

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

*“One of the first things you are to learn in this Christian life and warfare is that, if you go wrong in your doctrine, you will go wrong in all aspects of your life” (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones).
See “My Sheep Hear My Voice” page 115*

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MEDITATION

Exhorted to Spiritual Vigilance

Rev. M. Schipper

“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”

I Thessalonians 5:6-8

The Lord is coming again!

Of this indubitable fact it was not necessary that the apostle write, for the church was thoroughly knowledgeable of it. Even of the times and seasons that surround and precede His coming it was not for him to write. As to the second coming of Christ, His glorious Parousia, the church had been thoroughly indoctrinated. Fact of the matter is, the

church is wholly aware of the truth that “the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” This cannot mean that the church had come to believe that Christ’s return would be literally in the night time, but as the coming of a thief whom men are not expecting and for whom they will be wholly unprepared. The church was fully cognizant of the fact that when the Lord comes again the world of the ungodly will be assuming the lackadaisical attitude that all is “peace

and safety," while sudden destruction will come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child.

But the church is not in that darkness that that day of Christ should overtake her as a thief.

She has been thoroughly instructed as to the precursory signs, those harbingers, that forewarn the church that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. The Lord Himself had described in detail what the expectant church must look for before He will make His glorious appearance. He told them to look for signs in creation, such as, floods, earthquakes, and pestilences, all signs of the coming judgment. He told them there would be wars and rumors of wars. He instructed them that before He returns the gospel will have been proclaimed in all the world. Then there is the sign of the great tribulation of the church, brought on, no doubt, by the other signs of the great apostasy, and the coming of Antichrist. These and many other warning signals proclaiming loudly the speedy approach of the exalted Lord and Judge are what the expectant church is to anticipate.

But of the day and the hour of His actual appearance knoweth no man.

And the reason for this omission in the revelation concerning the return of the Lord, is this, that the church may always be vigilant!

Spiritual vigilance is the watchword!

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others! The others, that is, the ungodly in the world, and the ungodly who manifest themselves in the organic development of the church in the world, are the children of darkness who sleep in the night.

Of course, sleep in the literal sense of the word, and even sleep in the night, is a most natural phenomenon which God has added to our creation, according to which in a most natural way we become oblivious to the busy world about us, and find physical and mental refreshment for body and mind, so that at the light of a new day we may be enabled to realize more efficiently our vocation in the world. That sleep is a perfectly good creation of God. And for that reason the Scriptures teach, "the sleep of the labouring man is sweet."

But the apostle has in mind another sleep, the spiritual sleep of death of the natural man, apart from Christ. Relative to that sleep we must be reminded that from the dawn of history, when our first father Adam sinned, the light was extinguished, and it has been night ever since. In this night of darkness all men, all the children of Adam, are conceived and born. Also we were by nature children of darkness and of wrath, incapable of doing any good, and inclined to all evil. In that darkness the ungodly, apart from Christ, remain. In that darkness they sleep, oblivious of their calling to be actively loving

and serving God. They hate the light, and revel in the darkness. In that spiritual night they even talk aloud in their sleep, imagining that all is peace and safety about them, never realizing that they lie in the midst of death, never fearing that they shall have to meet the Lord in His day; and like the sudden birth-pangs that come to a woman with child, sudden destruction comes upon them.

Thanks be to God, for, whereas we were like unto them by nature, we are no longer children of darkness; but we are by the grace of God become the sons (not "children," as the translation has it), the sons of light and sons of the day. Indeed, we were by nature children of darkness, born out of darkness; but by grace we are adopted into God's family and are become sons of light, in whom God not only purposes to reflect His light image, but who are legally appointed and adopted heirs of all that the light stands for.

Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober!

The others are spiritually intoxicated, having no sense of true values. So inebriated are they that they know not who they are, where they are going, nor how they will get there.

Not so are the sons of light and of the day!

They have all their spiritual senses, and know how to use them. They know who they are, where they are and where they are going, and they know how to get there.

All this because they are by the grace of God sons of light and sons of the day.

And all this they are and have with a view to the coming of the Lord. Therefore that day of Christ cannot and will not overtake them as a thief.

But, you ask, if this is so, how is it to be explained that the apostle exhorts us not to sleep, not to be drunken as the rest, but to be sober and vigilant?

In answer, we point out, first of all, that, though we are the sons of light, we still dwell in the darkness of this present time. The night which settled upon the earth with the fall of our first parents is still with us, and we dwell in that night. The day, the eternal day, which dawns with the return of our Lord, has not yet arrived. And secondly, though we have been transformed from children of darkness into sons of light, we possess this grace only in principle. We still dwell in the flesh, in a corrupt nature, which is no different from the flesh of the children of darkness. If we followed the inclinations of that flesh and old nature, then we would also sleep in the night, and become intoxicated in the night. Therefore we need to be exhorted to vigilance. Were we already in heaven, where there will be no night, we would need no such

exhortation. But we dwell in the flesh which never willeth any good thing, which always imitates the world, and seeks the vain things below even to the point that we become intoxicated with them.

Why must we be exhorted to spiritual vigilance? Because in the darkness of this present time it is our calling to be sons of the light and of the day.

This means, first of all, that we live antithetically. And that means negatively, that we oppose the darkness, not only in the world, but in our sinful flesh, that we mortify the deeds of the flesh and bring it into subjection to the will of Christ. Positively, it means that we live out of the principle of regeneration, with all our spiritual senses tempered by the life of Christ which is within us. So we will reveal, not only to God but also to the world about us, that we indeed are the sons of light and of the day.

Shall we be constantly, spiritually vigilant, looking for the coming of the Lord, it follows that we be constantly clothed with spiritual armaments.

We must be putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

You will note, first of all, that the apostle here does not describe the armaments in detail as he had done in his letter to the Ephesians (6:14-17). There he enumerates all the parts of the complete panoply of God wherewith He prepares His people for and preserves them in the great battle of faith they are required to fight in the midst of the world. There the armaments are both for defensive as well as for offensive warfare. That the apostle mentions here only two aspects of the defensive armaments, breastplate and helmet, must not be construed to mean that it is perfectly safe to neglect the other aspects so long as we have these. Indeed, in the battle of faith every part of the panoply is extremely necessary, and every part must be put on if we are to stand in that battle. It must be observed, therefore that in our text the apostle is not referring specifically to the battle of faith we must fight, but he is referring to the exhortation to spiritual vigilance. Consequently he infers that even our spiritual vigilance must be guarded. Breastplate and helmet are protective armaments. Let us be clothing ourselves with the breastplate of faith and love; and let us be putting on our helmet which is the hope of salvation.

In the literal sense the breastplate was that part of the Roman armor that covered the warrior from his hips to his shoulders in front and in back. It protected his heart from the spear thrust in immediate combat, and from the flying arrow that might be shot at him from afar. The helmet was that part of the armor that protected his head. Together heart and head are those vital parts of the body which if pierced or shot through would most likely mean death. As the heart and head of the Roman soldier must be

protected, so must our spiritual vigilance be constantly intact.

The breastplate which consists of faith and love, and the helmet which consists of the hope of salvation, these are the armaments wherewith we must clothe ourselves, shall we remain vigilant, and wherewith we shall be able to withstand the strong urgings of the flesh to become sleepy and drunken. Our flesh has in it the power to deny our faith, to dampen our love, and to weaken our hope.

You must note, in the second place, the trilogy of which the apostle speaks: faith, love, and hope.

Of this trilogy the apostle had written to the church of Corinth, and then in a different order. (I Cor. 13). There he spoke of faith, hope, and love. And there also he stressed the point that of these three love was the greatest.

Here, however, the order is faith, love, and hope. Hope is mentioned last, not because it is the greatest, but because it stands most intimately connected to the coming of the Lord. When hope reaches its object, then our salvation will be complete. Now we are saved in hope, that is, we have it in principle; but when the Lord shall appear, then in body and soul we shall be saved completely.

Moreover, all three, faith, love, and hope, must be intact, and guarded, shall we be truly vigilant. Your faith which is the bond that ties you to Christ, is the grace through which you receive all the benefits of salvation from Him. Your love which the Lord has shed abroad in your heart is the grace whereby you taste in principle the perfection He has wrought in you, and which desires the perfection He will give when He comes. Your hope of salvation which also you possess now in principle, characteristically stretches out in longing and expectation for its perfection in the day of His coming.

These spiritual armaments we do not have of ourselves. They are of God, given to us of grace, to be conscientiously and constantly appropriated and put on, to guard and protect us from the powers of the flesh — the flesh that does not want to go to heaven, that does not want Christ, nor does it look for Him in His Parousia.

If we are constantly and conscientiously putting on these spiritual armaments, this spiritual activity will never allow us to fall asleep or be drunken.

So shall we be spiritually vigilant!

So shall we be watching and sober!

So shall we be waiting and ready for His appearance!

And praying the prayer the exalted Lord Himself taught us in the Revelation: "Come Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly!"

EDITORIALS

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

“Our Song of Hope” -- A Critique (Conclusion)

The next item with respect to which we wish to examine “Our Song of Hope” is that of the doctrine of the irresistible, or effectual, calling and, along with it, conversion; in other words, the doctrines covered in the Third and Fourth Heads of Doctrine of our Canons of Dordrecht.

About this, however, there is not much to write, for the simple reason that these distinctives of the Reformed faith are totally absent from “Our Song.” Even in Appendix B, which supposedly furnishes an index of references to our Reformed Confessions, there are very few references to Canons III, IV; and when one consults these references, he discovers in several instances that there is only the vaguest reference in “Our Song” to the truths taught in our Canons. In fact, some of the references are downright far-fetched. Furthermore, at no point is there any reference to Articles 10-15 of Canons III, IV, which constitute the heart of this chapter. These are the articles which set forth in clear and unambiguous terms the doctrine of efficacious grace, which teach that faith and repentance are conferred by God, so that obedience to the call of the gospel “is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will. . . . but it must be wholly ascribed to God.” These are the articles which emphasize the truth that God powerfully illuminates the minds of the elect by His Holy Spirit; which speak of regeneration as “a new creation, a resurrection from the dead, a making alive, which God works in us without our aid”; which speak of faith as the gift of God “not on account of its being offered by God to man, . . . but because it is in reality conferred, breathed, and infused into him.” But all of this is missing in “Our Song.” It speaks only in vague terms of the Spirit speaking. “The Spirit speaks through the Scriptures.” (Stanza 6) “The Spirit speaks through the Church. . . .” “He calls the world to bear witness to Christ. . . .” (Stanza 7) “God’s Spirit speaks in the world according to God’s ultimate word in Christ.” (Stanza 8) Stanza 16 is about the only point in “Our Song” which in any way speaks directly of the call to repentance; and it refers only to the outward call of the gospel: “The

Spirit sends His church to call sinners to repentance, to proclaim the good news that Jesus is personal Savior and Lord. He sends it out in ministry to preach good news to the poor, righteousness to the nations, and peace among mankind.”

