

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... we must, in a good sense of the word, broaden our outlook, gain an appreciation for traditions other than those of Dutch Calvinists, consider carefully the problems and struggles which others face in other lands so that we can be appreciative of them and recognize that they vary from our own, and (to use the words of Paul) become all things to all men if by any means we might save some.

See "Our Calling in Today's
Ecclesiastical World" — page 53

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THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.

Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

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Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

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Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

MEDITATION

Sarah's Faith to Conceive Seed

Rev. H. Veldman

"Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

"Therefore sprang there even of one and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable."

Heb. 11:11-12

Why is this scripture recorded here? Why is Sarah mentioned as a heroine of faith? Of course, we must permit this text to stand as it is. Some would read it

as follows: "By faith also with Sarah Abraham received ability for the conceiving of seed when he was past age." The emphasis, then, falls upon

Abraham. This interpretation cannot stand. It is simply an attempt to avoid the difficulty inasmuch as they would maintain that the conceiving of seed belongs to the man. The text, however, declares that the woman here receives strength for the conceiving of seed.

But, according to Genesis 18:12-15 Sarah laughed in unbelief. How, then, can it be said of her that she believed and judged the Lord to be faithful Who had promised? This explains why this text is recorded here. Sarah also believed.

* * * * *

Sarah believed? Does not the divine record tell us that she laughed and that, therefore, she did not believe? Why, then, do we read her name here, in Hebrews 11, among the heroes and heroines of faith?

To conceive seed, we understand, is a physical act. The text tells us that Sarah received strength to conceive seed by faith. But, to conceive seed is not simply an act of faith. Women do not conceive seed simply by believing. The conceiving of seed is not a spiritual but a physical act. The question is, therefore, surely pertinent: what does the holy writer mean when he writes that Sarah conceived by faith? Besides, she laughed and therefore did not believe.

Of Sarah we read that she was "past age." Literally we read: contrary to age. She was now eighty-nine years old; she had reached that age when the bringing forth of children had become impossible. And this also applied to Abraham. We read of Abraham in this text that he was "one as good as dead."

And now she did not believe. Abraham and Sarah had received the promise. Indeed, they had received this promise already in Mesopotamia. Later the promise had been repeated several times. Jehovah had promised them an innumerable seed. For several years it was not too difficult for them to embrace this promise. Upon entering the land of Canaan Abraham was seventy-five years old and Sarah was sixty-five years of age. The bringing forth of a child at that time was not humanly impossible. But now they had become old. To be sure, they had pelagian-wise, attempted to assist the Lord in the fulfillment of His promise. When Abraham and Sarah were eighty-five years and seventy-five years old respectively, Sarah had proposed to her husband to take Hagar to wife, thinking that Hagar's son, the son of her servant, would be considered her son and serve as the heir. But, this was unsuccessful. The Lord informed them that Ishmael would not be the promised seed. And now they had come to a state of utter hopelessness. Abraham was ninety-nine years old and Sarah eighty-nine when the Lord, accompanied by two angels, visited them at Mamre. Indeed, this visit surely revealed that Sarah was past age. It is not so that she

now doubted whether they would have a son, that there was still a glimmer of hope in her. No, the Bible tells us that it had ceased to be with her after the manner of women. At first, Sarah's and Abraham's faith in the fulfillment of the promise was not exclusively a matter of faith. At first, this fulfillment had also been considered physically possible. They thought that they could fulfill this promise of Jehovah. This also appears from the fact that Sarah gave Abraham her servant, Hagar, to be his wife. Had Sarah given up all hope as far as she was concerned, she did not consider it hopeless from the viewpoint of Abraham. Now, however, all has changed. Abraham, too, was as good as dead. And Ishmael was not to be the heir. And when the Lord came to Abraham at Mamre, Sarah laughed when she heard the Lord tell her husband that they would have a son. This was unbelief. She did not believe the promise of the Lord.

So, the question must be asked: how must this faith of Sarah be explained? Hebrews 11 places her in the ranks of those who act by the power of faith. Genesis 19 holds her before us as one who did not believe the word of the Lord. Yet, we read that by faith she received strength unto the conceiving of seed. She had become completely impotent. Now, however, she believes. And by her faith her physical desire and strength return. She is again able to conceive and have a son.

What did Sarah believe?

First, she judged, or considered, God faithful Who had promised. This means, on the one hand, that she judged the Lord to be able to fulfill it. God would surely not give a promise He could not fulfill. And, secondly, the Lord would not fail her. He would be faithful to His promise. Sarah believed in God's unchangeable faithfulness. Secondly, Sarah, mind you, judged this *now*. She judged this when she was past age, when the fulfillment of God's promise had become a matter of life arising out of death.

This also applies to us. Indeed, for us, too, God's promise is a matter of life out of death. We are by nature dead in sins and in trespasses. And what do we believe? Today people speak of God's promise as a general offer of salvation. But, what do we believe? We believe that we are hopelessly and helplessly lost in sin. We believe that God is able to save us and fulfill His promise. Indeed, He did save us upon the cross. And we also believe that He is able to fulfill it in us, being God Almighty, and that He will save us to the uttermost, in heavenly glory and immortality.

* * * * *

How was this faith of Sarah effected?

The purpose of the Lord's visit to Abraham at Mamre is obvious. This visit did not concern Abraham primarily. On the one hand, the Lord had already

appeared to Abraham according to Genesis 17. Then the Lord had told Abraham that his wife would bear him a son. And Abraham had believed and had submitted himself and all that were born in his house to the rite of circumcision. And, on the other hand, the Lord immediately asks Abraham: where is Sarah, thy wife? Hence, what the Lord tells Abraham is obviously intended for the ears of Sarah. The incident at Mamre, therefore, concerns primarily Sarah.

Now we know that Sarah had not believed. True, for a long time she had undoubtedly cleaved to the word of the promise of the Lord. Day after day she had lived in the expectation of the fulfillment of the Lord's promise to her and Abraham. But her faith had not always been the evidence of things unseen, and the substance of things hoped for. She had believed the word of the Lord as long as the fulfillment of the promise had appeared to her as humanly possible. But now she had given up on the promise of the Lord. She was becoming older and the prospects of a son were becoming dimmer. In unbelief she had suggested to her husband that he take Hagar to be his wife. And, now, at Mamre, she laughed in unbelief.

What now had happened that she believed?

How wonderful is faith! How often the people of God experience the power of faith in times when everything appears hopeless.

First, the word of the Lord had come to her at Mamre. Secondly, the Lord operated in Sarah. He not only revealed Isaac's birth to her, but also accompanied this revelation by His Spirit and grace, working in her, removing her unbelief. And, thirdly, through faith she received strength to conceive seed. She believed the word of the Lord. She believed Him to be faithful Who had promised. Her faith was the evidence of the things invisible. And so she received strength to conceive seed. She trusted in God that He would make her dead womb alive again. She submitted to the word of the Lord and was eager to have a child, and this in spite of the fact that she was almost ninety years old. "Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead," or, literally, "Therefore sprang there even of one (Abraham) and

them (Abraham and Sarah) as good as dead." Believing in God, through that faith, Abraham and Sarah were made alive again, so that a son could be born to them.

We must also apply this to ourselves. We must believe the word of the Lord. How much richer is the word of God as we have it today in the scriptures than what Abraham received at Mamre! Jesus has come, has suffered and died and is risen again, and is now exalted at the right hand of the power of God. Indeed, we have the fulfillment of the promise in Christ Jesus, our Lord. And that Word also speaks to us of things invisible. It speaks to us of the forgiveness of our sins, life, and glory everlasting in the new heavens and upon the new earth. But we believe and trust that God is faithful. He will surely fulfill His promise in us. And, in that faith, be it against all odds, and seemingly all things are against us, we will fight even unto the end, believing that the victory is certain and the crown sure.

* * * * *

This faith of Sarah was rewarded. Its immediate result, of course, was that she became a mother.

Greater, of course, is the other result mentioned in this particular word of God. We read here of an innumerable company. But, please note the character of this innumerable company. The text refers to the promise given Abraham, it refers to the elect of God out of all nations, peoples, tribes, and tongues. However, this people is born of God, through the power of faith. And faith is not something Sarah had; it was given unto her. This people, therefore, has its inception in the miraculous birth of Isaac. Isaac, according to Romans 9, is the child of the promise, born through the wonder of the promise, a child of God's wonderful grace, as it operated through the faith of Abraham and Sarah, God's gift to them.

And what is true of Isaac is true of all this seed of Abraham. We bring forth children like unto ourselves, dead in sins and in trespasses. But God calls His own from our children, until one day the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ will be full and His Church shall have been gathered unto the praise and glory of His wonderful grace.

Know the standard and follow it.

Read the STANDARD BEARER!



GUEST EDITORIAL

Our Calling in Today's Ecclesiastical World

Prof. H. Hanko

(Editor's Note. Because of an abundance of material for this issue, some of which should not be delayed, we give our editorial space to this transcript of Prof. Hanko's address to the annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association. In this guest editorial my colleague states some things, I believe, which need saying and from which our readers may well benefit. HCH)

In the past two decades, there has been some shift in emphasis in our churches. Our calling has been, in some respects, significantly altered because the Lord is calling us to new fields of labor. For many years, as Protestant Reformed Churches, we spent a great deal of time consolidating our position, developing the truth which God had given to us, and combatting heresy even as it arose in our own circles. Insofar as we paid attention to churches outside our own sphere, we paid special attention to the Christian Reformed Church, our mother denomination, and spent much of our time and energy in pointing that church to her errors and calling to the faithful to leave her and come with us.

This has been changing in recent years. The change came about, first of all, with the calling to work in Jamaica. Since that time we have had increased contacts with and increased callings to labor in other spheres: among Presbyterians in the South, where Rev. van Overloop is now working; among Chinese in Singapore; among people from Presbyterian background in New Zealand and Australia.

