of our salvation in the law-giving at Sinai. The righteousness whereby we are saved is without law as the *basis* of salvation. (Rom. 3:21) Such is the testimony of all the law and the prophets. Paul now calls attention to all these Old Testament Scriptures and tells us that "the Scripture," as the revelation of the divine plan and purpose, had something in mind with the law-giving in

relationship to the fulfilment of the Promises of God.

THE SCRIPTURE'S PURPOSE IN PLACING ALL THINGS UNDER SIN (Galatians 3:22)

Paul's appeal is here not to human logic or mere correct inference from certain data of Scripture. Paul appeals to the last court of appeal, the normative, canonical teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. Before this teaching all human reason must bow. These are the spiritual weapons which are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. (II Cor. 10:4) The foolish imaginations of these Judaizing teachers, which exalts itself against the knowledge of God, must be brought down crashing to its destruction. All must be brought to the obedience of Christ. And, therefore, Paul says: *The Scripture hath included (shut up) all things under sin* in order that the promise might be *out of faith of Jesus Christ*, to all them that believe!

Before this Scripture all must bow! There may be some difference of interpretation relative to the term: Scripture. In the Greek the definite article points out the well-known Scripture in this regard. Whether this refers to a definite Scripture passage in the Old Testament or whether it refers to the Scripture as a whole in its united teaching is not of great consequence as far as Paul's positive setting forth of the truth of the Gospel is concerned. Sometimes the term refers to a definite Scripture passage in the Old Testament. (Mark 12:10, Ps. 118:22) Sometimes the term "the Scripture" refers to more passages than one, to a group of passages as in John 7:28, 42. Here reference is to such passages as Ezekiel 47:1-12; Joel 3:1; 4:13; Zechariah 13:1; 14:8. It seems to this writer that here, in Galatians 3:22, the apostle has in mind *all* the law and the prophets. These all testify of this great "purpose" of the law in relationship to the fulfilled promise. (Rom. 3:21) For this reason Paul can say *the Scripture*, just as he did in verse 8 of this Chapter, where he personifies the Scripture, making the Scripture a *preacher* of the gospel-tidings to Abraham that in him all nations would be blessed. This same "Scripture" is here once more personified as putting "all things under sin." Here the Scripture is not a "preacher" but is more a "keeper of a city," a Divine pedagogue to Christ.

But we are anticipating.

Now Paul tells us some very instructive and interesting things about the law, as given 430 years after the gracious promise-giving to Abraham. This law did only one thing. That was all it *could* do. In comparison with the life-giving promise of the Spirit it was weak. It did not merely leave us in our sins, but it most emphatically put us *under sin*. (*upo hamartian*) That was the very operation and functional

design of the law. That was the purpose of the law-giving: it was for the transgressions' sake. (See verse 19)

It is worthy of notice that the phrase "under law" is only found in the writings of Paul, and then only in the Romans and Galatians. Again, we should notice that this term "under law" sometimes refers to being *legally* under law, that is, under condemnation. (Rom. 6:15) It is the very opposite of being "under grace" of justification. Being "under law" means to be legally in the status of a servant of sin. We then have no *right* to serve God as sons. Sin is our legal master before God. In Romans 7:14 we read that Paul confesses that, even as a free-born son, (Rom. 7:3, 4) he is, as far as his flesh is concerned, "sold under sin." His flesh is completely under the sin-principle. (Compare for the idea of being entirely under the grip of sin such passages as I Kings 21, 25 and II Kings 17:17, where it means to be wholly and entirely and totally under the dominion of sin.) Paul is *sold* under sin as far as his flesh is concerned. There is no good in it. Here "under sin" is not quite the same as being "under law." However, in our present passage, which we are considering here in Gal. 3:22, the term under sin, means *legally* and *spiritual* under the sin-principle. And, it must be understood that we are *legally* thus under this principle, because we are under *law-principle* which *cannot* make us alive, nor *can* it justify us!

Now the entire teaching of Scripture is that we are thus "shut up" under sin. We are like fish in a net. There is no escape, there is no getting from under this law. The Scripture thus teaches everywhere in all the law and the prophets. Thus it was in the Old Testament from Sinai till Calvary; any other teaching concerning the law is a lie.