On this score, therefore, one can only pass the verdict: tried, and found wanting. On this score, “Our Song” can never serve as an adequate expression of faith for a Reformed Christian.

The same is true with respect to the fifth of the so-called “Five Points of Calvinism.” It is totally missing in “Our Song.” I will not belabor this point, but only give one ridiculous illustration. Lines 6-8 of Stanza 5 read: “In this age, His Holy Spirit is with us, calling nations to follow God’s path, uniting people through Christ in love.” I ask you: do you find in these words the slightest hint of the truth of the sure preservation and perseverance of the saints? I fail to find it. But if you turn to Appendix B, what confessional reference do you find with Stanza 5, lines 6-8? Nothing less than Canons V, 1-15. That’s the entire Fifth Head of Doctrine! Frankly, I cannot understand how anyone got it in his head to accompany these lines with such a reference; I fail utterly to see any connection. One gets the impression that they were just trying to make “Our Song” look good by supplying some confessional references.

But in addition to this, one simply looks in vain in “Our Song” for anything which approaches the truth of the sure perseverance of the saints.

My conclusion, therefore, with respect to the five distinctively Reformed doctrines known as the “Five Points of Calvinism” is that “Our Song of Hope” can in no wise qualify as a Reformed confession of faith. On the contrary, in many respects “Our Song” militates against these distinctively Reformed doctrines.

As I have stated earlier, if one were to offer a detailed critique of “Our Song,” it would require a book longer than Dr. Heideman’s commentary promoting the proposed and provisional new confession of the RCA. I have purposely confined myself in this

critique to a very limited area of specifically Reformed truths, partly because these truths are crucial to any would-be Reformed creed, partly to get some kind of "line" in my critique, and partly because without a specific approach one simply would not know where to begin or end with his criticism of "Our Song of Hope." For, frankly, I can find nothing good and favorable to say about the entire document.

Yet I cannot refrain from calling attention to a few of the outstanding errors in "Our Song" other than those already mentioned. I will only mention these, without going into detail. The reader should also keep in mind that this list is not exhaustive.

1. The doctrine of Holy Scripture (Stanza 6) is phrased in purposely vague terminology, with no reference, of course, to infallibility or inerrancy. The commentary on this stanza explains that the question of canonicity is viewed as more important than the question of inspiration. I dare say that if a distinctively Reformed doctrine of Scripture were inserted in "Our Song," a majority at an RCA General Synod could not be mustered for it.

2. Stanza 8 seems to speak of some kind of unarticulated Word of God which is still present in heathendom. It reminds me of the "unarticulated word of promise" to heathen nations of which they wrote in the Netherlands several years ago. Again, the commentary confirms my suspicions. There we read, p. 41:

"Moreover, we believe that God works in every time and place, even when our feeble bodies and minds have not gone to those places. We believe that the message of the Scriptures has been working like yeast in the world for centuries, so that we cannot any longer trace its complete historical journey through Asia, Africa and the West. We believe that even when society and government, art and technology forget their own relation to Christ, somehow the Spirit of God remains faithful among those areas of life, just as He remained faithful to Israel in Egypt and in Babylon. We are impressed by the fact that when missionaries have gone to new lands, the people there seemed to have had premonitions of their coming and that within their cultures there often

seemed to be a preparation for the coming of the Gospel. However, this is not to say that all that goes on in strange lands and places is to be accepted as truth from God. Human sin and perversity is everywhere; those areas, like our own, must ultimately be measured and judged by Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Scriptures, the Way, the Truth and the Life."

3. The stance on marriage, family planning (a wicked euphemism), and abortion is corrupt, Stanza 13. "Our Song" seems to "reaffirm the life-long character of marriage." But the commentary contradicts this when it also states that "a variety of marriage systems have been and still are acceptable to God," and that "the words of Genesis about one man and one woman" only provide "the best regulation. . . ." Further, "Our Song" proudly speaks of family planning, not recognizing the fact that while it is possible to *prevent* the birth of children, it is not possible to control and to plan the birth of children. Finally, "Our Song" deliberately refuses to take a stand on abortion because "it is not yet clear" what stance one should take on the question of abortion. (Commentary, pp. 54, 55)

4. "Our Song" is replete with the social gospel. There are probably more direct references to aspects of the social gospel than to any single item. I will not go into detail on this, for that would involve me in another lengthy chapter of critique. In Stanzas like 10, 11, 12, and 16 this emphasis is so obvious anyone can detect it.

In conclusion, then, let me remind you again that no Reformed man could ever accept this proposed creed as the expression of his own faith. If the RCA finally adopts "Our Song," this can only mean that it has publicly and officially abandoned even the semblance of a Reformed stance. No one could ever recognize a church as being Reformed which raises this creed as its standard, its flag. And the very fact that this creed could even be provisionally adopted is proof positive that the RCA is far, far down the road of apostasy. Evidently men who are even evangelical are in the minority; and men who are at all genuinely Reformed in the RCA are rare items indeed! Still more, if they are truly Reformed, they do not belong in the fellowship of RCA.

Ecumenicity -- RES Style

In recent months two periodicals, *Calvinist Contact* and *The Banner*, have carried pictures of Dr. Paul Schrottenboer, General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, at his audience with Pope Paul VI, and, along with the pictures, articles about this occasion. In *Calvinist Contact* an article by Dr.

Schrottenboer was entitled "May We Pray for the Pope?" The entire article as well as the affirmative answer to the question in its title ought to constitute a warning to Reformed churches against the kind of ecumenicity for which the RES stands. For not only was Dr. Schrottenboer present in Rome evidently in his

official capacity; but even apart from this, his name as General Secretary is automatically associated with the RES. And this article is rather revealing as to the kind of ecumenicity in which the RES General Secretary is interested.

First of all, the article informs us that Dr. Schrottenboer was in Rome to attend "a gathering of secretaries of world confessional families who meet once a year to consider matters of mutual concern." Furthermore, this annual meeting "came on invitation from the Roman Catholic secretariat for the Promotion of Christian unity in the Casa International del Clero in Rome." In this same connection, we are informed: "The world confessional families is a mixed bag, having in it groups as fundamental as the Mennonites and the Seventh Day Adventists (a sect, HCH) and as ecumenical (ecumenical or modernistically heretical and apostate? HCH) as the World Council of Churches. It represents the largest number of Christians on the face of the earth. In it are organizations which represent the international bodies of various 'confessions,' such as the Lutherans, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, and the Reformed. In it are also churches with very high claims about their being *the* church, such as the Orthodox churches, particularly of eastern Europe, and the Roman Catholic Church."

This should be enough already for a truly Reformed man who is genuinely interested in true and Scriptural ecumenicity. What business does the RES have in such an admittedly "mixed bag," as Dr. Schrottenboer calls it?

The Secretary of the RES tells us next about the mass which he attended on Sunday morning. Now I don't know what opportunities there are in Rome for a genuine Protestant to worship; I do know, however, that a Roman Catholic mass is not the place for a Reformed man. To make matters worse, Dr. Schrottenboer even has some good things to say about this mass. "The liturgy was not as objectionable as I had expected," he writes. There was even something good: "What I liked best was the reading from Scripture (three passages)." And then: "The transubstantiation bit (remember: abominable idolatry, HCH) was not emphasized." But notice: it was not absent, could not be absent in the mass! And then come some more favorable and impressive elements: "Much was said about love and fellowship. What made the greatest impact on me at the time was the prayer. Besides many other matters, the priest in charge specifically prayed for 'our Holy Father' in his awesome responsibilities."

All of this, it seems, served to remind the doctor that he had never in his life prayed for the Pope, or any of his predecessors, "the man who is the titular

head of many hundreds of millions of Christian people." Why does he not characterize him as the alleged occupant of the chair of St. Peter and the claimed Vicar of Christ? Or why does he not characterize him as the one who with his predecessors shares corporately the responsibility for the deaths of thousands upon thousands of saints at the time of the Reformation in the Lowlands alone? Or when he speaks of "many hundreds of millions of Christian people," why does he not refer to the fact that the Pope is responsible for continuing to lead them in ways of apostasy, ways of work-righteousness, ways of idolatry, ways of Mariolatry? If he had thought on these things, it might have been easier for the doctor to arrive at a proper answer to his question.

Instead he suggests that perhaps because of our "Calvinist tradition" which has said "some unkind things" about the pope, we don't pray for him. He refers to the fact that John Calvin called the pope a "braying ass" and Westminster Confession identifies him as the anti-Christ. By the way, the Westminster Confession belongs to the confessional basis of the RES. Perhaps it ought to be modified? Then he goes on to suggest that "Perhaps my non-praying for the Pope . . . has been due to the hidden assumption that one does not pray for those who are not of his own fellowship." Evidently by "fellowship" he has reference to "evangelical Reformed Protestants." He might, indeed, have pondered that idea of fellowship in terms of "the communion of saints" and asked himself the question what this might have to do with our prayers. That might have been fruitful, and it certainly would have had a radical effect upon the prayer which he proposes.

But then he goes on to justify prayer for the pope on the specious ground that "The apostle said it (prayer) should go out also to rulers and to all who are in authority." Having settled that question, he states that the only question is: "what should we say then when we pray for him?" He proposes that "a good place to start would be:

May God bless all his efforts to promote peace and justice in the world in the love of Christ. May God give him grace and light to reform the church according to the Word of God. May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip the Pope with everything good for doing his will and may God work in him what is pleasing to God, through Jesus Christ to whom be the glory forever."

