

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

FIRE THREE! The mother needs to work to help provide a Christian education for the children. This, Satan believes, is his blockbuster: the principle and the practical tied together. He knows that the moment the mother walks out of the door she has given her children quite an education.

See "Keeping the Fortress" page 496

CONTENTS

Meditation—	
The Faith of Joseph.....	482
Editorial—	
Can a Classis Depose a	
Consistory?—Revisited	485
My Sheep Hear My Voice—	
Letter to Timothy	487
From Holy Writ—	
Exposition of Galatians	490
Report from Singapore	492
Guest Article—	
Northern Light.....	494
In His Fear—	
Keeping the Fortress.....	496
Book Reviews.....	498
Index	499
News From Our Churches.....	503

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MEDITATION

The Faith of Joseph

Rev. H. Veldman

"By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."
Heb. 11:22

How often it happens that when one comes from nothing to something, he becomes a grief to others. He once knew misery and poverty and has now arisen to riches, fame and greatness. And how true it is that such often become inflated and conceited. Much worse this is when it happens in the spiritual sphere. When a church begins to bathe in luxury

and plenty, it often happens that that church departs from the truth which it once knew and confessed and loses itself in the midst of the world. Yes, salvation is all of God and by grace; God will preserve His own, even unto the uttermost. But we do well always to bear in mind and heed the word of the Saviour: it is easier for a camel to go through

the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God and of heaven.

How beautifully this applies to Joseph! Indeed, he had once known misery and shame in Canaan and also in the land of Egypt. He had risen to a position of honour and greatness. But, he never forgot his own or the cause of God's covenant.

In Hebrews 11 the inspired writer singles out this event of Joseph's life, that he gave commandment concerning his bones. Strange? No reference is made to his life either in Canaan or in Egypt. Why is this? The answer is undoubtedly that this event marks the climax of Joseph's faith, beautifully set before us in this word of our God.

ITS OBJECT

The promises or Word of God—this, in general, is the object of Joseph's faith.

The incident recorded in this text is also recorded in Genesis 50:24 - 26. Two things are recorded here: the exodus of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and Joseph's commandment concerning his bones. And, of course, these two matters are related as cause and effect. Without the one the other would be impossible. If the children of Israel do not return to Canaan, Joseph's commandment is absurd.

Faith is never based upon reason. We never believe because we understand. We believe only because the object of our faith is in the written Word of God. Remove this Word of God and all possibility for believing falls away. To be sure, faith is never irrational or unreasonable. Faith is never based upon reason; but neither does it ever violate our reason. The resurrection of the dead, for example, is above my understanding, but it is not contrary to my understanding that an almighty God can raise the dead. But, we believe, not because we understand, but only because God has revealed it in His Word.

Faith clings purely and unconditionally to the Word of God. How fundamental this is! Yes, the devil can attack us in so many ways. The only ground and object of our faith is the promises, the Word of God. We must never argue with the devil. We must answer him, as Jesus did, with the infallible scriptures. O, if we lose the Word of God we lose all. Then our faith has lost everything.

This applies particularly to Joseph.

First, Joseph believed in the departure of Israel into the land of Canaan. This he knew only through the Word or the promise of the Lord. Indeed, at the time of this text all things surely appeared hopeless. Genesis 50:23 speaks of the third generation. These

children were surely settled in Egypt. Besides, why return to Canaan? They had left there because of a famine. That Joseph knew was only because God had once promised this and they knew this in the way of tradition inasmuch as yet there was not written word of God. Notice, too, what Joseph says to his brethren, Gen. 50:24. He tells them that the Lord will surely visit them. He does not use any "if" clause. He simply tells them that the Lord will surely visit them and return them to Canaan. Neither does Joseph say: "Remember what God has told you, how He promised you that you will return to the land of promise; and now it is up to you to do your part and realize this promise of the Lord." This may sound very pious to many people. But, this would make God's promise very conditional. And there is really nothing pious about that. Indeed, how different is Joseph's address to his brethren.

Secondly, Joseph gives commandment concerning his bones.