However, this law is not a sadistic contrivance to torture the *heirs* of the promise; it was the Divine way of underscoring the grand Gospel-message, by the greatest contrast, that *the promise* is for those who believe alone. Only it is for such only in the way of "out of the faith of Jesus Christ." The false teachers, who had descended upon the Galatian churches like vultures, would admit that the promise is only for *believers*. What they denied was that it was "*only* out of faith" without works of law. Thus they denied the great promise of God, and all the teaching of "the Scripture" concerning the very *purpose* of the law! They failed to hear the Gospel message in the Scripture. They failed to hear the one "Scripture" which spoke of the promised salvation to all nations, and of the role of the law in Israel toward that sure and wonderful goal. They erred because they did not know the Scriptures, nor the power of God. (Mark 12:24)

THE FAITH WHICH WAS ABOUT TO BE REVEALED (Galatians 3:23)

The law was really a marvelous institution of God, given by angels in the hand of Moses for Israel at Sinai. Although it kept Israel, the heirs of the promise, under sin, it had a very definite purpose of pointing to the fulfilment in Christ's death and resurrection! Christ would be delivered for our offenses and He would be raised for our justification. (Romans 4:25; Isaiah 53:4)

Writes Paul, "we were kept under law, shut up unto (*eis*) the *faith* which was about to be revealed." Hence, there is now a point of reference for Paul in his reasoning. It is "before" and "after" faith came. Israel in the Old Testament, under law, lived "*before* faith was revealed." We live "*after* faith is revealed." Now this has great meaning in Paul's argument against the false teachers. These disregarded this *before* and *after* faith of the Scriptures. They would bring the church back from the "after" to the "before" faith came. Thus they denied the truth of the Gospel of Christ: justification by faith, receiving the Spirit by faith! They were really enemies of the Cross of Christ.

Now we must understand this well!

What is this "faith" which was about to be revealed? A mere glance at this Chapter here in Galatians will show us that Paul uses the term "faith" many times, more than a dozen times. In some instances he refers to faith as the subjective faith in our hearts, by which we lay hold upon and appropriate to ourselves all the benefits of Christ. (see verses 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11 etc.) Then faith is not only a certain knowledge whereby we hold for true all that God has revealed to us in the Gospel, but it is also a hearty confidence which the Holy Spirit works in our hearts by the Gospel, that there is for me forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and eternal life merely for the sake of Christ's merits. (Heidelberg Catechism, Question 21) However, here in Gal. 3:23 the apostle Paul uses the term "faith" in the sense of the *entire merited salvation* by Christ on the Cross. It emphasizes that now there is nothing of the "works of law" left. What the gospel proclaims is "faith": the Cross and all its benefits are this faith. This is "the faith" once delivered to the saints. (Jude 3) Paul would have the Galatian churches and the church of all ages "earnestly contend" for this faith: the Christ crucified, evidently set forth in the preaching of the Gospel.

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

Coral Ridge leaves the Presbyterian Church U.S.

One of the best known of the Southern Presbyterian churches, the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, has voted to leave its present denomination to affiliate with the new Presbyterian Church in America. The *Presbyterian Journal* reports in its issue of Jan. 18, 1978:

Two prominent south Florida congregations, one with an international reputation, have joined the exodus from the Presbyterian Church US (Southern) in anticipation of union with the new Presbyterian Church in America.

Voting simultaneously on Jan. 8 to separate from the PCUS were the 4,500-member Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church here and the 500-member First Presbyterian Church of Plantation.

The vote in the Coral Ridge congregational meeting was 1754 to 1. The vote in the Plantation meeting was unanimous.

"Overriding consideration in our action," said the Rev. D. James Kennedy, Coral Ridge's senior minister who has an international reputation in the field of evangelism, "was the changes that the PCUS has made in the ordination vows for officers. We feel that the

change is tantamount to doing away with the Westminster Confession of Faith as the foundation of the Church's doctrinal position."

Dr. Kennedy indicated that before the congregational meeting, all of the organizational leadership of the church, from the session to the Christian education council, had registered unanimous votes in support of separation.

Almost identical consideration and actions accompanied the vote at Plantation. Speaking for the church in the absence of the pastor, the Rev. Joseph A. Scharer, who was unavailable at press time, the Rev. Anthony J. Casoria, associate pastor, told the *Journal* that the new ordination vows probably constituted the deciding issue.

It is understood that both congregations will pursue the possibility of formal dismissal by the parent presbytery, Everglades, before taking the unilateral route of withdrawal.

The consequences of this kind of shift of allegiance remain to be seen. One can not help but wonder what this will do to the P.C.A. There have been already there some rather strong differences of opinion on

significant doctrinal questions. We will be watching the effect of a union by Coral Ridge congregation with the P.C.A.

A second question which arises would be: what will happen to the properties — valued at several millions of dollars? According to *Christianity Today*,

Coral Ridge anticipates no difficulty. Though their property cost more than \$5 million to build, it remains heavily in debt. The huge mortgage is said to require \$4,000 per day! The Southern Presbyterian Church will likely not be too anxious to take over properties with that sort of indebtedness.