Horrifying! Have you noticed that the last part of that prayer is the apostolic benediction of Hebrews 13:20, 21 — addressed to the saints, the brethren, in Christ Jesus?

If this is the expression of ecumenicity, RES style, then no truly Reformed man or Reformed church should have anything to do with the RES.

But what about praying for the pope?

It ought to be obvious, first of all, that the only thing one could possibly pray for him would be a prayer for his *repentance*, both as an individual and as head of the Roman Catholic Church. In the second place, however, one cannot very well be a hypocrite in his prayers. Such a prayer would also imply that one tells Rome and tells the pope to repent. You cannot very well have an audience with the pope, give him a nice smile and a friendly handshake, and then get on your knees before our Father in heaven and

pray for his repentance. That would be an abomination in God's sight.

For do not forget that such a prayer must be consistent with the principles of true prayer as embodied in the Lord's Prayer and as explained in our Heidelberg Catechism. Prayer for the pope would have to be consistent with the second petition, for example, about which our Catechism says: "Thy kingdom come"; that is, rule us so by thy word and Spirit, that we may submit ourselves more and more to thee; preserve and increase thy church; destroy the works of the devil, and all violence which would exalt itself against thee; and also, all wicked counsels devised against thy holy word; till the full perfection of thy kingdom take place, wherein thou shalt be all in all."

TRANSLATED TREASURES

A Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church

We make only a short statement by way of introduction to the following pamphlet.

Just because the Reformation of the church is now a relevant issue, Luther's 400th anniversary has a more urgent significance.

Also in Luther's day men did not thoughtlessly begin the demolition of what was incurably filled with dry rot. A lengthy and earnest study of church polity preceded Luther's appearance, and in a number of writings the matter of the Reformation of the churches was at that time earlier advocated.

Without such a preparation only a chaos would have resulted from Luther's work.

But the fact was that almost everything righted itself after the break which he brought into existence; and indeed it is amazing how in those days of the Reformation the most correct ideas concerning the church, church polity, and church administration were developed by preachers, elders, and churches.

We are, alas, not at present, that far.

Indeed the reformation of our churches is in order, but the opinions concerning it are too far apart. There is still lacking a consensus. The way in which it must go is still in many respects uncertain.

This leads to a disagreeable friction and a division into groups which are consequently impure because many drift along with the tide and thus often separate what belongs together.

Yet the momentous work of reformation in our churches must not suffer under this. Whether God the Lord still wills to prolong the judgment under which our churches still are bowed, lies in His free will. But nothing discharges us from the obligation of obedience to seek in the way of means the healing of the fracture in His churches.

The misery which came over our land and over the souls of men through so miserable a state of the church and continues to be more threatening, is too great.

The key of knowledge is lost. Unstable spirits float along with every wind of doctrine. The house of our God becomes a mockery. And the more tender virtues of esteem and piety already begin to be in danger in the best circles of our land.

On that account it appears advisable to me that those men in our midst whom God the Lord has given opportunity for thinking into and studying this momentous question ought to put their ideas concerning the reformation of the church in an orderly fashion in a book.

Loose articles in a periodical always treat the question piecemeal, and even in oral debate one does not make any headway without preparation.

Only when anyone who is of the opinion that he can point out a beaten path and has set forth his ideas in order and in relation to each other in a book can an orderly discussion of the question begin, and the possibility of treating the matter with clearer consciousness of the issues is made possible.

And it is for this reason that I have set aside my free hours this year in order not to be lax in matters where I have admonished others, and to begin to subject my own ideas, as good or bad as they may be, to the judgment of my brothers.

I attempted to arrange my work in such a way that men can see through the clear water to the bottom.

To attain that purpose I have not restricted myself to a discussion of reformation, but have preceded the chapter on reformation with another concerning the deformation of the church. So that it may be clear what I understand by deformation, I have preceded this chapter with another concerning the formation

of the church. And because there is no agreement concerning the formation of the church unless one first of all clearly understands the general principles which govern the essence of the church, I mean to discuss also these principles in a separate chapter.

A division into paragraphs is done so as to facilitate looking up various subjects.

Although this pamphlet presents only a dim shadow of what a "handbook concerning reformed church polity" ought to be, yet I foresaw the possibility that men would let this pamphlet serve as assistance in that direction for the time being until one of our professors in church polity would give us that indispensable handbook.

And herewith this work is recommended to the good favor of our God, to the love of the brethren, and the kind judgment of experts.

My reward shall be overflowing if it appears that this pamphlet of mine contributes something to the reformation of those churches of the fatherland which have all the love of my heart.

Amsterdam, October 1, 1883

Kuyper

TRIUMPH THROUGH TRIALS

Bastards or Sons

Rev. J. Kortering

What a contrast between bastards and sons.

A bastard is an illegitimate child. From the point of view of those who are responsible for his existence, he shouldn't have been born, his existence testifies of sin. From his own point of view he is a misfit, he doesn't belong in the home. There are such spiritual bastards. Jesus spoke of the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do," John 8:44.

A son is quite different. He is born to parents who not only have a right to receive him, but also want to receive him. "Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them," Ps. 127:5. God has received us into His family as sons. We are born into this family by the Holy Spirit. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father," Heb. 4:6. This birth follows the marvelous act of adoption, whereby God deals with spiritual bastards, and makes us legally His own sons.

"God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. 4:4, 5.

The burning question is, how can we know whether we are sons or bastards?

The answer is given in Heb. 12:6-8: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."

We must be careful that we do not draw the wrong conclusions from this passage. There are bastards who have plenty of afflictions in their lives. There are some sons who do not know sickness and troubles. The mere fact that a person has or does not have physical troubles does not establish sonship.

The important question here is this: what is the chastisement which all sons receive and bastards do not receive?

Chastisement involves four things. First, it deals with sin and evil (verse 5 speaks of rebuke, which assumes wrong committed). Second, in dealing with this wrong, pain is inflicted (verse 6 speaks of scourging, which for the present is not joyous but grievous, verse 11). Third, it corrects the evil that was present, (verse 10 speaks of profit, and verse 11 says that it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness). Finally, it is an act of love, (verse 6, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth").

God never places this chastisement upon bastards. Those who continue to walk as their spiritual father the devil receive only judgment and wrath from the God who destroys them.

Chastisement is proof of being a son of God. No son is without it.

How is this so?

The answer is that chastisement comes in a two-fold way. First, it comes as a divine scolding and warning. Words forcefully but lovingly spoken to a wayward child constitute chastisement. For many a child this is more meaningful than a spanking. With God this is also true. There is more: God also in the second place adds correction by afflicting the body and troubling one's life. Many indeed are the afflictions of the righteous. The groans, cries, and complaints of God's people speak directly to this. It is obvious then, "if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons," verse 8.

The fact that God comes to you with His Word and deals with you in your life correctively, is proof that you are a son of God.

There is more, however; we must yet address ourselves to our response to this chastisement.

A bastard sometimes hears God's Word of correction and rebels against it by refusing to repent of sin and follow God's pathway. Likewise when the Lord sends affliction, he tries to escape from them and will not be humbled low, but despises them, verse 5. A son responds differently, he knows the importance of being admonished; he knows that he needs correction, and that all God's dealings are for his good. He endures chastening, verse 7. By the indwelling Spirit of sonship, we continually cry, Abba, Father.

There is one more gem that we must see here. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son *whom he receiveth*," verse 6. Children of God who seem to receive more chastisement than other children of God may conclude from this that God wants such children to be very close to Him, that He may receive them in a greater measure. Generally this is true; the sons with the greatest measure of chastisement are closer to God than the others.

What a blessing!

Chastisement is not penal, it is loving correction that yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet," verses 12, 13.

Chastisement is proof of sonship.

IN HIS FEAR

The School's Responsibility to the Slow-Learner (2)

Rev. M. Joostens

Our approach to the problem has to be covenantal. Now, I don't intend to discuss with you this evening the idea of the covenant. You hear this idea explained to you from your respective pulpits and there is much written on it in our circles. And for those who desire to become more familiar with the idea of covenant education I recommend for your reading Rev. D. Engelsma's little book, "Reformed Education."

In this connection I just want to mention a few fundamental things. We believe that God gathers His church in continued generations. For the promise is unto us and to our children. This is foundational! This we must preserve at all costs for it alone gives direction and purpose to the instruction of our children, whether it be in the home or at school. It is this beautiful idea of the covenant that is the basis

of *parental* education as we practice it. The Bible makes the correctness of this very clear in passages such as Deuteronomy 6.

But I want to move on from this brief statement of principles to the various implications that are inherent in the principle of covenant instruction. Let us begin in the home. First, parents have to recognize that there is diversity among their children. God gives unto each of our children a distinct personality. I believe He does this at the moment of conception. Each child has his own characteristic traits, faults, idiosyncrasies, etc. I think that this is, at least in part, the emphasis of the preacher in Proverbs when he tells us to train a child in the way he should go. This no doubt means that each child must be trained in accordance with his needs and particular character. And most emphatically this applies to the talents with which God has endowed our children. Some of them are "book worms," others are "mechanically inclined." Some of them are "bright" and some are "slow-learners." None of our children are duplicates of others. But let me be quick to point out that we, in distinction from the world, give thanks to God for each and every one of them! It makes no difference whether they are handicapped in one way or another, normal or slow achievers. We do not question the wise purpose of God in each of our children. The apostle Paul makes clear to us, when he speaks of the unity of the body of Christ, that there is diversity in the body of the church with regard to gifts and abilities. Our children are part of this diversity of the Body! And it does and must make no difference to us as parents that the needs of our children vary. We know that some of our children get by with regular shoes, while others need orthopedic. Some have hardly any cavities, while others are always making trips to the dentist. We treat them according to their needs. In this connection I want to caution parents in the family situation. We live in a day and age when a person's worth is determined by his achievements in the socio-economic ladder — or, to touch a little closer to home, one's position in the church. Let us remember that Paul did not in any way disparage even the lowest member in the body of Christ. Not every child has the ability to become a teacher or preacher. We must not confuse achievement with the calling of God for us! God simply requires that we live to the glory of His Name according to the talents and abilities He gives to us.