As we shift our emphasis in order to be obedient to these callings, certain problems have come up within our fellowship which have tended somewhat to stymie our labors and which have served as obstacles which we must overcome if we are to perform the work which God gives us to do. These problems have

their origin in the fact that we have, perhaps somewhat unconsciously, the notion that the only people who can really be faithful to the Scriptures are Calvinists of the Reformed faith who have their roots in the Netherlands and are not too far removed from Dutch speaking forbears. The fear is that, should we extend our influence beyond these narrow confines, we will surely sacrifice our heritage and fall prey to false doctrine. Better it is, so the reasoning goes, to stay within our own small circles, shout occasionally at the evils in our mother Church, and confine ourselves to the task of limiting our labors to Protestant Reformed congregations.

It is my contention tonight that we ought not be this way, and that we must bend every effort to avert this kind of narrow parochialism which will vitiate our labors.

In order to do this, we must, in a good sense of the word, broaden our outlook, gain an appreciation for traditions other than those of Dutch Calvinists, consider carefully the problems and struggles which others face in other lands so that we can be appreciative of them and recognize that they vary from our own, and (to use the words of Paul) become all things to all men if by any means we might save some.

To this matter I wish to address your attention. I am aware of the fact, of course, that this does not directly affect our *Standard Bearer*, and that, perhaps, this is not the ideal forum for saying these things; but in defense of my choice of topic I want to remind you, first of all, that the *Standard Bearer* is vitally a part of all this and ought to continue to be such; and, secondly, that neither our churches nor the *Standard Bearer* can get on with the task without the wholehearted support of all our people.

There are a few truths concerning the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ to which our attention must, first of all, be directed and which shall serve as a foundation for what we have to say.

In a sense, these truths all come down to the one truth of the catholicity of the Church of Christ. It is not my intention tonight to deal at length with this remarkable and astonishing truth concerning the Church of our Lord; but a few points are worth our notice.

The catholicity of the Church fundamentally implies her unity. There cannot be, in the Church of Christ, true catholicity unless there is also a fundamental unity. This unity of the Church is the unity of Christ the Head of the Church. The whole body of Christ is one, only because the whole body has Christ as the Head. This unity comes to expression especially in the unity of one faith, for all the Church of Christ is united in this one, central, and fundamental point: all the Church believes the same truth, for all the truth of God is in Christ Himself, and union with Christ is possible only through the truth of which Christ is the full revelation.

But that very unity is the unity of the body of Christ. And so the catholicity of the Church implies, at the same time as unity, a very wide diversity. If you have a thousand identical pieces of board you never have a unity among those pieces even though you pile them all atop each other. If you have a thousand identical leaves, you never have a tree, because to have a tree you must have branches and trunk and roots. If you have a thousand identical Christians you can never have a unity which can be compared with a body. For that kind of unity you need Christians who are different from each other, even though (and just because) they are held together in a unity by their one confession of the truth as it is in Christ and as we have it in the Holy Scriptures.

God has ordained that that kind of catholicity of the Church comes about by means of a Church which, after Pentecost, is gathered from every nation and tribe and tongue. The Church is most surely a catholic Church, and its catholicity is due to its wide diversity within its principle unity.

That means that there has got to be more in the Church than white Dutch Calvinists of Reformed background. The Church has got to include Germans and Swedes and Italians and Jews and all the rest. And, even more strikingly, that Church has got to include blacks and yellows as well as whites. Others need us, for we too are part of the Church. But let it never be forgotten that we need them as well, for they too are part of the Church.

Now all of this is rather elementary. I doubt very much whether there is anyone here who disagrees

with this. I do wonder sometimes whether, while we pay lip service to this truth, we really, in our hearts, would wish that it were not so. But be that as it may, on this we are, I think, agreed.

But there is another aspect to this question. That Church which has such a wide diversity must express itself also in such a way that that diversity comes to manifestation. As I was talking about the Church up to this point I was really talking about what we call the organism of the Church. I want now to say something about the institute of the Church. The body of Christ comes to manifestation in this world in institutional form. That is, it is always the calling of the believers in Christ to manifest themselves in the world by adopting the institute of the Church, the pattern for which we have in the Scriptures. The Church must get organized. It must be constituted into a congregation with officebearers, so that the Word of Christ can be proclaimed in that Church and go forth from that Church in an official way. That Church takes on the marks of the true Church only when that Church organizes herself into an institute. How can you have the pure preaching of the Word, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline unless you have a congregation with ministers, elders, and deacons and the gathering of believers and their seed?

It is the burden of what I have to say tonight that this institutional Church must also manifest herself so that her diversity remains intact.

There is something natural and inevitable about this. God sees to it that this is exactly what happens. It is our calling to recognize this, appreciate it, and strive earnestly to maintain it. Let me explain.

In the history of the Church prior to the Reformation there was an effort made to maintain the Church in some kind of institutional unity. For many centuries, from a certain point of view, these efforts were successful. That is, there was really only one single denomination which we now call the Roman Catholic Church. But even in those days of institutional unity, there was really no true unity. For, although the Church was one in a formal, institutional way, nevertheless, there were important differences of many kinds, especially between the Eastern Church and Western Church which really made two separate denominations. So clear-cut were these divisions, that they were, in fact, finally recognized and the Church went through what is now called the Great Schism of 1054. After that date, especially the Western Church did remain one institutionally as it was founded throughout all of Europe. But here too the differences between various national parts of the Church were so great that the unity was in some outward form only. And indeed, the efforts to preserve even this outward form of

unity resulted in untold heresies with which the Romish Church was corrupted in the time before the Reformation. The Church of Germany, e.g., was quite different in many important respects from the church of Italy. And the Church in Italy was, in its own way, quite different from the Church in France or in England.

The Reformation brought about a change of thinking in this respect. The Reformers, while seeking sometimes closer institutional unity for purposes of combining their forces against the threat of Rome, nevertheless did not press for this institutional unity as the *sine qua non* of church fellowship. Calvin in Geneva recognized fully the churches of England, Scotland, the Palatinate, the Netherlands, Bohemia, etc. even though he had no formal institutional ties with them.

The point was that as the Reformation took root in every different land, the Church developed along different lines. These lines along which the Church developed were determined in large measure by the particular historical circumstances which brought about the Reformation in these lands, by the history of the people within these countries and by the customs, habits, and mores of those who were to constitute the membership of these churches. The result was that there was a remarkable and astonishing agreement between all these churches in matters of the truth of Scripture. One need only to read the creeds of the French, Scotch, English, Dutch, and German churches to find out how close was this unity of the truth. But while there was agreement on these questions of the truth, there were also many differences between them. There were differences in emphasis — even emphasis on doctrine. The Dutch churches, in the heat of the Arminian controversy, produced the Canons of Dordt with its so-called five points of Calvinism — something which no other church anywhere produced. There were differences in church order. The form of presbyterian church government produced and developed among presbyterians is somewhat different from that which arose out of the struggle for religious liberty in the Netherlands. There were differences of many kinds.

This is as it should be. As God plants His Church in different lands and countries, in different cultures and among different peoples, God puts His Church in these lands that that Church may be a witness to His truth to the people in that place; for it is His purpose to gather His Church from these people. To witness effectively to these people so that the elect may be gathered, the Church must be a truly indigenous Church, for else it will not be a successful witness or a means to gather God's people in that place. As an indigenous Church it must take differences of expression, differences of form, differences of

emphasis, differences which express fully the catholicity of the Church and which make it a fit tool in the hands of God to gather a catholic body of Christ.

Our Church Order recognizes this fact when it speaks of the truth that "Churches whose usages differ from ours merely in non-essentials shall not be rejected." (Article 85) I am aware of the fact that it is not always so easy for us to tell the difference between "essentials" and "non-essentials"; but I fear that, while it is true that much of the ecclesiastical world usually brushes aside true essentials as non-essentials, we have a tendency to do the opposite. However that may be, the point is that here lies our calling.

The goal of the Church of Christ is not the kind of ecumenicity which is expressed in outward institutional unity. We do not pursue such goals, nor ought we. It is better, healthier, more in keeping with the nature of the Church that the Church throughout the world remain separated in denomination and congregational institutions than that she come together under one broad and all-encompassing institutional roof. The latter is not only impossible; it is not desirable and ought not to be our goal.

Let Presbyterians remain Presbyterians and let Reformed remain Reformed. This fact cannot alter the unity which we have in Christ.

All of this places upon us a burden.

I can, I think, best get at this question by facing the negative. There is a lingering attitude among us, on the one hand, that we can really have fellowship and contact only with those who are like us in every respect, i.e., with those who are in every way Protestant Reformed. If these people are not Protestant Reformed, they are, *ipso facto*, suspect. And until such a time as they become Protestant Reformed, they are beyond the pale of our notice and concern and outside the possibility of ecclesiastical fellowship. On the other hand, if we are successfully to do any work among others, this kind of work must be geared to making people Protestant Reformed in every respect. They must become — and to all this our labors ought to be geared — like us in confession, every aspect of walk, every expression of doctrine, and, indeed, even in matters of Christian liberty. If our work is not geared to that goal, we are remiss in our duty and suffer under the ever present threat that we will lose our heritage.

It is this danger which will, if it persists, threaten our calling in these times in which we live.

Insofar as we are called by God to witness throughout the world to the truth, we are called to do this in such a way that we recognize this wide diversity which does and must exist within the body

of Christ also as it comes to institutional manifestation.

We labor in this country. Our labors are especially geared to calling out of apostatizing churches a faithful remnant. Up to this point in our history we have labored almost exclusively among those who are of Dutch Reformed background. There was little problem in all this, for those among whom we labored were much like us and the problem scarcely existed. But now this work has gradually been extended to Presbyterian denominations. This presents a problem, for the people with whom we shall have to work are not Dutchmen, Reformed, and Calvinists. We come up against a people with different ecclesiastical background, with a different heritage, with different ways of thinking and different ways of expressing themselves. Common grace does not mean the same thing down south as it means in Grand Rapids among Christian Reformed people. Here it is downright heresy. There it may be heresy too, but it may be nothing but an incorrect way of expressing a truth which we all believe. Here it means the destruction of the antithesis and a denial of total depravity. There it often means nothing more than providence. And, while it may be incorrect to call providence grace, the debate centers on the correctness of terminology, not the truth versus the lie.