We may well ask the question: why? What difference does it really make where we are buried? Joseph is, of course, thinking of his burial and grave. The answer to this question cannot be in doubt. Canaan was the land of the promise and therefore a type and symbol of the heavenly Canaan. With this commandment, therefore, Joseph expresses his faith in the resurrection of the dead. He does not desire to be buried in Egypt, because he knew that the children of Israel would not remain there. He did not want his bones to be left behind because he belonged, not in Egypt, but in Canaan. He would be with the people of God also in their death because he knew that with them he would rise again at the resurrection into the new heavens and the new earth.

Does this faith of Joseph also apply to us? O, we can understand that also the place of our burial can have significance. We, too, wish to be buried with the people of God because we would rise with them. But, fundamentally, the question is: do we believe in God's Word, His promise, that He will bring us surely into that land of everlasting and immortal glory? Then we, too, live in principle in Canaan, the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the heavenly City of God that has foundations.

ITS EXERCISE

Joseph, it is claimed, was a great statesman. Now it is certainly truth that he was gifted by God with great gifts, as being able to interpret dreams, and he must have been a wise and great statesman. Hence, it is claimed, because of his great insight, he could visualize Israel's departure out of Egypt. On the

one hand, these Hebrew immigrants would really never become naturalized citizens of Egypt. And, on the other hand, Egypt would not care to keep them indefinitely. This, we understand, is the position and interpretation of wicked unbelief.

How impossible this view is!

Let us presuppose that Joseph was truly a great and gifted statesman. Does this warrant the conclusion that Joseph was able to visualize Israel's departure out of Egypt? And the answer is an emphatic No! We are familiar with the subsequent history of this people of Israel in the land of Egypt, after the death of Joseph. And, I ask you: what else could Joseph have possible foreseen? He was a great statesman? Well, then he certainly could have visualized two things. Then he certainly must have understood that the people of Israel would surely resent being subjected to a hard and cruel bondage. And, living in Egypt, he surely must have sensed and diagnosed the character of the Egyptians and realized that Israel's position would become increasingly dangerous and hazardous.

Joseph acted as he did by faith.

Notice his address to his brethren. How dark the horizon must have appeared to him at this time! And what he speaks to his brethren was not merely an expression of faith on his part, personally, an expression of anxiety for his bones. Indeed, he also meant to comfort his brethren. He says to them as it were: how difficult your position may become in this land of Egypt, how great your affliction and oppression which awaits you. Be not afraid, but rest assured that the Lord will not leave you or forsake you; He will surely bring you back into the land of Egypt.

And this was possible only by faith. And faith, as throughout Hebrews 11, is the evidence of things unseen, the substance of things hoped for. He was not prompted by reason. He spoke as he did because he believed. He took hold of the invisible, that which the eye cannot see and the ear cannot hear, which was contrary to all human appearances and could never enter into the heart of man.

ITS WONDERFUL CHARACTER

Literally we read: "By faith Joseph, coming to the end, made mention...." Jacob did what he did, according to verse 21, while dying. He, as it were, pushed death aside, by faith, to bless the sons of Joseph. Joseph, however, did what he did, not in the final agony of death, but simply toward the end of his life. When Joseph approached the hour in which he was about to leave this world he still reveals his faith. And, therefore, it is not true that Joseph believed only at his death while throughout

his life he was indifferent, but that he kept the true faith throughout his life, even to the very end. So, we do not have here a "death-bed" conversion. Such conversions, of course, are possible and appear in the Scriptures. They are not very frequent, and certainly not desirable, as in preference to regeneration in infancy. Isn't it more desirable to serve God all one's life?

How wonderful is this faith of Joseph! Let us review Joseph's life, in Canaan and then in Egypt. Now we understand the wonderful character of Joseph's faith. Shall he forsake the religion of his fathers and select Egypt as his own? His own people had treated him shamefully. Egypt had treated him wonderfully. Shall he continue to cast in his lot with this Israel, or shall he choose Egypt, be buried there, receive all the honours of a great and imposing funeral? Is he not ashamed of Israel; shall he not hesitate to associate with a crowd of wanderers who have no home, no possessions, no land, who have nothing but a promise which more and more appears absurd and impossible? Yet, Joseph remains faithful. And when his dying lips bid farewell to his brethren it is only to speak once more of the promise, once more of that other country, to express that he, too, as his father, be buried there. All his life he had walked by faith. And the Lord does not desert him now.