Now that which holds true in the home extends directly to the school. The school may not in any way be inferior to the instruction of the home; else we are not fulfilling our baptism vow, "... to the utmost of (y)our power." Each child must have an educational experience that is truly covenantal. The instructional treatment in the home must be paral-

leled in the school to as great a degree as possible. Therefore, even as parents instruct each child in accord with his specific needs, so educators must establish reasonable goals and progress for each youngster. Not all of our children fit into a common educational mold. Not all our children are college bound, or will become preachers, teachers, or white-collar workers. Teachers may require the best of each child, but this must never be confused with high academic attainment. If this is done, then some children go home night after night banging their heads against the wall, because they are never able to achieve such an academic goal. And a host of problems results: child-teacher problems; parent-teacher problems; etc. The children are the real losers. At home and in school we have to work toward reasonable goals for all of our children. We must do this with patience, being satisfied with reasonable progress according to God-given ability, our ideal being to prepare each child for his particular place in the kingdom. Or let me put this in other words. We must keep things straight. There is no inherent worth or value in the "three Rs," no more than there is grace in things! These have their value only in relationship to the child who is able to use them as tools to function in his particular calling to the glory of God. This means that some are going to be using their math skills to calibrate the stress at various points on an expansion bridge, while others use it to figure out how many 10-foot sections of sewer pipe are needed to complete a 500-foot stretch of street. Some of our children will use their reading skills to delve into Abraham Kuyper's work on the Holy Spirit, while others will use them to read *Standard Bearer* meditations with delight. We must prepare *each* child at his speed for his place in the diverse Body of Christ.

Let us turn to some possible solutions to the problem of the "slow-learner." The problem is largely one of implementation. I believe we practice what is called "mainstreaming." This is an educational method that became popular toward the end of the last decade. Mainstreaming means essentially that all students are placed in the same class according to chronological age. By this means all children are given the same opportunity for social and academic interaction. By itself the program is a failure and cannot live up to its expectations. Of course, there is no problem with the exceptionally bright child, nor with the norm of the students. But there is a problem with the "slow-learner." There is simply not the time nor the man power in the regular classroom situation to work sufficiently with this kind of child. Furthermore, the "slow-learner" cannot achieve to the norm even with extra help because the goal is too high and the pace too fast. Mainstreaming, therefore, is self-defeating in that the social isolation and stigma that it seeks to overcome is retained. The problem is deeper.

We have to deal with the God-given inability to achieve the norm. We cannot place talents where God has not given them. Nor can we develop children beyond their potential. The character of the "slow-learner" demands a wholly different approach. It is not even to an advantage to use the same educational material at a slower rate. The approach in educating the "slow-learner" must be goal orientated. The system has to be a way to achieve a certain end. I mean by this, that there has to be a practical approach to teaching the "slow-learner." For example, various skills should be taught in conjunction with social and practical needs according to the goal envisioned for each child. To illustrate, science could be taught these children from the approach of weather, seasons, plants, machinery, etc.

I know you are going to ask me, how is this feasible? Then we deal with cold hard facts. Then we are speaking of dollars and cents, teacher/pupil ratios, and other factors. And I recognize that especially Hope already has problems in this regard. Nevertheless, I like to make a few positive suggestions. I am particularly struck by the fact that the one-room schoolhouse solves so many problems in this regard. Without socially ostracizing, the teacher is able to educate each child toward his goal at his pace. These

teachers are essentially teaching toward many goals at different rates within the one classroom. I think our solution lies in this direction. I could visualize two systems running parallel in one school. Then we would have the regular grades and alongside them have the school house situation with two or three teachers addressing the problem of the "slow-learners." At the same time, these two systems could be integrated as much as possible. This could be done by giving the teachers and students some particular places and responsibilities in the regular curriculum. All the children would ride the same bus, eat lunch together, have physical education together, etc. These teachers could be responsible for some of their combined groups. Then they could not be labeled "those teachers for the M.R.s." In this way the social rejection and stigma would be reduced for the "slow-learner."

We must remember that all of these children are our children. All of these children are covenant children. We treat them in accord with their specific personal needs in the home. We must also do this in the school. In this way all of our children will achieve to their proper stature in the body of Christ. I thank you.

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

The Law Fulfilled in Christ

Prof. Robert D. Decker

"We believe, that the ceremonies and figures of the law ceased at the coming of Christ, and that all the shadows are accomplished; so that the use of them must be abolished amongst Christians; yet the truth and substance of them remain with us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have their completion. In the meantime, we still use the testimonies taken out of the law and the prophets, to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel, and to regulate our life in all honesty, to the glory of God, according to his will."

The Belgic Confession Article XXV

The title of this article, "Of the abolishing of the Ceremonial Law," is not quite correct and a bit misleading. It speaks of the fact that the ceremonial law has been abolished; while the article itself speaks not only of the ceremonial law, but of the entire law. And, the article does not teach that the law has been abolished, but rather that the use of it is abolished, while the truth and substance of it remain with us in Jesus Christ.

One might also wonder at the point of this brief article. Why does the *Confession*, in the middle of a discussion of the Person and work of our Lord Jesus

Christ, suddenly speak of the law and its ceremonies? There is good reason. But, one cannot understand the significance of this article without an appreciation of the historical setting in which it was written. In the Apostolic era and the years immediately following, the worship of the church was very simple. Gradually the church separated itself from the elaborate ceremonies of the Jews. The worship service consisted of the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, prayers, and the singing of Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. The emphasis lay on preaching, and there was very little if any ritual or

ceremony. Slowly but surely during the ensuing centuries, that simple worship service was exchanged for an elaborate liturgy with new rites and ceremonies. Stress was laid on the sacraments as the vehicles of grace. The spontaneous prayers of the early church were replaced by fixed prayers, spoken and sometimes sung by the clergy. Pictures and images were introduced as "books to the laity." And the preaching of the Word lost its central place in the worship. So bad was it that by the time of the Reformation the gospel was buried under a mass of symbols and ceremonies. To defend these ways of worship the Roman hierarchy continually appealed to the ritual of Old Testament worship.

With the sixteenth century Reformation came three reactions to Roman liturgy. The Anabaptists virtually repudiated the position that the Old Testament was significant for the development of Christian doctrine, worship, and practice. For these the New Testament was of paramount authority. Others, the Lutherans and especially the Anglicans, retained as many of the ancient rites as were, in their opinion, not forbidden by the gospel. Thus in these churches altars, vestments, and the liturgical year were preserved. The Calvinistic or Reformed branch of the Reformation followed a different course. Among these the general rule was adopted that whatever the Scriptures plainly enjoined was obligatory. All other rites and ceremonies were to be banished. Therefore, while much of the simplicity of the early church's worship was restored, the underlying argument for this differed sharply from the Anabaptists. The Reformed church has always strenuously defended the unity of the two Testaments. Although recognizing the differences of administration (the typical character of the Old Testament), the essential unity between the two testaments is preserved. In this light we can understand Article XXV of our *Confession*. The "ceremonies and figures" of the law ceased with the coming of Christ, all the shadows are accomplished so that the "use of them must be abolished among christians"; yet "the truth and substance of them remain with us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have their completion." And thus we "still use the testimonies taken out of the law and the prophets, to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel, and to regulate our life in all honesty, to the glory of God, according to his will."

We may also note that the error of Pre-millennialism stands condemned by this article. The basic error of Pre-millennialism is that it separates between the Old and New Dispensations, finding no continuity or relationship between them. Our *Confession* emphasizes that the law and the prophets have all been fulfilled in Christ, and thus, while their use for Christians has been abolished, their truth and substance remain for the church of all ages.

The article does not specifically mention it but does clearly imply that the entire law is meant. In fact by "the law and the prophets" is meant the entire Old Testament. That law is usually divided into three parts. There was the moral law which is briefly summed in the ten commandments. The ceremonial law directed Israel's life as a church. This law included all the laws concerning sacrifices, feast days, cleansings, etc. Finally there was the civil law which governed Israel's life as a nation. This law included regulations concerning crimes, family rights, property rights, etc.

As to its purpose, the Law served to form Israel into a separate nation and the people of God. Christ had not yet come and the blood of atonement had not yet been shed. The Lord had not yet been raised from the dead and exalted at the Father's right hand. And the Spirit of Christ had not yet been poured out into the church. Yet God would have a people also in the Old Dispensation who would walk before Him as His own chosen people in the midst of the world. Thus at Mount Sinai, in faithfulness to His covenant promise, after having delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt and before leading them into the promised land, God gave them His Law and said: "Be ye holy for I the Lord your God am holy." By that law Israel was distinguished sharply from the nations of the world around them and they were indelibly marked as God's church, the typical manifestation of the Kingdom of God in the midst of the world.

But Israel could never keep the law. The law, after all, demanded perfect obedience in every respect. Simple, outward conformity to the external principles and stipulations of the law was never sufficient. God Himself repeatedly warned the people that He was weary of their sacrifices because they were externally offered and not accompanied by broken spirits and contrite hearts. "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." That means that the law not only said, "Do this and thou shalt live," but also, "Cursed is everyone that does not abide in all that is written in the book of the law to do it." For this reason the law led to slavery, and the true people of God groaned under the burden of the law. For this reason the law was also intended to be a schoolmaster to lead the people to Christ. There could be no justification by the works of the law. That could only be by faith in Christ. (Galatians 3:21-29) Israel in the Old Dispensation was as a child who had not yet come to maturity. They were children under tutors and governors until the fulness of time was come, when God sent His Son into the world. (Galatians 4:1-5) Thus Israel, the child, had to be led by the hand of the law until the time of maturity when they could receive their inheritance through the redeeming work of Christ and the outpouring of His Spirit.

With the coming of Christ, that whole law was fulfilled. Christ came as the only One Who could keep the law of God, not only in its outward stipulations, but especially with respect to its inner reality. At His coming the Savior said: "I come to do thy will O God." Thus all through His earthly sojourn our Lord was bent on keeping every jot and tittle of the law, while at the same time, He scorned the mere outward observance and damned the Pharisees for their work righteousness. Thus at the coming of Christ the shadows of the law fled away. The whole law pointed to Christ. He was the reality. When He came as the eternal High Priest and as the perfect Lamb of God to offer the perfect sacrifice for sin, the shadows of the law had no more place or purpose. When Christ died, that moment marked the end of all that pertained to the economy of the Old Dispensation.