It may be that within our own country God wills that we all become one institutionally, for we are now united in a common purpose within the confines of our country. God will bring about that unity; but only if we reckon with the fact that Presbyterians, if they are bound by the Scriptures have something to teach us just as well as we have something to teach them. And the unity achieved will be richer and more blessed because we have been enriched by each other.

The same is true as our outreach extends beyond the boundaries of the United States. As you all know, we have contact with churches in many different countries of the world. Each has its own peculiar calling of God.

It is precisely this fact which controls the work which God calls us to do also among people of other

racess. We have worked long in Jamaica and are about to begin work in Singapore. The people there are from an entirely different race and their background, character, and nationality are fundamentally different from our own. While indeed God calls us to labor so that these people in these areas are instructed in the truth, we must nevertheless, remember that we may not attempt to make them Protestant Reformed in the sense of a church in the Grand Rapids area. It is the burden of our calling to teach them to develop into congregations which will grow indigenously so that they can be effective witnesses in the area in which God has placed them.

This will require of us no little work. We shall have to learn all we possibly can about them: about their background, their character, their own unique life which they live in their culture. We shall have to appreciate these differences, recognize them for what they are, adapt ourselves to them, and labor with much wisdom to preserve their own identity.

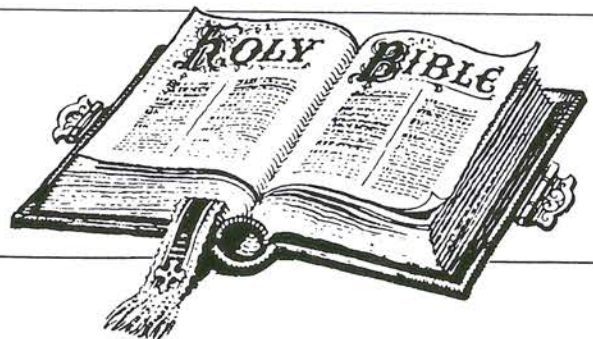
This will take, on the part of those who labor there, much sanctified wisdom. They shall have to be able to distinguish clearly between what is essential and what is non-essential; between what belongs to the basic unity of the Church of Christ and what belongs to the diversity of manifestation. This is not an enviable task, for it will be difficult at best.

Yet the best way in which this can be accomplished is that we, here at home, do the same. If we are indeed to support these many labors unto which the Lord has called us, we shall have to do this by becoming ourselves acquainted as much as possible with the differences in background so that we too can appreciate what it means that God gathers into the one Church a diversity of members from every nation and tribe and tongue.

If we do not do this we shall be frightened to enter the work; we shall obstruct the work at every turn with our objections; we shall try to draw back into our shells; and we shall make ourselves unworthy of our calling. God forbid that this happens.

We live in exciting times and we have been singularly blessed by God. Let us move forward with faith that God will use us to accomplish His purpose.

**The STANDARD BEARER
makes a thoughtful gift
for a shut-in.**



Question Box

Rev. C. Hanko

A reader asks:

What is the meaning of the similarity in the expression of Micaiah found in I Kings 22:17, "Israel scattered upon the hills as sheep having not a shepherd," and that of Matt. 9:36, "the multitude scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd"?

These two expressions obviously point to similar occasions.

In I Kings 22:17 these words are spoken in connection with the prophecy of Micaiah concerning the tragic end of wicked king Ahab. As you know, Ahab had begged Jehoshaphat to join him in war against the Syrians. Jehoshaphat foolishly consented, but not without fear and trepidations. It may have been a common practice for Jehoshaphat to seek the approval of Jehovah before going to battle, but in this instance when the alliance with wicked Ahab was bad enough, but besides that, he was also risking his own life and his army in battle, he was especially eager to seek the approval of the Lord. Ahab was well prepared for such a situation. Scripture informs us, that even though Ahab had made the Baal worship the national religion of Israel, he himself still had *his own* prophets of Jehovah, which he also consulted. (verses 22,23). These prophets knew how to cater to the whims of the king by speaking the things that Ahab wanted to hear, while still, as tool of Satan, they pretended to bring the word of Jehovah. There was one exception, of whom Ahab said, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Evidently he had quite recently spoken the Word of the Lord to Ahab and was therefore placed in prison. Now he is called out of prison to warn the king that he will die in battle, and then he is sent back. As a warning to Ahab Micaiah says, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house."

In Matthew 9:36 we read: "But when he (Jesus)

saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." In the previous verse we are told that Jesus went about all the cities and villages (of Galilee) teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease among the people." Mark informs us that at this time large crowds of people forced themselves upon Jesus, giving Him little time to be alone. (Mark 6:33). Among these people were those who were merely interested in seeing signs and wonders, or were hoping that Jesus might deliver them from the power of the Roman government by setting up an earthly kingdom. But there were also elect children of God, who were weary and heavy laden because of the burden of their sins and hungered after the true Bread of life. These starved and languished under the empty teachings of the scribes. When they heard Jesus preach concerning the kingdom of heaven, and saw His preaching confirmed by His miracles, they pressed upon Him, seeking their salvation in Him. Yet the time had not come for the full revelation of salvation. Jesus still had to suffer and die, arise again, and ascend to glory. It was on Pentecost that the full blessing of salvation came to these hungering souls with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Therefore Jesus was filled with compassion for them, for they were still like sheep without a shepherd. In the verses that follow He says, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into the harvest."

Both of these passages actually refer back to Numbers 27:16, 17. There Moses had come to the end of his earthly ministry and would soon pass away. As a faithful servant of Jehovah he is concerned about the future welfare of God's people. Therefore he pleads with the Lord, "Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead

them out, and which may lead them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd." From this passage it is evident that the worst thing that can happen to Israel, or to the church of God at any time, is that they are as sheep without a shepherd. A faithful shepherd leads the sheep out of the sheep fold to allow them to graze in green pastures. He also leads them back to the safety of the fold. Ahab failed to do this. In fact, he did the very opposite, leading Israel away from God into the arid desert wastes of Baal worship. Therefore the Lord would kill him in battle. The prophet Micaiah obviously is not concerned about wicked Ahab, but is concerned about the sheep of God's flock who wander about the hills like wasted, lost sheep. There was a similar situation at the time of Jesus, since the scribes fed the people stones for bread. Therefore these hungry souls pressed upon Jesus, and Jesus looked forward eagerly to His accomplished work on the cross, that He might ascend to the Father to send forth His Spirit upon the church at Pentecost. Today there are many lost sheep "of the house of Israel" who wander about like sheep without a shepherd, scattered and driven apart by false teachers. Well may we pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest. The end of the ages is drawing near.

The same reader who sent in a question about Matthew 9:36 also asks:

"Does Matthew 9:37,38 emphasize in connection with Matthew 9:36 a famine of the Word or a shortage of laborers (preachers) or both?"

In the context in which Jesus speaks of praying for laborers in the vineyard, it can well be said that the emphasis falls on the famine of the Word rather than on a shortage of laborers, or preachers. Verse 36 speaks of the fact that Jesus had compassion upon the multitude, because they were harassed and spent with exhaustion, they were like sheep without a shepherd. The teachers in Israel were like hirelings who allowed the sheep to scatter and wander about in confusion, failing to lead them in the green pasture of the Word of the prophets. Whereupon we read, "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few."

From the point of view that God supplies the laborers for His vineyard, there can never be a lack of laborers to carry out His divine purpose. God's cause never suffers because God fails to supply it with preachers or under-shepherds of Jesus Christ. But the point of view of the text is exactly that those whose duty it was to feed the sheep in Israel failed in their

calling. They were false teachers who led the sheep astray, committing them to the dangers of thorns and thistles and wild animals in the wilderness in which they hopelessly wandered. The true sheep of Jesus Christ were fully aware of this, so that when they heard Jesus speak they eagerly heard Him, longed to hear more, clamored with spiritual hunger for the Bread of life. When John the Baptist came preaching and teaching, thereby opening the door of the kingdom of heaven, the true people of God were like the violent who stormed into the kingdom. Thus also when Jesus came, they recognized the fact that Jesus spoke with authority, and not like the scribes. Jesus is deeply aware of this hunger for the Word, not only among those who crowded upon Him at the moment, but also among all the true sons of Abraham. The church saw the dawning of the new day, and eagerly awaited its coming through the cross and resurrection, the ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Even though they did not fully understand how and when Christ would enter into His kingdom, they did long for that day.

In this connection a few remarks are not out of place.

First, God is the Lord of the harvest. He gathers His own harvest by sending out laborers to work in His vineyard. A person must be called and qualified by the Holy Spirit to carry out this work.

Second, God requires of us that we pray that He may send forth laborers. It is through the prayers of His church that God carries out His work. He does not work independently, but creates in the hearts of His people the need and the prayer, and also answers those prayers in harmony with His will and the desire of His people. Think, for example, of Hannah's prayer for a son, or even on Revelation 8:1-8.

Third, this implies that the church at all times, but especially in such crucial times of apostasy in which we are living, eagerly desires and prays that the Lord of the harvest send forth laborers, in order that the Word of God may be proclaimed to the ends of the earth, God's church may be gathered and preserved, and His kingdom may come. True mission zeal is motivated by the longing for the coming of the Day of the Lord.

The same reader who sent in the previous questions about Matthew 9:36-38 also presents this question:

"Matthew speaks of the instructions in preaching and also of the giving of power which Jesus gives to his twelve disciples. Did the disciples go out to preach at this time? If so, how is this possible, seeing they did not understand the cross until after Jesus' death?"