And what shall we say? Are we walking in the way of the faith of our fathers, as parents and as children and also as young people, so that, when dying, we may still speak of the promises of the Lord? Is our eye focused upon Canaan, the heavenly Canaan, the City that has foundations? Or, are we indifferent to these things, carnal and worldly minded, lovers of the pleasures and treasures of this world? I know that only the grace of God can and will save us to the uttermost. Nevertheless, let us study the faith of our fathers, hide it in our hearts, love the truth and walk in it to the glory of Him Who alone called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Apart from this faith all is darkness.

In this faith we are always more than conquerors.

**THE STANDARD BEARER
MAKES A
THOUGHTFUL GIFT
FOR A SHUT-IN.**

EDITORIAL

Can a Classis Depose a Consistory? Revisited

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

In two recent issues of *The Banner* (July 18 and July 25) Editor Lester De Koster discusses this question in connection with a concrete case appealed from Classis Huron under the provisions of the CRC's Judicial Code and adjudicated by the 1980 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. Editor De Koster acted as the Consistory's advocate in this case, under the provisions of the Judicial Code. But Classis Huron, which has suspended the Consistory, was upheld in its right to do so both by the Appeals Committee, which heard the case, and by the Synod. Mr. De Koster expresses himself as being disillusioned with respect to the Judicial Code (which he himself helped to father) and as being in disagreement with Synod's upholding the classis in its action of suspending the consistory.

We are not interested in the concrete case between the consistory of Goderich, Ontario and Classis Huron. Nor are we interested in the matter of the Judicial Code, except to note that it certainly has not brought about ecclesiastical justice in the CRC as it was supposed to do. In fact, judging from the editor's report, the very opposite is true.

We are, however, interested in the principle of church polity involved and in the history connected with that principle, a history to which Editor De Koster himself alludes in his two editorials.

Without entering into the case itself, we must outline briefly what took place in order intelligibly to discuss the principle of church polity involved. Here is a condensed account, gleaned from the more detailed account in *The Banner*:

1. The consistory involved placed four members under silent censure. When these members did not submit to their creature, the consistory appealed to classis for help.
2. Classis appointed an investigating committee which, in due course, recommended that the consistory be sustained and a minister or elder be appointed to "work pastorally in the ...congregation under the authority of, and with the cooperation of, the consistory and minister for a

period of 2 months in order to build a relationship of trust and respect."

3. This report was sidetracked, and classis instead appointed a three-member committee "to pursue appropriate means to bring about reconciliation in consistory and congregation" and urged "the ... consistory to take steps which may lead to the lifting of the censure of the appellants."

4. This classical decision the consistory rejected.

5. Thereupon the classis not only insisted that the consistory obey, but also that it proceed to separate its minister from the congregation under Article 17 of the Church Order. (Note: The numbers of the articles in the CRC Church Order are not the same as those of the Church Order of Dordt.)

6. When the consistory refused to obey this decision of classis, the classis proceeded to suspend both the consistory and the pastor.

7. Pastor and consistory appealed their suspension to Synod under the Judicial Code. But both the Appeals Committee and Synod upheld the classis and rejected the appeal of the consistory.

It is about this case that Editor De Koster comments at length in the two issues of *The Banner* already mentioned. And in so doing he takes us back to the history of 1924-'26, as follows:

What, then, was the issue, which still is an issue?

Well, back in 1926, the late Rev. Gerrit Hoeksema wrote a book of 107 pages, published by Eerdmans, and entitled *Can A Classis Depose A Consistory?*

Before reading further, ask and answer that question for yourself. You will prefer the word "May" for the word, "Can," because "can" implies what one is able to get away with, while "may" implies what one has a right to do—and in Church politics, as in all other politics, there may be quite a gap between them. But ask yourself, now: may a classis depose a consistory?

Rev. Hoeksema wrote his book to give a "Yes" answer to his question, and many of you will know why. The Reverend Gerrit Hoeksema was among those who shared in the Reverend Herman Hoeksema's leaving the CRC and the consistory in view was

that of Eastern Avenue, Grand Rapids.

But in the middle of his lengthy argument, Reverend Hoeksema comes to a startling confession: "But to return to the question, the *Church Order* does not specifically and literally give to a Classis the right to depose a consistory." (Perhaps you should read that again!)