But as the *Confession* puts it, "the truth and substance" of the law remained in Jesus Christ. Christ is the real substance of all the law. That is exactly why Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." (Matthew 5:17-20) That same truth is found in Romans 10:4 where we read "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." Christ is the purposeful end or goal of the law for righteousness. In Christ, therefore, the law finds its fulfillment. Its truth and substance remain in Jesus Christ. That could never perish. Israel still is, but no more is it the Jewish nation; it is the true Israel of God, the natural branches of the olive tree

of God's church (cf. Romans 11). Jerusalem still is, but not as an earthly city; it is the spiritual city of God. Canaan still is, but not in the land of Palestine; it is the inheritance of the people of God in the new heavens and earth. God's temple and tabernacle still are, but they are the covenant fellowship of God with His people in Christ. Christ is our Prophet, Priest, and King and we are a royal priesthood in Him (I Peter 2:9). He is the fulfillment of all the sacrifices. Washings and cleansings still exist, but in the sanctified heart of the elect child of God. Tithes and firstfruits still have their place, but are now the true sacrifices of our thanksgiving. Fasting is changed in Christ to the real sorrow of a contrite heart. All the inward substance of the whole law is written upon the hearts of God's people by sovereign grace through the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

All of this certainly does not mean that we have nothing to do with the law or the Old Dispensation anymore. We do. It has a very real purpose for us who live in the end of the ages. The law and the prophets are for our instruction. In as far as they show that the Lord fulfills His promises, they confirm our faith and help us to understand the reality. In the substance of the law there are also eternal principles of truth and righteousness which regulate our lives in the midst of the world. The law reveals sin to us, points us to the cross, and it is the rule for our life of gratitude to the praise of God Who gave us His only begotten Son to redeem us from the curse of the law.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of the Book of Galatians

By Rev. G. Lubbers

THE TRUE AND REAL SONS OF ABRAHAM

continued

(Galatians 3:7, 8, 9.)

All these "families of the earth" are blessed in Abraham, that is, in his "Seed" which came from his loins in Isaac the son of the promise. This "Seed" is none else but the Son of God in our flesh, born in the fulness of time. This is a point which is pivotal to all Christian faith and thinking. When this is clearly seen, then all salvation by works of faith is banished from the church, and all false "dispensationalism" is avoided with all its horrible pitfalls.

The term for "blessed" in the Greek is very expressive. It is "*eneulogeethesontai*." This is the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew verb "nibheracu." This is a Niphal reflexive verb: God would bless all nations in Abraham Himself. That is His sovereign, sublime prerogative in His covenant blessings in Christ Jesus. The Greek translation, which the Holy Spirit quotes through Paul, indicates that those who are blessed are entirely passive in this matter of blessing. They in no way initiate this action of God's blessing. They *are blessed*. They are blessed with all the spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, even as

they were elected in Him from before the foundation of the world. All the elect are blessed. It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God Who sheweth mercy. (Rom. 9:16; Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5) Besides, as the future tense clearly indicates, this will surely come to pass. It is the sovereign promise that is preached, the fulfilment of which depends entirely upon the faithfulness of God's covenant as confirmed by oath (Heb. 6:13-20) It is really the anchor sure and steadfast in the holy place of God. That makes this "shall be blessed" so certain. God be praised!

For this preaching is anchored in this sure steadfastness of God's purpose of election to bless all nations in Christ. Surely here we see that election is the *Cor Ecclesia*, the heart of the church. But here we also have election-preaching without mention of the term election. For when the proposition is maintained that the promise of the Spirit is out of faith, this is only possible because it is for the elect, for whom faith is merited by Christ, and to whom it is pure gift of God. (Eph. 2:8-10) Such believing children of Abraham are God's creation in Christ Jesus, that none should boast in the flesh.

And so Paul reaffirms the propositional truth: so then they which are out of faith are blessed with *believing* Abraham. Abraham stands looking at the stars at night and hears the word: thus shall thy seed be in multitude. He believes and is justified and made heir of the world, fellowheir with Christ, his Son and elder Brother, the Firstborn of all creatures. (Rom. 8:28-30; Col. 1:15 ff.) Come now, you bewitched Galatians, and stand in this blessing of Abraham and be freeborn sons of God. Let no one rob you of this great grace for all nations.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN: (Galatians 3:10-12)

Paul's great polemic is now firmly anchored in *the Scripture*. He has chosen the battlefield in the very Scriptures which the Jewish antagonists of the gospel of Christ purport to believe. And the Scriptures cannot be broken, for God cannot lie. (Heb. 6:18)

But that is not the entire story. Paul has yet another arrow in his quiver. He will shew from the Scriptures themselves, from the very expressed words of God by Moses, that all who "are out the works of law" are not sharing in the blessings of God's covenant with Abraham, but that they "are under (upo kataran) curse." The text to prove this proposition is quoted from Deuteronomy 27:26: "Cursed be he that confirmeth not (all) the words of this law to do them." That too is a Word of God before which all must bow. And this word is, indeed, very significant. It is the fatal blow to all attempts of proud man to establish his own righteousness. Paul suggests this in

Romans 10:2, 3. He is there speaking of those for whom he has a great sorrow of heart. He could wish that those who are ignorant of God's righteousness might be saved. But they are "under curse." They are under the ratified curse of Mount Ebal to which we will call attention shortly. He will shoot his arrow and lay all human pride low. For what is the plight of all who are out of works of law? It is that they are ignorant of God's righteousness of the Cross, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they do not submit unto the righteousness of the free gift of God. They dream about a righteousness which they may attain by works of law. They follow after a righteousness of law, which they have never and shall never attain. Why? Because they seek it by works of law and not by the simple hearing of the Gospel of the Cross by faith.

It is not so that the wrath of God and the curse of God *shall come* upon them, but it *is* upon them, and it *abides* upon them. They *are* under the curse of the law which says, "cursed is every one that does not remain in all things written in this book of the law *to do them!*" (Deut. 27:26.) For let it not be forgotten that this word was not merely spoken to Israel by Moses, but it was a word to which in a public assembly in the land of promise, they were to ratify the curse upon themselves if they did not keep the "law" with a solemn "Amen." Moses gave these instructions to Joshua before he died in the land of Moab, before Israel crossed over Jordan. It was given to Joshua and all Israel as a solemn command which they must execute on two mountains, Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal. On the one mountain, six tribes were to stand to pronounce the blessings of the law (Deut. 28:1-14) and on the other mountain (Ebal) the other six tribes were to stand to pronounce the curses. (Deut. 27:14-26) This was enacted publicly by Joshua after Israel's armies had conquered Ai and they had made a wedge in the middle of the land. Then they wrote all the words of the law upon stones covered with plaister. And Levites stood in the valley between these two mountains, the one of blessings and the other of curses, and to the blessing the tribes on Mt. Gerizim said Amen, and to the curses the tribes on Mt. Ebal said Amen. Thus Israel solemnly bound themselves to the "blessings" and the "curses" by the "law of works." The man that "doeth them" shall live by the law. Alas, no one did, and all placed themselves under the "curse" of the law.

Under that ratified curse of Mt. Ebal all Israel is which does not look toward the blood of atonement, pointing to Christ's blood which speaks better things than that of Abel. When Christ was on earth he said, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Mt. 11:28) Christ does not give this heavy yoke of Ebal's curse. He does not ratify and establish the "covenant curse." That

was ratified at Ebal. He came to realize the righteousness of God, the free gift out of many offenses unto justification.

With the Scriptures in their hand the unbelieving Jews in Jesus' day nailed Him to the Cross; yes, nailed Him to the Cross Who came to remove Israel forever from that terrible ratified curse of Ebal. He did not come to prolongate the "curse" of Ebal in the church. For this curse is not upon those who believe in the crucified Christ, but upon those who are "of works of law." These perish in their sins and under the wrath of God. Curse and blessing in the "covenant" was in the Covenant at Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal which we can learn by reading Joshua 8:30-35, which we will not quote here. However, this is the "law" dissected from the promise of salvation and the blood of the Lamb. They are not works of thankfulness of which the Decalogue speaks, but they are law-works according to the rule: he that *doeth them shall live thereby*. (Rom. 10:6; Lev. 18:5)

Now these disturbers of the peace and tranquility of the conscience in the blood of the Lamb, would once more place these Gentile Christians under the law ratified at Mt. Ebal. That is a denial of the blood of the Cross. Enemies of the Cross of Christ they are! Such is the sad story ever anew in the church of Christ. Think of Rome and of the ages before the Reformation where the doctrine of justification by faith never came to its own. Think of pietism in the church, imitation of Christ. Think of the "conditional" covenant conception which manipulates with the "curse" and "blessing" in the covenant. Paul here preaches curse and blessing too. It is he that believes in the Son who has the blessing of Abraham, and he that believes not the Son hath not life, but is under curse. Two kinds of people. One in the Covenant of God and the other under works of law. The one under curse and the other under blessing. The one in the bondage of sin and other in the freedom of the fulfilled law!

What a polemic! What a grasp of the Scriptures!

Come now ye bewitched Galatians. Stand in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free!

CHRIST HAS REDEEMED US FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW (Galatians 3:13, 14)

It is what *Christ* has done for us. Paul writes literally: "Christ *us* has redeemed out of the curse of the law." He has redeemed us from that terribly ratified curse of Mt. Ebal. Calvary is no Mt. Ebal for us. It was Mt. Ebal for Christ. He is the "Amen" which Israel pronounced upon the "blessings and the curses." The Lord there caused the iniquity of us all to come upon Him. (Isaiah 53:4-7) He has borne our

griefs and carried our sorrows! He was made sin for us. (II Cor. 5:21) He assumed the law: the man that doeth the same shall live thereby.

This Christ is the anointed of God. He is appointed and qualified by God through the Holy Ghost. He is the great High Priest, Who brings the sacrifice for the sins of the people. And He had to be made a curse for us to purchase us free from the curse.