Matthew 10 implies the calling to the discipleship

as recorded in Matthew 4:18-22, just before Jesus delivered the sermon on the mount. Now Jesus sends these disciples out to preach, entrusting to them the divine power to cast out unclean spirits, cleanse the lepers, heal all manner of sicknesses and diseases, and even to raise the dead. (see verses 1 and 8). Obviously the power to perform these miracles had to serve as a seal on their preaching.

There are at least three things that must not be overlooked.

First, the disciples must not bring their message to Samaritans and gentiles. Even though the time was drawing near for the gentiles to be gathered in, and for the church to become universal, this time had not yet come. Verse 5.

Second, the twelve must preach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, that is, to the elect of God among the Jews. The field of labor was limited to Galilee and Judea. Verse 6.

Finally, the specific message entrusted to the twelve at this time was, that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Vs. 7. This was the contents of John's

preaching as he prepared the way for the coming of the Savior. Now, as Luke puts it, the kingdom of heaven is come nigh unto them. Luke 10:9. This is God's kingdom. And therefore it is the kingdom of God's dear Son, Jesus Christ. It is spiritual and heavenly in character. Its citizens are the broken of heart, the poor in spirit, who mourn because of their sins, the meek who hunger and thirst after the righteousness that is in Christ Jesus, the merciful and the pure of heart who have peace with God and enjoy the hope of eternal life. That kingdom Christ would establish through His death and resurrection, and through His ascension when He would sit at the right hand of God on God's throne. That was the message that the twelve were told to proclaim to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Regardless of whether the disciples understood the details, or even whether the lost sheep understood the details, the message was clear, the kingdom of heaven was at hand, even drawing nigh. The true believers were being spiritually prepared for the new dispensation that was soon to be ushered in on Pentecost. Those who believed that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of the living God, could rejoice in that expectation.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

(In the last installment of this translation Kuyper was talking about the exercise of authority in the church. He had mentioned a *direct* authority, i.e., an authority by which Christ rules directly over His church. He concluded the last paragraph with the statement: "But also with the use of means the King exercises authority through men, and only this mediate authority is relevant here." Thus, he now turns to a discussion of mediate authority.)

This mediate authority this King exercises in two different ways, viz., either through the whole church, or through those in her midst who are clothed with the office. This takes place in such a way that the King grants His authority actually and really to the church as church. But at the same time He provides her with offices to which the church is bound in the

operation and exercise of this authority. Just as the ear ceases to hear and the eye ceases to see when the person to whom belongs that eye and ear loses his consciousness, so also those offices can no longer perform any spiritual function when the church grows cold and lifeless. And, vice versa, just as an awake and living person can neither hear nor see if the eye or ear is disabled or taken away, so also the church cannot let her granted authority function properly unless the organs of the office are developed in her. The correct and right proportion is precisely maintained in this way. All authority is in Jesus, is given by Him to the whole church, but is bound to the offices for its proper functioning. The church does not create these offices but she receives them,

just as also the body does not make the ear but is rather enriched and adorned by God with eye and ear. To proceed correctly it is necessary to distinguish between what part of authority the church exercises through the special office and what part of authority is bound to the office of believers. In addition to the particular function of the eye, the ear, the nose, the mouth, the brains, etc., there are also in the human body common functions such as generation of heat, perception, etc. And thus also in the church of Christ there are, alongside of each other, the common operations of the whole body of the church and the particular operations through her special offices. Both these common and particular exercises of authority extend over three areas, viz., over that of the means of grace, over the order of the church, and over discipline.

The church exercises authority in the area of the means of grace, in the first place, because she receives power to dispense the word and sacraments and to bind them on the conscience. This is the ministry of the keys in the preaching and through particular admonition, from which the sacrament as a seal of the Word must not be separated. But also, secondly, she does this through opposing that which these means of grace oppose, and by judging error and confessing the truth over against it. Without error there would be no confession. But now, because error always was, is now, and will ever be to the end, confession is inseparable from the essence of the church.

Likewise, the church exercises authority over the order which shall exist in her midst, and does that in two different ways, viz., first through the drawing up of a church order and composing further ordinances; and, secondly, through the execution of the articles of this church order and these additional ordinances.

And, finally, the church exercises authority over discipline. She does this, first, by rightly admonishing those who stray in doctrine or life, and, if need be, by punishment and excommunication. She does this, secondly, through reinstating the penitent in honor and through taking them into the circle where the full enjoyment of the means of grace is tasted.

Of this threefold power, the general authority which belongs to the whole church ought first to be considered; then the particular operation of this authority which is bound to the offices.

The following belong to the church as a whole. First, that which concerns *the means of grace*. Included in this is the obligation and the right to witness, to confess, to pray, and particularly to admonish, as also the freedom of prophecy. Concerning the *order of the church*. This includes the right of establishing a church, a right which belongs

to believers if there is no church or if the church which was there fell away. Further, in an already existing church, believers also have the right to judge concerning receiving attestations and admission to the Lord's Supper. They have the right to designate persons for office, to bring differences to classis and synod, to be present as listeners at ecclesiastical assemblies, to delegate deputies to other churches, to appoint guardians and keep an eye on the management of the churches' property. Thirdly, concerning the *administration of justice*. This includes the right of believers to exercise the first steps of discipline in particular differences, to withdraw from unfit fellow members and office bearers, to judge concerning excommunication and readmission, to protest against ungodly ecclesiastical conditions and demand remedies, or to proceed, if necessary, to the organization of one's own consistory whenever the church becomes aggrieved, and, finally, if the church appears to be entirely lost, to send to that sham or false church a letter of separation and to manifest the true church elsewhere.

On the other hand, the church is bound to the official offices for the particular authority in which ecclesiastical government comes to expression. Consequently, these rights belong to the office bearers: first, concerning the means of grace, they have the right to minister the Word with authority in the gathering of the congregation, to lift up supplications and prayers, to dispense the sacraments, and to decide concerning the confession of the church in ecclesiastical gatherings. Secondly, concerning the order of the church, they have the right to regulate the affairs of the church and establish rules of order, to direct the affairs of the church according to those regulations and execute the decisions. The office bearers or those delegated by them have the right to serve as officers in the gatherings of the congregation, to represent the church in meetings with other churches or in the gatherings of classis and synod, to examine matters coming to lower or higher assemblies and make decisions with respect to these matters, to confer the office on newly chosen persons who have been appointed to it and ordain them in it. And finally, what concerns, in the third place, the administration of justice, they are to exercise discipline among themselves, to warn with authority and to censure, to punish in union with the congregation, to excommunicate and receive again into the church; and, in connection with the coming of wolves into the congregation, they are to protect the believers against them, and, if need be, to separate the believers as an aggrieved church; and, when this is of no avail, to assemble in a new place in a newly established church.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Further Grief of Mind

Rev. John A. Heys

How he came upon the information we are not told, but of Esau we read that he saw that Isaac blessed Jacob and sent him away to get a wife from Rebekah's family in Haran. It is quite plain from the silence that prevails upon the pages of Holy Writ that Rebekah did not reveal either to Isaac or to Esau her knowledge that Esau intended to kill Jacob as soon as the days of mourning for Isaac's death were past. And this is not right.

It was not right that Isaac and Rebekah did not tell Esau himself that Jacob was being sent to Rebekah's brother's house for a God-fearing wife. The lines of communication in the family had plainly broken down since Esau took to himself unbelieving wives out of the land in which they dwelt. Here too we simply read that these wives were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah. We read not one word of reproof or rebuke, or for that matter of any word that these parents spoke to their older son in connection with this deed. They showed it. Esau was aware of their displeasure, and this we will see in a moment. But no fatherly, motherly admonition was forthcoming. And when parents are silent they invite more evil in their children, as becomes plain in subsequent history.

Now there are times when father and mother must keep silent. When their children establish their own home, they must know when to speak and when to refrain from speaking. This whole mother-in-law problem, of which the world speaks so flippantly, and sometimes humorously, is a very real problem, and so often due to the fact that mother cannot keep silent in her son's home, or in her daughter's. Not that fathers are above this and create no tense situations, but the tendency on the part of the mother is usually greater to have something to say in her son's or daughter's home. Now there is also a time when mother and father should say something, and not fail to do so. Turn to Titus 2:3-5 and note, "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as

becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed." Paul gives the admonition because it is not always heeded.

And that Isaac and Rebekah should have spoken to their son after he married heathen wives cannot in this light be denied. The Word of God was blasphemed by Esau's marriage. And not in bitterness, not in anger, not with an uncivil tongue, but in love and with the Word of God they should have approached him, and, if he needed it, because they had been silent about these things before he married these heathen wives, they should have pointed out to him the evil of his deed. They have only themselves now to blame for Esau's subsequent deed of taking a daughter of Ishmael to try to get back into the good graces of his father and still obtain part of the birthright blessing.

The same is true about this intent to kill Jacob. Rebekah had a calling to speak to her son about this. Perhaps it would — and indeed it did — all blow over. His anger cooled off, and in time he, to all practical purposes, forgot Jacob's deed, and was satisfied with his own large herd of cattle. The fact remains that Rebekah, the mother, allowed his sin to go unrebuked. He was not shown the evil of his rage and intent to kill. Isaac knew nothing about it and could not speak to his son, but Rebekah, the mother, knew and fails in her calling to teach her son to love his brother, and to walk in love before God.

And as pointed out, seeing that Jacob has been blessed — that is, the blessing is repeated upon him — and he is sent away for a God-fearing wife, Esau, after some thought upon the matter, goes out to take a daughter of Ishmael to wife to seek thereby to please his father. He will not follow Jacob; and with that

anger in his heart he had better not do so. But his unbelieving heart and mind leads him to add to his sin, which had not been explained to him by his parents, by taking another unbelieving wife. This time she comes from Abraham's fleshly seed, from Ishmael his firstborn, the son of Hagar.