Episcopalians and Roman Catholics

Christianity Today, Jan. 27, 1978, reports on the efforts to unite the Episcopal and Roman Catholic denominations:

Episcopalians and Roman Catholics in the United States share such a “unity of faith” that they must give it “visible expression and testimony now.” That is the conclusion of the officially appointed Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation after twelve years of study.

The nineteen-member body, composed mostly of theological professors but chaired by two bishops, issued its report last month. The seventeen-page document suggests specific joint activities for demonstration of unity. These include cooperative projects in evangelism, the war against world hunger, and the like.

The report cites six areas where there is wide agreement: baptism and the Eucharist; the Bible as the inspired Word of God; traditional central doctrines (the Trinity, Christ as true God and true man, the Church, and others); the role of bishops; ethics and Christian life-style; and personal life in Christ. Indeed, suggests the document, there is so much agreement that the two bodies can be considered “sister churches.”

In the section on the Bible, the document states in part: “Episcopalians and Roman Catholics believe that in the Bible the inspired Word of God is expressed: through the Holy Scriptures the living God speaks to us still today. . . . To help comprehend the meaning of Scripture [both] churches endorse and utilize historical, critical methods of exegesis.”

The report identified four “problem areas”: papal authority, the role of women, the tension between “normative” tradition and individual conscience, and the degree of unity that must be reached before there can be “sacramental sharing.”

Other magazines have reported also on the above. There appears to be a readiness, yea even an eagerness, within the leadership of the Anglican (Episcopal) Church to seek union with the Roman Catholic denomination. And there are admittedly many similarities between certain segments of the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church. It would be difficult to predict whether there will be an actual merger, or whether greater and greater cooperation will ensue. But all of this surely works to the time when the antichrist will rule within his church and against the faithful in Jesus Christ.

Corporate Responsibility

In an article with the above title, John Murray writes in the *Bulwark*, the magazine of “The Scottish Reformation Society,” and published in Scotland. An interesting section treats “denominational responsibility.” There are some pertinent thoughts which ought to be considered by those who believe that they can remain affiliated with a denomination which is rapidly departing from God’s Word, yet maintain their loyalty to Scripture in their local church. There are important thoughts also for us who are called ever to be aware of denominational activities and decisions — and to assume an active role in this.

Corporate responsibility not only makes it mandatory that we give earnest consideration to the question of our denominational affiliation, but also that we be deeply aware of and sensitive to the state and condition of that church to which we belong or with which we have affiliated ourselves. We can never take the position that we can segregate ourselves and

bear witness in our own congregation, disregarding what may be happening in the churches which have become unfaithful to Christ in their corporate witness. Good people and also ministers of the Word have settled down and consolidated themselves in the position that in the situation of widespread declension and apostasy it is their responsibility to do their utmost to preserve and promote orthodox faith and practice in their own local congregation. And they console themselves with the thought that their congregation maintains a witness to Christ and his gospel even though unbelief may abound throughout the denomination.

It is necessary to be faithful, first of all, in our local situation and it is there that individual and corporate responsibility is most accentuated. But it is to desert the corporate responsibility which we avow in our local situation if we do not apply it in the broader context of the church as a whole. This is the same evil of independentism and individualism as that

by which we seek to isolate ourselves as individuals from our corporate relationships and responsibilities. Only, in this case, this individualism is applied to the local congregation rather than to the individual person.

This evil of concentrating our thought and interest and concern upon the local congregation appears, however, in orthodox denominations as well as heterodox. It is not only in opposing wrong that our corporate responsibility appears. It manifests itself also in the whole range of those functions which it is the responsibility of the church as a corporate entity to perform. Every member of the body of Christ must be alert to the corporate functions of the whole church. It is only in this way that the witness of the church can be maintained and furthered. Sometimes exclusive preoccupation with the work and witness of the local congregation may arise from the persuasion

that the denomination is strictly orthodox in its work and witness and that we need not concern ourselves about it. Let the premise be true, the inference is false. The unity of the body of Christ is the principle which exposes its falsity, and experience has demonstrated that the sure road to decline and eventual heterodoxy is exclusive absorption with the work and witness of the local congregation. The whole denomination is a unit, and if one member suffers all the others suffer with it, if one member is honoured all the others rejoice with it. Such organic unity makes isolation of any kind impossible.

Let us then take our full share of the responsibilities that belong to us in the church of Christ and let us realise that only as each one of us is conscious of our relation to the whole shall we be sensitive to the demands of the honour of Christ and of the purity and unity of his body.