Yes, even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Christ, the Son of Man, be lifted up on the accursed tree. He is made a "curse for us." He is made this in our stead. Now he has purchased us. He has fulfilled the law and carried the wrath and curse of God. Heaven would not have Him, and earth rejected Him. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me. He Who was irredeemable now redeems us by becoming the very "curse for us." Mt. Ebal is satisfied. The Amen of ratification stands in Christ. Israel could say "in Christ" Amen, as they saw Christ as the "end" of the law for righteousness to everyone that believed. That is the only solution for that amazing enactment on Mt. Ebal where Israel assumed the curse, which they surely knew would come upon them.

But there is more to this wondrous story of the love of God by removing the "curse" in Christ. It is that Christ came to bring the blessing of Abraham to the Gentiles, to the Galatians too. Such was the blessing of the preached gospel to Abraham: in thee shall all nations be blessed. This has come to pass. Christ "redeemed" us once and for all. Such is the implication of the tense used here, which is the aorist tense. Christ died at Calvary. He paid it all. He has nothing more to do. It is finished. The curse is removed. Justice is satisfied. God is just and the justifier of those who believe in Him. Hallelujah, praise Jehovah!

The blessing of Abraham has come to us. We are Abraham's sons. We receive the Spirit of Pentecost. It is for all the elect of all nations. That is the gospel which Paul preached to the Gentiles. And now anathema upon anyone who teaches any other gospel than this gospel of the Cross, the accursed Christ in our behalf.

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THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Found: A Wife That Loves God

Rev. John A. Heys

Having been sent under oath to get a wife for Isaac, Abraham's servant sought the help of Him Who had established His covenant with Abraham and with his seed after him. Before going to look for a covenant wife for Isaac, he looked up to God on high, came before the throne of grace and sought the invaluable help of Him Who alone could make the search prosperous.

What is more, he even stipulated and presented a carefully thought out sign whereby he might be helped in getting such a wife for him in whom and around whom the covenant centered and revolved. We read in Genesis 24:12-14 that he prayed, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the city come out to draw water; and let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give to thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby I shall know that thou hast showed kindness to my master."

What shall we say about this prayer? That he prayed in commendable, and truly it is recommended to all God's people in all their trials and difficulties. There is no better way than to look unto the everlasting hills from whence cometh all our help, every bit of it. But can we approve of stipulating a sign for God? And what is more, can we approve of this sign and these characteristics which he wishes to find in that wife for Isaac? Was he merely expressing what kind of wife he would like to find for himself? Is there really anything spiritual in all this that he insists on being found in the wife he will bring back for Isaac?

Would it not be better for him to pray to be guided in his walk to the home of one of Abraham's kinsmen? There he could dwell for a week or two, hide his purpose and then carefully observe the

daughters in that home and see first-hand how they behaved in their father's home? Did they honour their father and mother? Then they would honour and be in submission to Isaac as husband. Were they industrious or lazy? Did they spend the greater part of the day before a mirror preening and primping, satisfying the vanity of their eyes, or could they be expected, when the demands of the home and the children took all their time, to be content with neatness and beauty before God?

Could he not as a silent observer watch to see which of the daughters in this or that home was found praying, speaking of the things of God's kingdom, was faithful in sacrifices to and worship of the living God? Should he not listen without appearing critical to what songs she sang or hummed in her daily tasks? (And, indeed, our young people today by the tunes they whistle or hum or sing, by the music they have on their radios, or play on their instruments show where their interests and hearts are. By the disks, or platters as they are sometimes called, they buy and by the stereo tapes for their players in their cars — and that holds true then for young men as well — they reveal a great deal about their spiritual lives, and how much they love the God of our salvation.)

Abraham's servant seems a bit impatient and himself averse to a whole lot of work and to searching for Isaac's wife. It seems as if it does not sit too deeply in him and that, although he prays to God, he does not take things too seriously. He seems to pray that he may have an easy time with a difficult task, that he may get it all over with in a hurry so that he may go back home and be in far more familiar territory. After all he was exhausted after what in that day was a long and wearisome trip. Before he has done any searching he wants it all to happen right here at the well where he first stopped in the land of Abraham's kinsmen.

In answer to all this we must simply say that he chose a very beautiful sign revealing his own rich

spirituality. And he was not simply looking for a hard worker, a generous, kind soul, one with whom the temperamental son of his master could get along with because she would bend and would walk two miles when he asked her to walk one, would turn the other cheek when he would strike her on the one, would sing when he was surly, and with a soft answer would turn away his wrath. All this you can find in an unbeliever. They sometimes have charming characters and can be labeled "a peach of a fellow." They can make some very delightful company and be so very accommodating.

He could not have had in mind those words of king Lemuel which had not yet been written: "Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she also bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night (Abraham's servant could have tried to see too how long she slept in the morning), and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. . . ." The quotation is too lengthy to place here in full. But by all means read it as it is found in Proverbs 31:10-31. And though he could not have had these lines in mind, he did reveal by the things which he presented to God as the sign that he sought a woman who had strong faith in God.

No, he did not so much as mention the word faith, and yet his words spell out the evidences of faith in unmistakable terms. To mind come first of all the words of James that faith without works is dead. To mind come also the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." To this may be added the words of John in I John 3:23: "And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." Abraham's servant was looking for a believer; and to know the tree he looked for the fruit that would tell him that this woman was engrafted into Christ by a true faith. He knew that a covenant wife for Isaac must be a believing wife; and he sought a woman who loved God and revealed this by keeping His commandment of walking in love.

Doctrinal purity is precious, but it does not tell the whole story. Solomon in his wisdom teaches us that to fear God (that is, to believe in Him; and then certainly according to pure doctrine) and to keep His commandments is the sole duty of man. We had better not stop at the fear, let it stand all by itself, and ignore the fact that we must also love one

another. This servant of Abraham, in a day when the doctrines of the church were not as highly developed as today, in a day when God had not given as much revelation as we have today, wanted a woman who feared God. But she must be a woman — and indeed will then also be a woman — who keeps God's commandments. And faith itself is a rather difficult thing to find in one you do not know, and when, as this servant, you are in a strange land among people you never saw before. But the works of a living faith are the same the world over, for they are works of love. A dead faith has no works of love. A dead love has no faith. And the servant seeks to know whether she has faith in God by asking her to perform a work of love.

He has his answer soon. All things went exactly as he had asked God — with the very first woman who came to the well. The works of love seem to be there. Yet we read, "And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not." Genesis 24:21. There are two things which he must still know. Unbelievers, as we said, can perform deeds that certainly look like love to the neighbour, even when these unbelievers have no love for God. This however is *not* the keeping of God's commandments, for it is not doing the neighbour good *for God's sake*. It is not then the right kind of fruit to show that one is engrafted into Christ by a true faith.

One can pick out a very likely cantaloupe or watermelon and pay a good price for it only to find at home that it is bitter and a big disappointment. Will this servant find this kind and thoughtful young woman to be an unbeliever in spite of these outward deeds? Has he found works of faith? He soon finds out that she does come from a believing family and indeed is of the kinsmen of Abraham. But one thing still stands in the way: Will she come and be Isaac's wife? Those deeds that apparently are deeds of faith must have the love of God that will move her to leave father and mother and cleave unto her husband for God's sake in a strange, far off land.

Yes, he finds all this also in time. But he found there at the well that God had prospered his way in sending a young woman who did exactly as he had stipulated in his sign which he asked of God. He found a believing wife.

Our youth have an advantage over this servant in that they know the families from which their friends whom they are courting come. And let it be stated with emphasis that they must be looking for a believing husband or wife. And that means that they must limit themselves to the young men and young women in the church. Spiritual compatibility comes first on the list of requirements. It must be one who

loves God and reveals this by deeds of love toward the neighbour for God's sake and not simply for society's sake. Such a woman will be an help meet, that is, fit, suitable, for a believing young man. Such a young man will be one with which a believing young woman can work and plan and one whom she can encourage to worship and serve the living God.

Indeed it would make it easier for us if God would let us stipulate such actions in modern life and terminology as a sign for us and then have it all work out according to these requirements which we set. But we live in a different day and age, with much more revelation, and among the people of God. We are not like Isaac, so that, by a call of God to our parents, we are born in a strange land and living as pilgrims and strangers with no young men and women of the faith living in our land. And we must not, nor must we let our young people, lose sight of the fact that they can and must in seeking a husband or wife make it a matter of prayer before the throne of grace. They may not be allowed to forget that they must look for a wife or husband who loves God out of a true faith in Him. They may never be given the

impression that they may look for one, or that they will find one, in the world. When they go to college away from home and away from the churches that faithfully proclaim the truth, they must be warned and warned and warned again for their own good. We will find a husband or wife that loves God when we walk in love to God ourselves.

It is not a question of finding one that *either* loves God *or* has faith in Him. These are always found together. What is called love but has no faith in God is actually sin. What is called faith and has no works of love for the neighbour is unbelief. Those who do not walk in love with the neighbour do not believe in God. In fact, such dare to defy Him and therein reveal that they do not love God.

Young people, seek a wife or husband that loves God. You will find one that has faith in Him and loves you. You will not have to "go home to mother" or, if you are a young man, go rent a hotel room. The love of God that both of you possess will hold you together and produce forgiveness and reconciliation when there is friction.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

December 1, 1977

Dear Timothy,

This letter, Timothy, is going to be of a slightly different kind. It is occasioned by the fact that I was reading the other day a recent publication by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. It is a continuation of his exposition of Ephesians; more particularly, it is an exposition of Ephesians 6:10-13. In this book Lloyd-Jones spends a great deal of time concentrating on the expression found in these verses: "the wiles of the devil." Among those wiles of the devil, he finds the temptation to abandon doctrine. In this connection he has a very interesting section on the importance of doctrine in the life of the child of God. I want to quote this section for you in this letter because he not only has some fine things to say, but he also touches upon a point which we discussed together earlier in our correspondence. Perhaps also you will be persuaded by this quote to purchase the book yourself and read the whole thing. It is well worthwhile. For your information, the book is entitled "The Christian Warfare," and was put out by Baker's. I have received permission from the publishers to make this lengthy quote.