Esau, the unbeliever, plainly does not understand that God's covenant does not run in the flesh. He knows nothing of the truth that they are not all Israel that are of Israel, Romans 9:6, and that he is not a Jew that is one outwardly but inwardly, Romans 2:28, and that is not circumcision that is of the flesh but of the heart, Romans 2:29. Ishmael is of the flesh of Abraham, just as surely as his father Isaac is. They have different mothers, but Abraham is father of both of them. And, wrongly, Esau assumes that something good runs in the line of the flesh, so that in Ishmael's daughter he can find that which Isaac and Rebekah would find acceptable, if not indeed delightful. We read that "When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take to him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan . . . and Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father; Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which He had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife."

Now marrying one who is a fleshly descendant of a believer may satisfy a parent in the church, but the silence of Scripture on this point as far as Esau and Isaac are concerned may be construed as a testimony that Isaac did not approve of this any more than he did of marrying the Canaanitish women. But the holy God must be satisfied, not merely the believing parent. This Esau does not give one moment of consideration. It is his father whom he seeks to please, because he still wants and is seeking at least to get a piece of that birthright blessing.

May we so judge of Esau? May we call him an unbeliever and present his motive as evil? There are those who are going to object and criticize our evaluation of this deed of Esau. But the judgment is not ours. It is not an attempt to play God and delve into what men like to call God's "hidden will." Scripture gives us this judgment. Scripture says, "Esau have I hated" in Romans 9:13. And that is the word of God Himself. And again in Hebrews 12:16 God says that he was a profane person. Hated of God and declared profane by God Esau cannot have been a born again child of God. And Jesus — let us beware lest we dare to call Him a liar — said that except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom. Much less then can he perform the works of that kingdom. One does not accidentally please God and do the

things of His holy will. One may be accused of being proud when that one calls Esau profane and an unbeliever. But is it not plainly an act of pride to dare to disagree with what God wrote Himself? And let not be forgotten again that other Word of God in Hebrews 11:6 that without faith it is impossible to please God. Not being born again, not having faith, it is simply impossible that Esau in this deed of taking one of the fleshly seed of Abraham to wife can please God. It is doubtful that this pleased Isaac and Rebekah. They did not send Jacob to Ishmael for a wife but where they had reasons to believe that there were believing children of God.

And that parents in the church must do today. Today we cannot, as Abraham did, go and get a believing husband or wife for our children. Nor need we send them to far off lands as Isaac did. But we certainly ought not to take them away from the covenant sphere and for material gain or other fleshly reasons bring them where they can only find Canaanites for husbands or wives. The world makes much of compatibility. And indeed it is a beautiful word and an important one. But in the church it should be understood that spiritual compatibility comes first, and may not be a later consideration, if you can get it. One must get it or one must not marry! Paul tells the believing husbands and wives who before their conversion married unbelievers that they shall not leave these unbelieving mates but so live before them that there may be a witness to these unbelieving mates of what Christianity is all about. And God is pleased sometimes to use these chaste and godly walks to bring His elect to the faith. But that same Paul insists that one always marry in the Lord. He, in I Corinthians 7:39 writes, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord." She is free to marry any believer. She may not marry an unbeliever. And that holds true just as well for those who have not married and are not widows or widowers. They shall marry in the Lord. One must find a husband or wife that is spiritually compatible, or not marry.

God made Eve to be an help meet for Adam. And the word meet means fit, suitable, compatible. Indeed, the Hebrew has but one word which means help. But can you imagine the Almighty and All-wise God, Who says of all His works that they are very good, making an help for Adam that was not fit, suitable, compatible? And can this mean anything less than spiritual compatibility? Would she be any help at all to Adam if spiritually there was not complete agreement of thought and desire? Should our young people settle for anything less? And what ought to give covenant, believing parents grief of mind more than to find their son or daughter married

to one who is no help spiritually, one who strives with that son or daughter against the truth and righteousness, rather than to strive for these? What should give believing parents more grief than to see that the husband or wife of their daughter or son will not help to bring up the grandchildren in the fear of God's name? Listen once to John when he writes in III John 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." He says that of his spiritual children. But is that not also true then of our physical children?

And those churches today who have not the spiritual 20/20 vision of Isaac and Rebekah, who look the other way when their youth associate socially with the world, and do not warn their youth against mixed marriages and spiritual incompatibility had better take a long, hard look at this lesson which God preserved for us here on the pages of Holy Writ. Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob away to a place where he could expect to find a believing wife. Esau's

compromise of seeking merely one who is related to believing Abraham by blood ties was not only folly. It was sin. The churches had better emulate Isaac and Rebekah and not Esau.

The churches had better impress strongly on the minds of their young men and women that this one quality of spiritual compatibility comes first, and that "Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan." Never mind temporal beauty of face. Never mind congenial natures and delightful company as far as fleshly standards are concerned. Never mind wealth and social standing. There is more at stake here than one's flesh and its gratification. The glory of God, the defense of the truth, and the spiritual strength of the church must be of primary concern. Let our young people listen to Christ Himself when He tells them to seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness. Otherwise that child of God will add to himself grief of mind, and God's glory will be denied.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Galatians

Rev. G. Lubbers

THE WORKS OF THE FLESH MANIFEST (Galatians 5:18)

Paul writes, "manifest are the works of the flesh." No one needs to be in doubt whether he is walking according to the Spirit or according to the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh are as far apart as the poles of the earth. For the works of the flesh are indeed manifest as being such works of the flesh. No Christian need be mistaken!

The writer to the Galatians is still pursuing the subject of the inner battle which the Christian wages with his flesh by the power of the sanctifying Spirit. The believer must walk at liberty; he must not walk as do those who are under law, under the power of sin. For the power of sin is the law, as a law-principle. (I Cor. 15:56; Rom. 4:15; 5:13; 7:5, 13) He must crucify the flesh with the passions and lusts thereof. For the heirs of the kingdom "have crucified the flesh" once and for all. All who are the possession of Christ, all who have been redeemed with Christ on the Cross of Calvary, stand in a new legal relationship

to God. They have legally died unto sin. There are no longer *debtors* to live unto the flesh. (Rom. 8:12) Such we were once when we did not yet have the Spirit of Christ, when we were not yet led by the Spirit of Christ. Then we were under the Spirit of bondage to fear; we were under the sting of death in our heart and conscience. (Rom. 8:15) In a sense at that time we were free from righteousness. (Rom. 6:20). Then we were yet married to the old husband. By the law of that husband of sin and death, yes, by that law were we legally married to sin. We did not yet know of the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. We were not yet Spirit-in-dwelt. We were not the temple of the Holy Ghost. But now we are legally married to another, namely, to Jesus. Who is raised from the dead, to bring forth fruits unto God. (Rom. 7:3, 4)

It is of paramount importance in this battle between the flesh and the Spirit to keep in mind that the *right* (authority) of the sinful flesh to assert itself in our members has been taken away, wholly taken

away, by the death of Christ on the Cross and by the power of His resurrection! He who fights sin in his members is standing on solid ground! He looks for the hope of righteousness, legal righteousness; yes, he looks for the final justification to receive the inheritance as a chosen heir in the day of Christ. For he is by faith righteous before God and is an heir of everlasting life. And everyone who has this hope upon God, the hope to see God as He is, *purifies* himself. Such is the saved status of those who must fight the good fight. (Gal. 5:5; I John 3:3) Here is the basic Christian ethics of the liberated sinner.

Yes, the regenerated, called, elect sinner has flesh. He has a law of sin in his members which wars constantly against the Holy Spirit of God, as He powerfully and efficaciously sanctifies us in the hope of eternal life and glory. Paul enumerates these "works" of the "flesh." He does not simply list some possible lusts, a mere cataloging of them for easy study-reference, but he is turning you and me inside out. He holds, as it were, the mirror before our eyes. We are so dull and slow to recognize ourselves for what we really are, that Paul tells us who are before the bar of God, where we must fight sin with a free and good conscience. Paul writes of "the" flesh in *us*. And this flesh we must recognize in our sinful affections. Perhaps a better translation of the Greek *tois patheemasin* is "the passions." These are the inner, driving, sinful inclinations and powerful forces of sin as an impelling sin-law. And these passions reveal themselves in lusts, which are unlawful desires of every color and hue. Paul does not give a complete and exhaustive list here. It is, however, such a representation that Paul can say "and such like." (Gal. 5:21) From here on, we can recognize any lust of the flesh, whenever and wherever such lust reveals itself in our life, wherein we are Spirit-led. Paul is free from our blood, having given sufficient instruction and warning on this point. We now know the kind of works of the flesh to recognize in our flesh. Paul really says; Which are of *such a kind!* (*atina*) We find many more manifestations of the flesh in us than what is here listed.

THE LIST OF WORKS OF THE FLESH GIVEN HERE BY PAUL. (Galatians 5:19-21)

Paul gives the following list: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Most interpreters find that Paul gives a certain order and classification here.

The first sins mentioned, lusts and passions, are those which pertain to the transgressions of the seventh commandment: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." All uncleanness is accursed of God. Let us

briefly let these pass in review. *Fornication* refers to all illicit sexual intercourse, whether one is married, or not in the marriage-state. It must not once be named amongst the saints. The Bible does not use the terms of the modern church-world, who would gloss over the sinfulness of sin, by speaking of sexuality and sexualness. It calls sin by its real and proper name: fornication. And then it says: let it not be named amongst you. (Eph. 5:3) Sexual intercourse outside of holy wedlock is not mere creaturely "sexuality," but is lusts of the flesh. It is the *transgression* of the revealed commandment of the LORD. Upon such *comes* the wrath of God. (Eph. 5:6) Fornication is the proper works of the children of disobedience, the reprobate world. (Eph. 2:2) *Uncleanness* is moral uncleanness in whatever guise. This is lustful, luxurious, profligate living. Such was the Graeco-Roman world, the pagan-world, which was not under the power of the Gospel in Paul's day. It is the sodomy of men with men co-habiting, and women with women practicing the sin of lesbianism. Notice well, dear reader, that these are the sins in our flesh and in the flesh of our children!