A Scientist on Creation

Several of the religious magazines have recently quoted from a book, *Until the Sun Dies*, by Robert Jastrow, founder and director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies. The man is, evidently, an unbeliever. He also is convinced of the old age of the universe. Yet in his book, he makes some startling admissions. As quoted in the *Presbyterian Journal* of Jan. 11, 1978, he states:

"In science, as in the Bible, the world begins with an act of creation," writes Dr. Jastrow. "That view has not always been held by scientists. Only as a result of the most recent discoveries can we say with a fair degree of confidence that the world has not existed forever; it began abruptly, without apparent cause, in a blinding event that defies scientific explanation." . . .

How the universe came into being, he writes, "can never be answered: We can never tell whether the hand of God was at work in the moment of creation; for a careful study of the stars has proved, as well as anything can be proved in science, that all matter in

the universe was compressed into an infinitely dense and hot mass when the world began; and in the searing heat of that holocaust, the evidence needed for a scientific study of the cause of creation was destroyed."

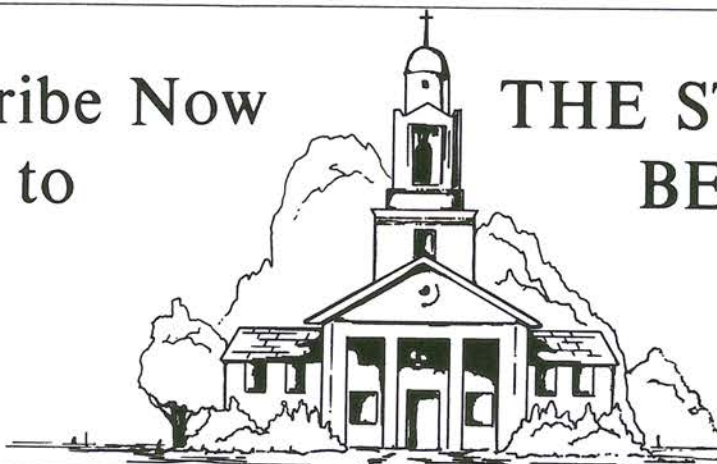
Equally vexing to the scientist, he says, is that "at present, science has no satisfactory answer to the question of the origin of life on earth."

"Perhaps the appearance of life on the earth is a miracle," Dr. Jastrow speculates. "Scientists are reluctant to accept that view, but their choices are limited: Either life was created on the earth by the will of a being outside the grasp of scientific understanding, or it evolved on our planet spontaneously, through chemical reactions occurring in nonliving matter lying on the surface of the planet."

Interesting! Remember Rom. 1:20? "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

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Gise Van Baren
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RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church (Grand Rapids) express its sympathy to Mrs. Grace Engelsma in the loss of her husband, MR. MELVIN ENGELSMA, who passed away February 8, 1978. Also to his sisters, Mrs. J. Bomers and Miss Sybil Engelsma and his sisters-in-law, Mrs. D. Engelsma and Mrs. G. Engelsma.

"Sing O heavens: and be joyful O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted." (Isaiah 49:13)

Mr. J. Huisken, Vice Pres.
Mrs. P. Knott, Sec'y.

SYMPATHY RESOLUTION

The Bible Class of the Pella Protestant Reformed Church hereby extends its sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Bernie Menninga in the death of his sister, HENRIETTA. May the God of all comfort richly bless this experience to the increase of their living hope for the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and which fadeth not away. (I Peter 1:4).

Rev. George C. Lubbers, Pres.
Mrs. Catherine Vander Wiel, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere and heartfelt sympathy to one of its members, Mrs. Harold Van Maanen, in the death of her mother, MRS. HENRY SANDBULTE.

Our prayer to God is that He will supply her with that abundant peace, knowing that God doeth all things well.

Rev. M. Hoeksema, Pres.
Mrs. John Hoksbergen, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church (Grand Rapids) express its sympathy to Mrs. Dick Kooienga in the loss of her sister, Mrs. Harold Nienhuis, who passed away February 13, 1978.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27).

Mr. J. Huisken, Vice Pres.
Mrs. P. Knott, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith Protestant Reformed Church (Jenison, Mich.), expresses their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Miersma in the sudden loss of her father, JOHN PERSENAIRE, of South Holland, Ill.

May they be comforted in the truth expressed in Psalm 116:15 — "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Rev. M. Joostens, Pres.
Jacob Kuiper, Jr., Sec'y-Treas.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith Protestant Reformed Church (Jenison, Mich.), expresses their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Johanna Schmidt and Mrs. Hildrene Smith in the loss of her father and grandfather, JOHN WENSINK, at the age of 88 years.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:17).