He writes about the fact that heresies have appeared in the Church from the earliest times, and that

the great Confessions of the Church were composed for purposes of combatting heresy and making the truth of God's Word clear for God's people. He then goes on to say:

"Is there someone who feels at this point, 'Well, really, what has all this to do with me? I am an ordinary person, I am a member of the Church and life is very difficult. What has all this to say to me?' Or there may be someone who is recovering after illness and who says, 'Well, I was hoping to have a word of comfort, something to strengthen me along the way, something to make me feel a little happier; what has all this about Creeds and Confessions and the wiles of the devil to do with me?' If you feel like that, the truth is that the devil has defeated you. The Apostle Paul says, 'Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners' (I Corinthians 15:33). He means that wrong teaching is desperately dangerous. He is there dealing with the great question of the resurrection, he is concerned with that one doctrine, and he says, Make no mistake about this; it is not a matter of indifference as to whether you believe in the literal physical resurrection or not. 'Ah but,' you say, 'I am a practical man of affairs, I am not interested in doctrine, I am not a theologian, I have

no time for these things. All I want is something to help me to live my daily life.' But according to the Apostle you cannot divorce these things, 'Evil communications' — wrong teaching, wrong thinking, wrong belief — 'corrupt good manners.' It will affect the whole of your life.

"One of the first things you are to learn in this Christian life and warfare is that, if you go wrong in your doctrine, you will go wrong in all aspects of your life. You will probably go wrong in your practice and behaviour; and you will certainly go wrong in your experience. Why is it that people are defeated by the things that happen to them? Why is it that some people are completely cast down if they are taken ill, or if someone who is dear to them is taken ill? They were wonderful Christians when all was going well; the sun was shining, the family was well, everything was perfect, and you would have thought that they were the best Christians in the country. But suddenly there is an illness and they seem to be shattered, they do not know what to do or where to turn, and they begin to doubt God. They say, 'We were living the Christian life, and we were praying to God, and our lives have been committed to God; but look at what is happening. Why should this happen to us?' They begin to doubt God and all His gracious dealings with them. Do such people need 'a bit of comfort'? Do they need the church simply as a kind of soporific or tranquilizer? Do they only need something which will make them feel a little happier, and lift the burden a little while they are in the church?

"Their real trouble is that they lack an understanding of the Christian faith. They have an utterly inadequate notion of what Christianity means. Their idea of Christianity was: 'Believe in Christ and you will never have another trouble or problem; God will bless you, nothing will ever go wrong with you'; whereas the Scripture itself teaches that 'through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God' (Acts 14:22), or as the Apostle expresses it elsewhere, 'In nothing be terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake' (Philippians 1:28-29). Our Lord says, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' (John 16:33). There is nothing which is so wrong, and so utterly false, as to fail to see the primary importance of true doctrine. Looking back over my experience as a pastor for some thirty-four years, I can testify without the slightest hesitation that the people I have found most frequently in trouble in their spiritual experience have been those who have lacked understanding. You cannot divorce

these things. You will go wrong in the realms of practical living and experience if you have not a true understanding. If you drop off into some heresy, if you go wrong at some point, if you believe, for instance — I give one example in passing — 'that healing is in the atonement,' that it is never God's will that any of His children should be ill, that it is always God's will that all His children should be healthy, and that no Christian should ever die from a disease . . .; if you believe that, and then find yourself, or someone who is dear to you, dying of some incurable disease, you will be miserable and unhappy. . . . Such a person's condition is due to error or heresy concerning a primary central doctrine. He or she has insinuated something into the Christian faith that does not truly belong to it.

"Nothing is more urgently relevant, whether we think of ourselves in particular or the Church in general, than that we should be aware of heresy. Take the New Testament, take the history of the Christian Church, or take individual Christian experience, and you will see that true doctrine is always urgently relevant. It is of supreme importance for the whole life of the Church. The Holy Spirit is the power in the Church, and the Holy Spirit will never honour anything except His own Word. It is the Holy Spirit who has given this Word. He is its Author. It is not of men! Nor is the Bible the product of 'flesh and blood'. The Apostle Paul was not simply giving expression to contemporary teaching or his own thoughts. He says, 'I received it by revelation'. It was given to him, given to him by the Lord, the risen Lord, through the Holy Spirit. So I am arguing that the Holy Spirit will honour nothing but His own Word. Therefore if we do not believe and accept His Word, or if in any way we deviate from it, we have no right to expect the blessing of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will honour truth, and will honour nothing else. Whatever else we may do, if we do not honour this truth He will not honour us.

"This is surely one of the major problems in the Church at the present moment. Everyone is aware of the fact that the Church is lacking in power. The leaders are trying to seek the cause of this in order that they may discover how to remedy it; and apparently, they are all jumping to one conclusion, namely, that the cause of our lack of power is found in our divisions. So we must all come together. That is the argument. The divided Church is the cause of the trouble, and so the argument follows that if only we all come together we shall be blessed, we shall obtain the missing power, and tremendous things will happen. But how are we to come together? One believes this, another believes that. The main trouble, we are told, is that some put far too much emphasis on what one believes. Surely, they say, we ought to

recognize that the one thing that matters is that there are great common enemies against us, for example, Communism, so we must all come together, all who call themselves Christian in any shape or form. We are all one; why divide about these things? We must all come and stand together as Christians, and then we shall have power.

“We read about these things constantly. . . . I have but one comment to make about this matter, and I regret to have to make it. To me, all such talk is just a denial of the plain teaching of the New Testament, a denial of the Creeds and the Confessions and the Protestant Reformation! It is carnal thinking, in addition to being a denial of the truth. According to the teaching of the Bible, one thing only matters, and that is the truth. The Holy Spirit will honour nothing but the truth, His own truth. But that, He will honour.

“To me the most marvellous thing of all is that, the moment you come to such a conclusion, you realize that in a sense nothing else matters. Numbers certainly do not matter. But today the prevailing argument is the one that exalts numbers. . . .

“But this argument is not only wrong, it is dangerously wrong, if you relate it to the realm of the Christian faith. The whole Bible testifies against it. The glories of Church history protest loudly against it. The Christian position is entirely different. Here, you do not begin by counting heads, you are not concerned primarily about numbers and masses. You do not think in that way. You are in an entirely different realm. . . .

“Nothing matters in the spiritual realm except truth, the truth given by the Holy Spirit, the truth that can be honoured by the Holy Spirit. Is there anything more glorious in the whole of the Old

Testament than the way in which this great principle stands out? God often used individual men, or but two or three, against hordes and masses. Is there anything more exhilarating than the doctrine of the remnant? While the majority had gone wrong, the ones and the twos saw the truth. . . .

“Is it not amazing that people should forget the Scriptures and past history? . . .

“I do not understand that mentality in the Christian Church today which says that we must all come together and sink our differences; and that what we believe does not matter. . . .

“There is an exclusiveness in the New Testament that is quite amazing. The Apostle Paul writing to the Galatians says, ‘Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed’ (Galatians 1:8). . . . So many of these modern preachers are much nicer people than the Apostle Paul! They never say a word against anyone at all, they praise everybody, and they are praised by everybody. They are never ‘negative’! They never define what they believe and what they do not believe. They are said to be ‘full of love’. . . . The explanation is that they do not ‘contend for the truth’, they are innocent concerning the ‘wiles of the devil’. It is not for us to decide what to leave out and what to drop for the sake of unity. My business is to expound this truth, to declare it — come what may! We must not be interested primarily in numbers, we must be interested in the truth of God.”

Well, Timothy, I have to end this quote — and this letter. What Lloyd-Jones has to say on this topic is well said, and we do well to take it to heart.

Fraternally,
H. Hanko

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Seeking the Kingdom

Rev. Rodney Miersma

Jesus Christ was the greatest preacher that ever walked upon the face of the earth. He taught by both word and deed. We have recorded for us in Holy Writ the most beautiful sermon which was ever preached,

preached by our Lord Himself, the Sermon on the Mount. In this sermon Christ reveals to us the truth concerning the kingdom of God, which is a heavenly kingdom of righteousness, whose ruler is God through

Christ, and whose subjects are God's children. The last time that the undersigned wrote in this department we discussed the proper use of our time. What Jesus has to say in this sermon is very closely related, for a proper use of our time involves our life as subjects of the kingdom of God. Our calling with respect to the kingdom of God is set forth in Matthew 6:33 in His sermon on the mount where we read: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." This passage stands in marked contrast to the preceding context in which Jesus warns us against the evil of worrying about material things. But there is no need to worry about such things because our Father knows that we need these things for our earthly sojourn. That for which we must use our time is the seeking of God's kingdom. This admonition is for the youth as well as the adults. Let us take a closer look.

The kingdom of God is that glorious commonwealth that God realizes through the blood and Spirit of Christ in the midst of the world. The world in which we now live is the kingdom of darkness, this darkness the result of the fall of our first parents in paradise. By nature all men, including ourselves, are subjects of this kingdom in which Satan is the king. Hence, our whole life by nature centers around "these things." Just take a look around you and then at yourself. What do you see? Everyone is seeking the pleasure of this world. Note the large increase in recreational vehicles, equipment, and parks. Look at the time spent on sports in all its variety of manifestations. And look again at the whole field of entertainment. Everyone is looking for a way to be amused. That is only one sphere of life. What about today's emphasis on luxury? The old stand-bys are no longer good enough; everyone needs the best whether he can afford it or not. That is right, the whole world is going crazy in its seeking and in its worrying about food, clothing, luxury, and pleasure. This, however, we must know, namely, that the kingdom of darkness which is characterized as such is destined to be destroyed along with all those that are its subjects and seek it.

We as God's people must not be dismayed, as if to think that this kingdom of the devil is the only one in existence. God by grace through His Son re-established His kingdom. That kingdom is now here, although it will not be perfected until all is consummated in the new heavens and the new earth. Nevertheless, it is here and we must seek it now in antithesis to the kingdom of darkness which the Lord hates. As far as this kingdom is concerned we know that God is its King. It pulsates with His life "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Rom. 11:36. Under

God is Christ, the blessed Mediator between God and man. As the Christ He was eternally ordained of the Father to this place, that in Him the fulness of the Godhead should dwell bodily, and that He should be the fount of every blessing for all the redeemed. In His blood He crushed the kingdom of Satan and merited the righteousness that could satisfy God. Thus, the kingdom of God is realized by the Spirit of Christ in the hearts of men. Christ alone, then, rules. As you perhaps have already surmised, the subjects of this kingdom are the believers. Into our hearts the Spirit of Christ must come to renew our hearts and dethrone the devil who has set up reign there. With this new life we belong to and are citizens of that heavenly kingdom.