Then Paul mentions *lasciviousness*. Such is the wanton excess, lewdness, debauchery, the shameless walking in sin. It is paraded even on the television of our day: it is the "in" thing, the acceptable form of our society: in schools, in churches, in homes, in men and women in high positions of government. All this we are to flee and crucify as the temples of the Holy Spirit. These are the lust of the flesh which war constantly against the Spirit within us.

But we must proceed. We notice that Paul now also cites all forms of false religions. He sums these up under the terms: *idolatry* and *witchcraft*. Idolatry and witchcraft are really the spiritual roof of fornication. The worship of idols is as foolish as it is wicked. It is foolish because it is the worship of a *nothing*: it is the worship of a mere appearance. It is trying to make a visible image of the invisible God. It is a mere figment of man's sinful imagination. Paul tells the men of Lystra, who imagined that he was Mecurius and Barnabas was Jupiter, to desist from their contemplated worship of them by saying: "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you and bring you Gospel-tidings, that ye should turn from *these vanities* unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea and all the things that are therein." (Acts 14:15) (Read Psalm 115:3-8) The sin of witchcraft is closely connected with idolatry. The term in the Greek used for "witchcraft" is connected with mixing herbs and drugs. There is much of this going on in pagan lands and also here in the United States of America, which is fast turning pagan. It is man grasping at the straws as a drowning man. Basically it is the sin of willing

disobedience to the revelation and law of God. It is man in his final doom. (Rev. 21:8) It is rebellion, fighting against God's clear revelation, keeping the truth down in unrighteousness. When there is a "dope-problem" in the church we must point the "victim" (?) to his sin of rebellion and disobedience to the clear commandment of God. Thus did Samuel addressing Saul, when Saul disobeyed the commandment concerning slaying the Amalekites: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifice, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the *sin of witchcraft*, and stubbornness is as the *sin of idolatry*. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." (I Sam. 15:22) Those who "practice" idolatry and witchcraft shall not inherit the kingdom of God! They may have a "ride" in their dope and drugs, but it is the road which leads a Saul to the witch of Endor, and leads the hell-bound world to eternal destruction! They who are of Christ have crucified the flesh with these affections and lusts! Let us remember it.

Furthermore, Paul also speaks of the sins against the *sixth commandment*: "Thou shalt not kill." Also the murderous nature of our sinful flesh is mentioned. Here the veil is really lifted on our sinful flesh, in which there dwells no good at all! (Rom. 7:18)

The first sin mentioned is the sin in which is exhibited the very opposite of "by love serve one

another." (Gal. 5:13b) The Greek term *echthrai* is in the plural tense: enmities. The plural indicates enmities of every kind, in all and every relationship of life. It is the great and basic corrupter of human-relations in the world and in the flesh in the church. Always this enmity crops up in one form or another in the church of Christ here on earth. We must ever remember that we were reconciled to God when we were only filled with enmity toward God and our neighbor, full of enmities, when we were reconciled to God. Constantly the flesh makes it so that we are in need of reconciliation with our neighbor. Here we see that by nature we hate both God and our neighbor.

From this enmity is born contention, strife. All the wranglings in the church, in families, between individuals, sinful, hateful wranglings come forth from this hatred and envy. This is also a sin, a work of our flesh, which is evident. Paul writes in Rom. 13:13, "not in strife and jealousy." Such was the strife in the Corinthian church. It was party-strife concerning Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ. This is especially the sin of the "legalist." We are told that amongst the Greeks there was the legend concerning the goddess "*Eris*" who was the goddess of dissension. She caused all the contention in the world. But Paul puts the finger on the hurt in our life: it is in our sinful flesh, which are lusts, and the evil affections. These must be crucified in our members with Christ.

ALL AROUND US

The Church in New Zealand

Rev. G. Van Baren

A short notice in the *Banner* of Oct. 5, 1979, caught my attention — particularly because of our contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church there. The article portrays a sad picture of the general church situation — which likely is not a great deal better in this country.

Anglicans in New Zealand were told by one of their high church officials that 30 years from now

their only problem will be the disposal of their empty buildings. Accusing his denomination of being "so busy looking after the one found sheep that they have ignored the 99 who are lost," archdeacon Herbert G. Boniface said that Sunday school attendance has dropped 63 percent in the last 15 years. He said that in New Zealand only four percent of the population attends Sunday worship.

On Situation Ethics

An editorial in the *Presbyterian Journal*, Sept. 26, 1979, points out some of the evidences of "situation

ethics" within the churches. This form of "ethics" (and it is not "ethics" at all) suggests that what is

done in love, though in violation with laws of God or of men, can rightly be done by children of God. The editor of the *Journal* sees this now in the decisions taken by some of the denominations in our land:

Last week . . . we carried in our news pages the story of a civil trial in which representatives of the Presbyterian Church US appeared in court with documents purporting to be minutes of meetings of a certain board of trustees — meetings which, in fact, had never been held and minutes of which, therefore, were evidently fabricated.

We're not repeating the details because the details do not matter. What matters is what situation ethics or "the new morality" has done to the moral consciences of churchmen in general and some Presbyterians in particular.

It is mind-boggling that at the very top levels in the Churches today, and in such contexts as proceedings in the civil court, the truth is considered expendable if a fabrication will achieve a desired purpose. That is an idea central to the theme of situation ethics — that we do not live by rules and regulations, but by what is "the loving thing to do" — in this case, what will best achieve a goal considered desirable.

The philosophy of situation ethics appeared in the decision of the 1978 PCUS General Assembly to send

down a proposal on "weighted voting" for ratification by a majority of the presbyteries rather than by the constitutional three-fourths of the presbyteries.

It appeared in the decision of the 1979 General Synod of the Reformed Church in America simply to declare that women may be ordained and let it go at that — after *six* attempts to have the constitution changed to permit such ordination had failed.

Now it appears in the presentation of official papers to a civil court in a civil suit — "minutes" of meetings which never took place.

We thought we had seen the limit when we witnessed a former moderator of the PCUS testifying in civil court that people long dead were, according to his testimony, members of a "loyal minority" entitled to a local church's property. We should have known that the virus had penetrated deeply when we became aware that nobody really cared that such a thing should have happened. . . .

The editorial rightly deplores this "situation ethics." This evil does indeed appear in many places, many churches, and under various circumstances. It is nothing more than that first lie of the devil to Eve, "Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." The "new morality" is not new at all. Only it comes often in different guises.

More of the "Unchurched"

Calvinist Contact, Sept. 21, 1979, quotes a report which reflects upon the church situation in Canada. Some of these findings also are of interest — and added indication of the great apostasy taking place over the whole world.

Despite the apparent winds of charismatic change which rippled across the land in recent years and despite a "born again" attitude within some of the mainline churches, Canada is no longer a Christian country.

Well over half of the nation holds a belief in secularism — that the world is all there is and that they might as well enjoy life while they can.

These findings are based on a report by church growth researcher, Rev. Dennis Oliver, a 37-year-old Presbyterian. He has spent the past five years doing research work at the Canadian Church Growth Centre in Regina, Sask. His findings reveal a religious reality which totally contradicts the widely held belief that Canada is a Christian country.

Mr. Oliver says that only *one-third* of the population has "any functional relation to God in the traditional sense." "Secularism is the principal orientation of the majority," he says.

Some other conclusions are also startling. We often talk about the "mainline" churches — Anglicans, Lutherans, the United Church. But there is a new mainline made up of newer Protestant groups which tend to overshadow those traditional, older churches.

"Many newer and smaller religious groups have gained in strength to the point where they can be considered to have achieved mainline status. They presently outnumber the more traditional Protestant Churches."

He bases his arguments on average numbers attending services rather than on official church rolls or census figures. Far more Pentecostals attend church on any given Sunday than Anglicans — 256,000 compared to 187,374.

The Jehovah's Witnesses' Sunday gatherings exceed those of the Lutherans. More gather to attend services of the major Mormon church than those of any Lutheran or Holiness (Salvation Army, Christian Missionary Alliance, etc.) denomination. And there are now more Muslims in Canada than Presbyterians, who have sunk steadily over the past decade to a current figure of about 169,000.

Mr. Oliver says that the churches which are generally lumped together under the title Evangelical or Conservative-Evangelical (including most Baptist churches, all Pentecostals, some Mennonite and a

number of independent traditions) now have a combined average Sunday attendance of 397,000. This is greater than that of Canada's leading Protestant denomination, the United Church, which has 378,156.

If you want to put a tag on Canada's religious stance, then you could say that the religious segment of Canada is mainly Roman Catholic. That church's communicant membership stood at 10 million, according to 1978 statistics. But even more significantly is the fact that approximately 46 per cent of them are active in church attendance. . . .

Churches in Court

Our own past history involved some of our congregations going to court in order to secure their properties. Repeatedly, churches with doctrinal difficulties resulting in "splits," find that the courts appear to decide that properties go with the loyal group (though it be but a small minority). There have been in recent years and months, some changes in this respect. *Christianity Today*, Sept. 21, 1979, reports on some of this:

A mailman in Macon, Georgia, has to know his Presbyterian churches. Otherwise, he might deliver mail to the wrong Vineville Presbyterian Church. There have been two churches by that name in Macon for the past six years — the result of a church split.

But what was once only a matter of local confusion, now has attracted the concern of several mainline Protestant denominations as well as Roman Catholic and Orthodox bodies. At stake is the question: Who owns the church property of a local congregation — the congregation or the parent body?

A recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling involving the Vineville church seemed to cast a vote on the side of the local congregation. For that reason, at least one group — the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. — rang its alarm bells. At a hastily called meeting on September 16, the church's Missions Council voted whether to convene a first ever special General Assembly.

If called, the General Assembly would consider an amendment to the church constitution that would clearly specify that local church property is held in trust for the entire denomination.

For more than a century, the bodies merged into the UPCUSA, often called the Northern Presbyterians, have operated on the principle that property is held in trust for the parent body. This policy evolved primarily from an 1871 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Watson vs. Jones*, which said that decisions of church courts were final in cases involving "connectional" churches.