In a moment of candor, the captain torpedoed his own ship. A classis *may* not depose a consistory, if it be obedient to the *Church Order*! So does someone, who spends 118 other pages in arguing that a classis *can* do just that, encounter a moment of truth. But, like the seasoned Church politician that he was, Reverend Hoeksema had no trouble brushing aside his own confession. He quickly goes on to say (speaking, mind you, of his own *Church Order*!), "To a Reformed thinker, however, this means just as little as, for instance, that Scripture does not contain a specific command to baptize children" (p. 59). But he needs 118 pages to rationalize his position!

I was criticized the other day for seeming to suggest that *only* the liberal mind winks at the *Church Order*; I've never meant to suggest that, but if I had, here is a case that fits the other foot—for Reverend Hoeksema was no liberal. But given his principle, the *Church Order* "can" be twisted to 'prove' anything.

The cast of characters has changed, but the issue has not: Synod 1980 faced the same question raised by the two Reverends Hoeksema, except that it came in terms of suspension instead of deposition.

In this connection, in his second editorial on this subject Editor De Koster raises several questions and then answers them by means of a reference to Van Dellen and Monsma's *Revised Church Order Commentary*, as follows:

Any time your consistory imposes silent censure on members who choose not to keep it silent but instead go over your head to classis, what authority does classis have over your consistory? May it become a court, hear both sides, and perhaps require you to lift censure? May it require you to separate your pastor from the congregation if your consistory does not lift the censure? And may it suspend pastor and consistory together if its orders are not carried out?

In their wise and indispensably well informed *Revised Church Order Commentary*, Van Dellen and Monsma respond to our questions (in discussing Article 27) as follows: "A major assembly cannot force a minor assembly to accept and execute its decisions." Their grounds for saying this are discussed in an article appearing elsewhere in this BANNER. And after listing the principles implicit in Article 27, Van Dellen and Monsma go on to say: "If the Church of Christ ever does lose sight of these all-important principles, she will suffer for it."

A few comments are in order.

In the first place, I congratulate Editor De Koster on his stand in favor of the correct view of Reformed church polity. If he is in earnest about his

position, I suggest that he devote his retirement years to a crusade in the Christian Reformed Church which would have as its goal the adoption of this Reformed view, that a classis cannot lord it over a consistory, and, consequently, the righting of the wrong done not only in the Goderich/Huron case but also in 1924-1926 in the Hoeksema-Danhof-Ophoff history in Classis Grand Rapids East and Classis Grand Rapids West. After all, Mr. De Koster has endorsed the comment of Van Dellen and Monsma, "If the Church of Christ ever does lose sight of these all-important principles, she will suffer for it."

In the second place, I call attention to the fact that the Rev. Gerrit Hoeksema's question in his little book is, in spite of Dr. De Koster's comment, the correct one: "*Can* (not: *May*) a classis depose a consistory?" Mr. De Koster chooses to interpret "can" as implying "what one is able to get away with." But this was not Gerrit Hoeksema's question, nor is it the fundamental question which has troubled Reformed churches with respect to this issue. "Can" in this connection means: does a classis have the *inherent ability*, the *ecclesiastical power*, to depose a consistory? If so, then, of course, when such a classis presumes to depose officebearers, such officebearers are really and truly disciplined and deposed; and, in that case, everyone must recognize such deposition as valid. If not, then such deposition is not valid, has not truly taken place, and no one is obligated to recognize it. This, you see, was precisely the issue in 1924-'26. The officebearers involved—though now outside of the Christian Reformed communion—continued in their respective offices, continued to function, and continued to be recognized by their congregations as ministers, elders, and deacons.

In the third place, there are some historical inaccuracies in Editor De Koster's presentation:

1) He writes: "The Reverend Gerrit Hoeksema was among those who shared in the Reverend Herman Hoeksema's leaving the CRC, and the consistory in view was that of Eastern Avenue, Grand Rapids." Editor De Koster, of course, is in this statement perpetuating the myth that Rev. Herman Hoeksema *left* the Christian Reformed Church. In so doing, he almost leaves the impression that Gerrit Hoeksema also left: he "shared" in his leaving. The truth is that Herman Hoeksema—and Henry Danhof and George Ophoff and their consistories—were *ousted*. And Gerrit Hoeksema shared in hierarchical ouster of these officebearers.