The youth today use a common phrase: "be right with God" or whatever else they happen to be talking about. Did it ever occur to you that that is what righteousness is? I ask this question because the kingdom that we are talking about is a kingdom of righteousness. To be righteous, one must be in legal harmony with God, that is, his sins must be forgiven. He must also be in spiritual harmony with God, that is, living in sanctification and obedience. Such is the kingdom of heaven where all is in harmony with God, where all live what they are by grace in Jesus Christ.

This kingdom we are enjoined to seek. This means more than simply having our names recorded in the records of some church. This means more than having a passing acquaintance with what is going on in the church. Again, seeking the kingdom involves more than outwardly cooperating with this or that kingdom cause, or contributing of our abundance to the church or some institution of mercy. Rather, to seek the kingdom means that we want that kingdom with our whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. We desire to live the life of the kingdom, serve its God, love its Mediator, and obey its laws. Now to seek that kingdom *first* does not mean merely first in the order of time — that is, first seek the kingdom of God and then we may seek other things. Nor does it mean that if we want to succeed in gathering earthly treasures, then we must first seek God's kingdom.

Positively, to seek the kingdom of heaven *first* means to seek the kingdom of God as the fundamental principle of all our life. This is not just for our fathers and our mothers, and for our grandfathers and grandmothers, but for you young people and children as well. Young people, you must seek the welfare of God's church and kingdom when you seek a helpmeet. You cannot be seeking that kingdom by making an unholy alliance with the world or by being unequally yoked with the unbeliever. You must look ahead to the day also when covenant seed will be born, the church of tomorrow. Amalgamation with

the world will only yield a seed that is fit for destruction; thus you will not have advanced the cause of the kingdom. And if you are not working at some job now, you are perhaps seeking employment or soon will be. Here too the principle of seeking first the kingdom of heaven applies. Why do you want to work? You answer: that I may provide for a family with food, clothing, house, and whatever else is needed to "make a living." I also need work that I may support the church, the school, and various institutions of mercy. This is all true. But do you realize that you work in God's world as God's servants using God's tools, and that all that is wrought must be rendered unto the Lord? That is right. Now do not immediately take your paycheck and put it in the collection plate. That is not what is meant by rendering all unto the Lord.

However, in your work you must consciously labor to the end that the gospel may be preached in order that all God's children may be gathered from the four corners of the earth. Then we will not give only of our abundance to the church. No, there must first come the church, whatever that may take, then of what is left we supply our family. God knows the needs of our daily life; He will supply them. The same holds true with respect to the desiring of a family. Why do you marry? You marry that together as husband and wife in the Lord you may walk in covenant relation before God as a picture of the relationship between God and His people, and between Christ and His church. Further, you seek to bring forth covenant seed out of which God will gather His children. But in this area we so often let our carnality show. One puts off the begetting of children so that both husband and wife can work in order that "these things" may be paid for. As soon as the house, the car, the furniture, etc., are paid for, then we can think about the expense of children. Covenant youth, please do not look forward in your life with these ideas in your mind. See how selfish and self-centered they are? God's kingdom must be the governing principle in our lives which will dictate the way you and I must go. To say that the children have to wait so that you can have "these things" is telling God that you are more concerned about yourself than about Him. Thus, top priority in our lives must be given to the church in order that the gospel may be preached, the gospel which is God's power unto salvation, salvation which is necessary to enter into the heavenly kingdom. Top priority must also be given to the instruction of the covenant seed which God pleases to give unto us. Not just any instruction, but instruction which is covenantal. The old excuse of "I can not afford it" simply does not hold. Covenant instruction is included in our calling to seek first the kingdom of God. This may mean less of "these things" or going to the deacons, but it is our

calling, and one which God always gives us the means to fulfill. We do not always see this, but that is the way of faith. It belongs to the righteousness of the kingdom to labor with all our might and talents for the temporal maintenance which God has entrusted to our care. But while we do so we do not set our hearts on these things, but on the kingdom of God. We do not *seek* things that are below, but of the kingdom of God.

Living a life of seeking the kingdom is not without fruit. Jesus, in the same passage in which He admonishes us to seek first the kingdom of heaven, tells us that by so doing "all these things shall be added unto you." Christ is speaking about food, drink, and clothing, the things that the Gentiles seek, but we are exhorted not to seek. God, you understand, created us; He knows what our bodies need. He has so ordained them that they are to be sustained by earthly bread, etc. Then we can conclude that as long as God has a purpose for us here on the earth He also will provide the means whereby we are sustained. Therefore, we may not worry about them, for they will be added unto you and me. This certainly is not a guarantee that because we seek the kingdom we are going to have an abundance of earthly goods — in other words, that it pays to be a Christian. That is not true and that is not our experience, for as a rule it does not pay to be a Christian. It does not take long for us to recognize that the vast bulk of the earthly treasures are in the hands of the ungodly. In fact the Bible teaches that the believer will have less because the world will hate him to the point where he will not be able to buy or to sell. But Christ gives us the assurance that we shall not want, as far as our temporal needs are concerned, because our Father in heaven knows we have need of them and will provide them. He will accomplish that through the means of your daily work; and if not, then He has other means. We may have to turn to the diaconate; if so, that is the way of God. Whatever the case may be, we will always have enough to carry us to the end of our pilgrimage. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Therefore, young people, do not worry about these things, but seek ye first the kingdom of heaven. Pray unto the Lord for your *daily* bread and be satisfied with that. Being content in the Lord is a fruit of seeking the kingdom; we will have the peace that surpasses all understanding. Trust in the Lord and He shall direct thy paths.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Redlands, California, expresses its sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Abel Vander Veen in the loss of her mother, MRS. RENA VAN DALFSEN. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:17).

Rev. Jason Kortering, Pres.
Mrs. Otto Gastra, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

Professor Herman Hanko, now teaching in our Seminary, has declined his call to become pastor of First Church in Grand Rapids. Our church in Randolph, Wisconsin, has extended a call to Candidate Kenneth Koole. Rev. Ronald Van Overloop, pastor of Hope Church in Walker, Michigan, has accepted the request of our Synodical Committee for Contact with Other Churches to labor in Christchurch, New Zealand for a period of nine or ten months. Permission for this rather special 'loan' of their pastor has been granted by the Hope Church Council. Rev. Van Overloop and his family plan to leave for New Zealand in early December.

First Church bid their pastor and his family farewell on October 28 with a short program and a reception afterward (with the customary coffee and refreshments). Rev. Van Baren was presented with gifts of a grandfather clock and a check. In his remarks, Rev. Van Baren said that he had often been asked how many baptisms he had performed, how many marriages, etc. He thought the farewell program an appropriate time to reveal the list. During his twelve years as pastor of First Church, Rev. Van Baren performed 33 marriages, 101 baptisms, heard 94 confessions of faith, and preached 64 funeral sermons.

Rev. Van Baren was installed as pastor of our Hudsonville Church on November 6. On November 1 Hudsonville scheduled an appreciation program for Rev. Cornelius Hanko, who had been serving as their pastor, but who has recently been retired from the pastorate. Rev. Hanko has hardly 'retired' in the complete sense of the word, however. He continues to preach and write and also is teaching part time in our Seminary. Rev. Hanko plans to continue living in the Hudsonville area.

The undersigned has always considered some of Rev. Hanko's bulletin announcements "just a little bit special." For example with the announcement of an upcoming marriage, this was added: "As this couple sets out on the sea of matrimony may Christ be their Pilot, His Word their compass, their goal the Haven of Rest."

In addition to the Reformation Day lecture sponsored by our Churches in the Michigan area, several other observances of this day were scheduled in other of our churches. The South Holland, Illinois, Church Men's Society sponsored a lecture by Rev. John Heys

of Holland, Michigan, on the topic "The Splitting and Splintering in Modern Protestantism." Our church in Isabel, South Dakota, sponsored a lecture by their pastor, Rev. Rodney Miersma, on the theme "The Reformation and The Holy Scriptures." Rev. Wayne Bekkering, pastor of our church in Houston, Texas, lectured on "The Reformation - A Deliverance From Bondage." In Loveland, Colorado, Rev. George Lanting lectured on "The Reformation and Its Significance for Today." A lecture was also scheduled in northwest Iowa, and quite likely in other places but about which no word has yet been received.

The Houston bulletin carried a note that our Synodical Mission Committee is preparing to send emissaries to Jamaica to aid the saints on that island as soon as possible.

Some of the special meeting and programs held in our churches during the Fall season included the following: The Western Ladies' League met in Edgerton, Minnesota, on November 1. Rev. Slopsema spoke on "Contentment Linked With Godliness," from I Timothy 6:6-8. On November 10, the staff and student bodies of our Christian Schools in Edgerton, Hull, and Doon met for a combined chapel service in Hull. The Mr. and Mrs. Societies League Mass Meeting was held in Hudsonville on October 18. Rev. C. Hanko gave an excellent and thought-provoking speech on "The Spiritual Life of the Family." Rev. Hanko also spoke for the Classis East Office Bearers Conference on October 4. His topic was "Christian Liberty; Its Use in Our Churches." Combined Mens' and Ladies' League Mass Meeting was held in Hope Church on October 11. Rev. H. Veldman spoke on "The Coming of Anti-Christ." The Sunday School Teachers Fall Mass Meeting was held on October 3 in First Church. Rev. G. Van Baren spoke on "Faithfulness to The Word."

Occasionally rather "down to earth," or should we say "up on the ceiling" announcements appear in the various bulletins. Here are a couple examples: "Tomorrow evening we will have our annual fall church cleaning. Please bring mops, buckets, ladders, or whatever you feel is necessary. Many hands make light and enjoyable work." That from Isabel. "Volunteer help and trucks are needed to haul the newly purchased seats (for the Loveland Church auditorium) from Arvada on Monday evening, October 31."

K.G.V.