However, in its July 2 ruling involving the Vineville church, *Jones vs. Wolf*, the high court said that if "religious societies" want local church property to revert to the denomination in the event of a congregational schism, they can either write such provisions into their constitutions, or local congregations can write such provisions into their local charters.

Specifically, in its 5-4 majority ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court gave state courts the freedom to decide church property ownership cases on secular considerations when the denomination's constitutional provisions are not specific. The court said, "We cannot agree that the First Amendment requires the states to adopt a rule of compulsory deference to religious authority in resolving church property disputes. . . ."

Understandably, some of the larger denominations were shook up about the above decision. Defections continue within these denominations. But the property question is ever a major consideration. Churches which realize that they will not necessarily lose their properties, might be more ready to leave an apostatizing denomination.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Missions by the Word of the Risen Lord

Prof. Robert D. Decker

In the gospel according to John, chapter 21:3-14 (for text consult your Bible), we read of the third appearance of the resurrected Christ to His disciples. Each of these appearances is a manifestation of the risen Christ. According to vs. 1 Jesus showed Himself. That was necessary because He is now the resurrected Christ, and the former relationship to the disciples has been transformed. It's the same Lord Jesus, only now He is raised from the dead. Unless Jesus reveals Himself He cannot be known. Thus, too, each of these appearances of the resurrected Christ reveals some aspect of the gospel of the resurrection.

So it is with the appearance we consider in this article. In this double miracle at the Sea of Galilee the risen Lord demonstrates the task and calling of the apostles. They are to be fishers of men. They are to preach the gospel and be instrumental in the gathering of the church. And they will do that only in the power of the word of the risen Lord. At the same time the risen Lord will supply all their needs. Thus the work of the disciples will be carried out in the power of Jesus' word and in Jesus' fellowship. Really what Jesus does is to demonstrate the great commission: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." This is what is demonstrated by the command: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." Jesus also promised: "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." This is demonstrated by the words: "Ye shall find," a multitude of fish and "come and dine," I will provide all your needs.

What a wonderful word and what a powerful word that is. A wonderful and powerful word it is for the church of all ages, for the church today. These disciples, who became the apostles, constitute, together with the prophets and Christ as the cornerstone, the foundation of the church. And the Word of God is very simple: "I will build My church." Not men, not the disciples, not the preachers of today, but *I* will do that work. And

nothing can hinder that great work. It is accomplished by the power of the word of the risen Christ and not even the gates of hell can prevail against that power.

The scene is the Sea of Tiberius or Galilee. This must have brought to the minds of these seven disciples many pleasant memories, for much of Jesus' ministry had been in this vicinity. Here many had been restored to health, many a leper was cleansed, many blind received sight, and deaf their hearing. Here the demon-possessed had been set free, and along these shores the gospel of the kingdom had been proclaimed with gracious words. It was by these shores too that some of the most significant events of the Lord's ministry occurred. They would never forget the feeding of the five thousand with a few fish and loaves, nor the rejection of Jesus which followed. How could they forget the night He came walking on the angry waves of this very sea and then by a word calmed the wind and the waves? But something else they apparently did forget. Early in their acquaintance with the Savior they had decided to go fishing on this very sea. They toiled all night and caught nothing. Then the Master came, and at His command they cast the net once more and, lo, there were so many fish the net broke. Jesus had told them, "I will make you fishers of men." He had called them away from their earthly occupations.

They are here in Galilee because of the command of the Lord. Jesus, just before the betrayal, had told them to go to Galilee. He had told them two things: the shepherd would be smitten and the sheep scattered and, after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee. But they didn't understand. They went right on arguing who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And Peter vowed never to be offended in the Christ, as did also the rest of them. After the resurrection the angel reminded them of this word. He told the women to tell the disciples, He

goes before you into Galilee as He said.

Thus we find them in Galilee but now weary of waiting. They had remained at Jerusalem at least a week. Twice the Lord had appeared to them in the upper room and now they are at the sea waiting for the fulfillment of the promise. But it seems so long to them. Every day they look with expectation for the Christ to come, but He does not. Was He perhaps grieved with them because they were offended in Him and had left Him? Why does He not come as promised? They seem to have forgotten their own slowness to understand. He had spoken to them plainly of His suffering and death and of their being offended and of the resurrection. All these things they forgot. They were offended. In the darkness of the cross they forgot all about the resurrection. Fools they are and slow of heart to understand. And so are we.

But knowing our own sinful weaknesses we can understand their situation. Everything is so different. They know that Jesus is risen from the dead. All the appearances proved that. They had seen Him, talked with Him, and eaten with Him. There could be no doubt about the resurrection. But everything is changed. Their former relationship was so different. Now the Savior comes and He goes. The daily fellowship is gone. And even when He is with them He seems so remote. Jesus seems to belong to them no longer. It's just all too much for them: the terrible cross, the strange resurrection, the waiting.

Thus, weary of waiting, they go fishing. Seven of them are there. Five are mentioned by name. They are the three intimates of the Savior: Peter and the sons of Zebedee, James and John. Thomas, who had worshipped the risen Christ and who had put his fingers into the nailprints in His hands and who had cried, "My Lord and my God," is also there. Nathaniel, in whom there is no guile, one of the first to confess Jesus as the Son of God, is present too. Two others are not mentioned by name, which indicates they were not of the eleven apostles but belonged to that broader group of disciples who followed Jesus.

Already the prophecy of Jesus is happening: "I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." There are only five of the twelve, which means the apostolic band is breaking up. They had been together for three years and they were inseparable. The bond of their fellowship had been their special relationship to Jesus; but now He's gone from them. And had the Lord not returned in the Spirit, we may easily surmise what would have happened. They would never have stayed together. They would have returned to their former life. They could not of themselves, this means, preach the gospel of the risen Lord. Christ Himself had to do it through them.

So Peter says: "I go a fishing." Yes, Peter, the impulsive man of action. . . . It is so characteristic of Peter the disciple who had fallen so deeply after boasting of his faith in the Lord. Peter, whose name had been especially mentioned by the angel, "Tell the disciples and Peter"; Peter, who had been privileged by a private appearance of the risen Savior, in his own characteristic way takes the initiative: "I go a fishing." What does this mean? Much more than meets the eye. Some say the disciples are quite innocent and didn't mean any harm. It was perfectly natural for them to go about the business of fishing, for they had to eat, and they didn't know what was in store for them. This does not meet the test of the Scriptures. Peter says literally: "I am going away to fish," not just going to fish, but I go away to fish. The term means to withdraw oneself, to depart, and that is precisely what Peter decides to do. They had the word of Christ: "I will make you fishers of men." And they had been instructed to go to Galilee. They had been promised the Spirit of Christ and still Peter says, "I am going away to fish." Peter decides to leave the Word. He asks no questions and does not invite the others. He merely announces his intentions. He says in effect: "You may wait here all you want; you may do as you please. But I have had it, I can wait no longer; I just do not know what the Lord wants or when, if ever, He will come. I'm going away to fish." The others respond immediately: "We also go with thee." We are with you Peter. So they enter into a ship, utterly discouraged, perhaps even disgusted. Away they go, fishing. It is back to business as usual.

And in that night they caught nothing. They toiled, they labored, they cast their net into the sea and drew it out again all the weary night long. The plain, simple, blunt fact is, their fishing is an exercise in futility. They caught nothing. And they grew more weary and impatient as the night wore on. So it is often with the church of the risen Lord. What is the use of preaching and teaching the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? What is the use of all the struggle? There is so much unbelief and so much rejection of the Word and opposition to it. Let's go fishing, the church is often tempted to say.

Suddenly, "when the morning was about to come," the weary disciples are called by the word of the risen Lord. All night long they had been fishing (and these were experienced fishermen who knew the Sea of Galilee), but they caught nothing. Suddenly, when the dawn is about to break, they see through the darkness a man standing on the shore, but they know not that it is Jesus. They know not that it is Jesus — not because of the darkness, nor because of the distance, for they weren't that far from shore; but they see Jesus and know Him not, simply because He is the risen Christ. He is the same Jesus and He has

nailprints in His hands, but now He is raised from the dead. The mortal has put on immortality, the corruptible has put on incorruption, the natural has become spiritual, and the image of the earthly is now the image of the heavenly. And they could not recognize the Lord unless and until He reveals Himself by the word. The point is that they and we live by faith and not by sight, and faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of the Lord.

The Lord speaks to them affectionately: "Children", "my boys." That is a word full of patience and love, over against the unfaithful impatience of the weary disciples. "My boys," means the Lord never forsakes His beloved. Then Jesus asks a question which expects a negative answer. Gently but firmly He asks: "Children, have you any meat?" We may paraphrase the question this way: "Children you do not have any meat do you?" Curtly the disciples answer, giving vent to their frustration: "No," and they go on with their fishing. But the risen Lord has shown their efforts, attempted apart from His word, to be futile.

Then Jesus gives the command, the promise: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship and you shall find." Did they recognize the voice? Did they catch the note of authority? Did it remind them of that time once before when Jesus told them to cast the net? We do not know. But without argument or objection they obeyed and they found. The net was so full that, struggle though they would, they could not get it into the boat. How must we understand this? There is only one explanation: Jesus drew that multitude of fish into the net.

Now they know Him! John says to Peter: "It is the Lord." Who else could it be but the Lord? Simon Peter forgets the fish, throws the fisherman's coat about him and splashes through the water to Jesus. The other disciples come in the boat, dragging the net behind.

Now these weary disciples are encouraged by the word of the risen Lord, by two words really. First Jesus instructs them: bring of the fish which ye have now caught. No, they do not have to bring the fish for food, for Jesus had that all prepared. But the Lord means to lay bare their foolishness and lack of faith. Bring forth the fish ye have now caught, caught by the power of My word. "Look at all those fish," Jesus means to say. Peter hastens to drag them in. There are one hundred and fifty-three in all, great fish. "Bring them forth, look," Jesus says, "you went fishing and you caught nothing. Apart from Me ye can do nothing. You cannot even be successful at fishing, apart from my word. And anything you attempt apart from My word is only going to end in failure. Still more: be not faithless but believe. You went fishing, and you will go fishing again. You will

be fishers of men! I told you that! And you will find — so many that you will not be able to get them into the ship."