2) Actually, the Rev. Gerrit Hoeksema was at that time a minister in Classis Grand Rapids West; and he had a direct share in the ouster of the Revs. Henry Danhof and George M. Ophoff and their consistories.

3) Technically Classis Grand Rapids East did not depose the Consistory of Eastern Avenue, but declared that the consistory by its own act of "insubordination to the proper ecclesiastical authorities" had "for the time being severed its connection with the Christian Reformed Church" and was "for the time being and until final determination in the case was made by the synod...denied all rights and privileges connected with the ecclesiastical connection of a consistory with the Christian Reformed Church." The classis did, however, suspend and depose Rev. Herman Hoeksema. What happened in Classis Grand Rapids East was that the classis was confused and tried to combine the Collegialistic and the Reformed conception of church polity, partly because the classis was advised and somewhat influenced by Dr. J. Van Lonkhuyzen, who long had fought in favor of the view that a classis cannot lord it over a consistory.

4) It was in Classis Grand Rapids West that the view of the Rev. Gerrit Hoeksema prevailed completely. In that classis they proceeded directly to depose the Revs. H. Danhof and G.M. Ophoff and the consistories of Kalamazoo First and Hope-Riverbend. As the Rev. Herman Hoeksema later wrote concerning Classis Grand Rapids West: "It attributes to itself the right at any time to pick up a quarrel with a local consistory or pastor or both, though there be no accusation against either of them; and in the course of that quarrel to depose the office-bearers, if they presume to disagree with its authority!"

"It brooks no opposition or contradiction! When

its commanding voice is heard, the consistories and ministers had better hasten to obey!"

"And its vengeance is swift as lightning!" (*The Protestant Reformed Churches In America*, pp. 246-247)

In the fourth place, I call attention to the fact that Dr. De Koster is not only fighting the old position of the Rev. Gerrit Hoeksema. But arrayed against him are such venerable Christian Reformed authorities as Prof. Heyns, Dr. Volbeda, Dr. Beets, yes, and even the Rev. Idzerd Van Dellen, who caved in and conceded the right of classis to depose officebearers when he was on the witness stand and under oath in the Eastern Avenue court case. The chief argument in those days was the argument of *periculum in mora*, "danger in delay."

Finally, it should be noted that Dr. De Koster is fighting the official position of his own denomination's broadest assembly. For in 1926 the Synod of the CRC put its *imprimatur*, its official stamp of approval, on the actions of Classes Grand Rapids East and West. In the Netherlands the same thing happened, beginning with the Geelkerken Case in 1926 and continuing with Schilder, Greijdanus, and hundreds of others at the Synod of Sneek-Utrecht in the 1940s.

Who knows? Perhaps De Koster will succeed where so many others have failed. I hope so. For I certainly agree with Monsma and Van Dellen, "If the Church of Christ ever does lose sight of these all-important principles, she will suffer for it."

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

September 15, 1980

Dear Timothy,

In a number of our letters we have been discussing the whole question of the conscience. There are a few ends which we ought to tie up before we turn our discussion to other matters.

In your last letter to me you made mention of the words of the apostle Paul which he wrote to Titus in 1:15, and you asked the question of how this related to the whole matter of conscience. The text itself reads: "Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is

nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."

I think, if I understand your question properly, that you have reference to some statements I made in connection with the conscience. In one instance I wrote that even the ungodly have a conscience which functions and which is the voice of God, through His revealed Word to be sure, which passes judgment upon their acts. Even the wicked know the difference between the rightness and

wrongness of their deeds. In connection with this idea, I spoke also of the fact that the wicked can (and do) sear their consciences with a hot iron so that these consciences speak no longer. Your question refers to the apostle's statement that the wicked have a defiled conscience to function properly—unless a defiled conscience is the same as a conscience seared with a hot iron.