Rev. M. Joostens, Pres.
Jacob Kuiper, Jr., Sec'y-Treas.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church (Grand Rapids), expresses its heartfelt sympathy to two of its members, Elders Dewey Engelsma and Jay Bomers and to the family in the recent death of MR. MELVIN ENGELSMA. May these brothers and this family find comfort and strength in God's Word knowing that God's grace is sufficient to bear this burden of grief.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:15, 16.)

Joe King, Vice-Pres.
Jon Huisken, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church (Grand Rapids), expresses its sincere sympathy to its members, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Terpstra, in the loss of her brother, MR. MELVIN ENGELSMA. May they find comfort in the Word of God and in this time do as God instructs us in Psalm 37:5 — "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He will bring it to pass."

Prof. Herman Hanko, Pres.
Joann Huisken, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

The following news was printed in the Hope Church (Walker, Michigan) bulletin of January 15 concerning their pastor, Rev. Van Overloop, who is 'on loan' to Christchurch, New Zealand. "Word has been received from our pastor and his family that they arrived safely in Christchurch, New Zealand. They have been warmly received by the congregation and are in the process of 'settling in'. In addition to preaching twice each Sunday, Rev. Van Overloop has been engaged in pastoral work as well as all the activities which belong to the organic life of the church: young people's doctrinal instruction in a bi-weekly meeting with all the members of the congregation, etc. Our pastor reports that "As we are settling in, the work within the congregation is becoming more definitely set out before us and we are eager to get going. At the present time the extent and nature of the work within the denomination is not known. . . . Please remember us in your prayers. The Lord is supplying our every need."

Rev. Robert Harbach, who is engaged in mission work for our churches in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, kindly sent in a copy of his little paper called the *Calvinist Contender*. The January issue contains many quotes from various church fathers and applications to our lives of the Reformed Faith. The following is an example. "The motto of Ursinus which hung over the door of his study read, 'Friend, who enters here, be short, or go, or help me with my work!' Are we as avid, dutiful, diligent and painstaking in our service unto the Lord? Do we give of our time and strength for the advance of the Reformed Truth? Ursinus did, and as a result today we have the beautiful little book of comfort we call The Heidelberg Catechism. Do you know it and live its contents?"

The Reformed Witness Committee of Northwest Iowa and Minnesota sponsored a lecture in the Sheldon, Iowa Community Building on February 1. Due to the good response to an earlier lecture there, the Committee decided to follow up with another lecture by Rev. Kamps on "How to Interpret the Bible." Rev. Kamps is the pastor of our church in Doon, Iowa. However, due to the poor weather on the 1st, the lecture was postponed until the 8th.

And, speaking of poor weather, our Michigan churches were not spared. On January 26 and the days following, the Midwest was 'shut down' by quite

a snow storm. For the first time in memory, First Church canceled the Sunday morning service because of the snow. Classical appointments in neighboring cities could not be kept and many other activities were postponed. It seems that these January storms arrive with regularity on or about the undersigned's birthday.

Our Seminary has not suffered from any want of pulpits for the school's professors and students to preach from of late as First Church is without a pastor, Hope's pastor is in New Zealand for nine months, Kalamazoo's pastor was in Jamaica for the Mission Committee, and various of our other ministers were kept from their pulpits by illness on occasion.

Sometimes the 'news' comes in rather roundabout ways. A note in the Edgerton Minnesota bulletin informs us that our church in Prospect Park, New Jersey, is about to receive their building permit for a new church building after more than a year and a half of 'red tape'.

At a congregational meeting on January 10th, the members of our Southwest Church decided to accept an offer to purchase their present church building and parking lot. After the sale contract is signed the congregation will have 30 days to vacate the building. Southwest will keep their organ. Temporary facilities for worship services and other activities are being investigated until the new church building now under construction is ready.

Rev. C. Hanko has now moved out of the 'old' Hudsonville parsonage into his new "retirement" villa at 5046 - 32nd Ave., Apt. 14, in Hudsonville, Michigan.

The funeral service for Mrs. Nick Yonker took place on February 1 in Muskegon with Rev. John Heys of Holland, Michigan, officiating. Mrs. Yonker reached the ripe old age of 100 years, and had she been spared another fifteen days would have reached 101. But for the child of God death is gain and for the attainment of things which we could never have and enjoy here below in this vale of tears. The above is included from the Holland Church bulletin on the suggestion of Rev. Heys, as he is sure that many of the older people in our churches would remember the Yonkers.

K.G.V.