That is the word of encouragement to the church today, represented so vividly in those faithless, weary disciples. The church can be so discouraged in the work. It is such a struggle. Often the church is inclined to give up, for no one, it seems, wants the truth. The church must hear this word then: "Cast the net." Preach the Word, the life-giving, world-destroying, powerful resurrection Word of the gospel of Jesus. Preach that Word and do not give up and do not say: "I am going away to fish." Preach the Word! And the risen Lord from the shore of heaven gives the word of direction, the word of power. That Word will draw the multitude of fish into the net. It will do that; it cannot fail. Sinners will be brought to repentance and faith, and the ungodly will be condemned. Jesus Christ will build His church. Of that there is no doubt.

Casting the net of the gospel, the church need never be discouraged, need never say it is too much, and need never fear. Rather the church must hear the Word: "Come and dine." Another miracle greeted the eyes of the weary disciples as they came to shore. There was a fire of coals, and on it a fish and some bread. It was all prepared for them by the risen Lord. They did not have to go fishing at all. How little faith they really had. Jesus has the food all ready for them. O yes, it served to reveal the Lord to them. We read that none dared ask Him who art thou; they knew it was the Lord. But it also served to encourage them in the great task which lay before them as apostles and preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. "Come and dine" means (though they did not understand at the moment) "I will provide." Jesus is saying to them in effect: "I will be with you always even unto the end of the world. Preach the Word then, and take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, what ye shall drink, or what ye shall put on. Just preach the resurrection Word."

May the church of our Lord Jesus Christ in these last days hear this word: "Come and dine." May they hear the word: "Cast the net — preach the Word." The church does that in the power of the risen Christ and never in its own strength. And the church may be assured that the saints of God will be gathered out of the nations, a church will be built for Christ, and Christ will provide as He gathers by His Spirit and Word out of the whole human race those children to everlasting life. Some day soon the saints of all the ages will come and dine with Him in the glory of the new Jerusalem. That Word is sure, for it is the Word of the risen Lord. Let the church then be on with the task of preaching the gospel wherever the Lord opens the doors and leads the way.

Book Reviews

THE PIETY OF JOHN CALVIN, An Anthology Illustrative of the Spirituality of the Reformer; Translated and edited by Ford Lewis Battles with music edited by Stanley Tagg; Baker Book House, 1978; 180 pp., \$9.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

Perhaps the best way to give the reader some idea of the worth and value of this book is briefly to review the contents. In the introduction appears an interesting essay on the whole concept of piety as found in the writings of the Genevan Reformer. Chapter 1, entitled "The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Calvin," reproduces Calvin's own account of his conversion which is taken from the preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms*. Chapter 2, "The Kernel of Calvin's Faith" is taken from the first chapter of the 1536 edition of the *Institutes*. Because this edition was later extensively enlarged by Calvin, the material included here was also greatly expanded. Chapter 3, "Calvin on the Christian Life," is taken from the 1539 edition of the *Institutes* published in Strasbourg. Chapter 4, "Calvin on Prayer," is taken from the 1536 edition which also was later expanded. Chapter 5 includes several prayers of Calvin which were used by Calvin in the weekday services and before and after his exegetical lectures. This section includes also some examples of the order of worship used in the worship services. Chapter 6, "Metrical Psalms Translated by Calvin," includes an important introduction along with several of the Psalms themselves. Chapter 8 is entitled, "Prose-Poems Adapted from Calvin." The book concludes with an Epilogue on "Calvin on Christ and the Church."

The book is also filled with copious footnotes which are very interesting and includes a textual reference.

We heartily recommend this book to our readers. The price is very reasonable. It will not only appeal to students of Calvin, but to a much wider reading audience which will find much pleasure in some of Calvin's finest devotional writings. We are pleased to report the publication of the book to the readers of the *Standard Bearer*.

THE SCHILDER TRILOGY, Klaas Schilder; translated by Henry Zylstra; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 3 volumes, paper, \$24.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema)

This is a reprint of the famous Passion Trilogy of

Dr. K. Schilder. The first volume, *Christ in His Suffering* (468 pp.), takes us through the capture of Christ. The second volume, *Christ on Trial* (550 pp.), takes the reader through the condemnation of the Savior. The third volume, *Christ Crucified* (562 pp.), covers the crucifixion and the burial of our Lord. Incidentally, in the information on the back cover of these volumes, Volumes 1 and 2 are reversed in order.

Especially for those unable to reach Dutch – and Dr. Schilder's Dutch is by no means the easiest – this is a worthwhile reprint of what has become a classic in Lenten literature. The late Henry Zylstra did a masterful job of translation and succeeded in conveying in the translation something of Schilder's sparkling style.

True, one will not always agree with Schilder's exegesis. Small wonder! For Schilder did not always agree with himself, as is evident from the fact that he undertook an extensive revision of the Dutch edition of his trilogy before his death, a revision which was interrupted by his death before he completed the third volume. Besides, Schilder was given to poetic flights which sometimes seem to have a rather tenuous exegetical basis, but which nevertheless add to the enjoyment of the reader. But the main point is that Dr. Schilder certainly had a profound grasp of the centrality and the cosmic character of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures. This does not fail to come through in these volumes.

One more remark: do not expect easy reading when you read the Trilogy. Enjoyable? Yes. Instructive? By all means. But you must be prepared to put on your thinking-cap.

This reprint is bound in a durable plasticized paper binding, one of the reasons it can be offered at the attractive price of \$24.95 for the set. Highly recommended.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sympathy to its fellow Elder, Mr. Clarence Kuiper and his family in the loss of his father, MR. HENRY KUIPER, SR., the patriarch of our congregation and father and grandfather of many of our members, who passed into Glory at the age of ninety-five years.

"The Lord knoweth the days of the upright; and their inheritance shall be forever." (Psalm 37:18).

Rev. M. De Vries, Pres.
Phillip J. Lotterman, Clerk.

News From Our Churches

Again this month there is quite a bit of news concerning calls extended by various of our congregations. Candidate Ronald Hanco has accepted his call from Covenant Church in Wyckoff, New Jersey, to become the second pastor of this young congregation. Their current pastor is leaving soon to labor as missionary in Singapore.

Rev. Jason Kortering has accepted the call extended to him by our Loveland, Colorado congregation. Rev. Kortering preached his farewell sermon in Redlands, California on Sunday, October 7. The Kortering family left for Loveland on October 8th. Rev. Kortering was installed as Loveland's new pastor on Friday, October 12, by Rev. Marvin Kamps, pastor of our Doon, Iowa congregation. The Loveland congregation was planning a welcome program for the Kortering family on October 26.

Our Hope Church in Walker, Michigan has called Rev. Wayne Bekkering of Houston, Texas to be their pastor. The Hope trio also included Rev. Bernard Woudenberg and Rev. Dale Kuiper.

Ordination services for Steven Houck were conducted in Hope Church on September 19. Rev.

Houck preached his inaugural sermon in Hope Church the following Sunday. Rev. Houck is serving as home missionary in the Lansing/Charlotte, Michigan area.

Redlands has extended a call to Rev. David Engelsma. Their trio also included Rev. Marvin Kamps and Rev. Dale Kuiper.

The congregation of our Southeast Church in Grand Rapids was rather surprised to see Rev. Schipper on their pulpit on the Sunday morning. Rev. Carl Haak was scheduled to preach his first sermon as their new minister. Rev. Schipper informed the congregation that Rev. Haak was in the hospital with blood poisoning. This condition had developed from a sore on his hand. Rev. Haak did obtain a four-hour leave from the hospital on Sunday evening in order to preach. He has now recovered from his illness. Southeast scheduled a welcome program for their new pastor on Thursday, September 27.

The Reformation Day lecture in the Grand Rapids area is scheduled for October 30 at the Calvin College Fine Arts Center. Rev. David Engelsma will speak on "Evangelism and the Reformed Faith."

K.G.V.

Report of Classis East

September 12, 1979 Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church

Classis East met in regular session September 12, 1979, at Hudsonville. All the churches were represented by two delegates. Since the major portion of this meeting was devoted to the examination of pastors-elect Carl Haak and Steven Houck, delegates *ad examina* Revs. Engelsma, Miersma, and Lubbers were also in attendance. Rev. A. den Hartog chaired the meeting.

As mentioned above, the classis was privileged to hear the peremptory examinations of two candidates, C. Haak and S. Houck. God's covenant faithfulness was again witnessed when, at the end of the day, Southeast was authorized to ordain and install their pastor-elect, C. Haak, and Hope was authorized to ordain and install S. Houck as missionary to the East Lansing/Charlotte, Michigan area.

In other business, Classis again received a letter from the people in Skowhegan, Maine requesting help should a local church or the Mission Committee not provide any. Classis decided that it was unable to treat this matter since neither the Skowhegan people nor Classis East had been informed of any official

decisions taken.

The request for emeritation of Rev. R. Harbach was again presented by Hope Church. Classis granted permission pending the submission of statements from two medical doctors concerning Rev. Harbach's eyesight.

The Finance Committee reported expenses of \$712.02 which amount also includes the expenses of the delegates *ad examina* from Classis West.

Hope and Covenant requested classical appointments. Appointments were given to Hope only since Candidate R. Hanco is considering the call to Covenant. The schedule adopted for Hope is as follows (evening service only): September 23 — Rev. Van Baren, October 7 — Rev. Bruinsma, October 28 — Rev. Joostens, November 11 — Rev. Woudenberg, November 25 — Rev. Heys, December 9 — Rev. De Vries, December 23 — Rev. Haak.

Classis will meet next in Holland on January 9, 1980.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon Huiskens, Stated Clerk