The context of this passage in Titus 1 contains a warning to Titus to be on his guard against Jewish teachers who were attempting to bring the Church of Christ back to the bondage of the Old Testament law. Calvin, in his commentary, suggests that Paul's main concern was to warn against those Jewish teachers who wanted to impose upon the Christians the law which distinguished between clean and unclean animals. Whether this is true or not is not immediately clear from the text. But whatever may be the immediate reference, it is clear that these Jewish teachers were robbing the believers of their Christian liberty and leading them back to bondage. Calvin writes that, among the dangers of this, was that "a snare of bondage was laid upon the conscience." Calvin is correct when he points out that this attempt to foist a legal bondage on the Christians was foolish on the face of it because the people of God are pure, sanctified through the blood of Christ. And to the pure all things are pure. There is no need to lay any restrictions upon these people of God. Everything is pure for them because they are themselves pure. But at the same time, it is equally foolish to attempt to lay restrictions upon unbelievers because they are polluted, and, because of their pollution, all things are polluted to them. What good do restrictions of any kind do in that case?

To show the extent and completeness of that defilement of the ungodly, Paul mentions their minds and their consciences as being defiled. By "mind" Paul means here, not only that one faculty of the understanding in man, but man's entire psychological life including his mind, will, and emotions. All is polluted. The mind is corrupted so that it can know and believe only the lie, for it is filled with darkness. The will is corrupted so that it can only choose for sin. The emotions are corrupted so that they are all sinful affections. In fact, Calvin makes the remark in a sermon on this passage (quoted in part in the commentary) that this pollution is so extensive that man even pollutes absolutely everything in God's world which he touches.

In this way also his conscience is polluted. His conscience still functions properly (until such a time as it is hardened); but regardless of what his conscience says, he goes his own wicked and evil way. His conscience is so polluted that it lacks the

power to direct him in the ways of God's holy law even though that same conscience condemns him for his sin.

And this leads us to a discussion of the role of the conscience in relation to mental health.

It is a very dangerous and serious matter for a person to do something against his own conscience. There is a motto that was, some years ago, rather common: "Let your conscience be your guide." There is, I think, nothing wrong with this motto as long as we understand that the conscience must be enlightened by the Word of God. You will recall that we emphasized in a former letter that the conscience is never the voice of God which speaks to us independently of His Word. This is an important point to remember. There are always people who speak of a course of action which they are determined to follow which is clearly wrong. But they justify this by an appeal to their conscience. And they, very piously, claim that they must do this because to fail to do it would be to act contrary to their conscience. But this is so much nonsense and is very dangerous as well. Never does the conscience speak apart from the Word of God, and never does the conscience tell us to do something which is contrary to the Word of God. In this sense of the word, the Word of God is alone our guide in life. After all, God's Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light upon our path. It is the *only* lamp and light which we have. We must not look for another.

The conscience of the child of God, therefore, speaks always in connection with the Word of God. You must understand, however, that this does not always mean that every man's conscience tells him the identical thing. There is, in the life of the Christian, the whole area of Christian liberty. And the conscience stands closely connected to that. Paul writes extensively of this in I Corinthians 10. It is worth our while to quote the whole passage (vss. 23-33): "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, (i.e., in the market place where meat that had been sacrificed to idols was sold), that eat, asking no question for conscience sake. For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice to idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? For if I by grace be a

partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

Paul is saying here that there are many things, within the limits of Christian liberty, which it is wrong for one believer to do and right for another—all depending on the conscience. We have a very clear case of this, e.g., in the sin of alcoholism. A person who has been delivered from the slavery of this sin by God's grace knows that he cannot touch any kind of alcoholic drink again. His conscience too will forbid this. For him, nevertheless, to go against his conscience and drink a can of beer would be a terrible sin. But for another saint, a can of beer on occasion would not be wrong. He does not violate his conscience in this regard.

It is in this way that we understand that the voice of God within our consciousness which comes in connection with the Word, comes also in connection with all the circumstances of our life. God passes judgment upon every one of our deeds within our consciousness, but His judgment is perfect; and it is perfect because it is expressed in perfect harmony with all our life, with all its circumstances, in the place and calling in life in which the Lord has set us.

It is in this sense of the word that our conscience can certainly be our guide.

And it is in this sense of the word that it is so important that we never violate our conscience. If one persists in violating his conscience, one of two things is going to happen. It may be that, through continuously committing the same sin, his conscience is finally stilled. As we mentioned before, this is dreadful and is tantamount to the hardening of the heart. In the believer this can happen for a time (although never completely) until God in His mercy breaks through our wall of resistance and brings us to our knees in sorrow and confession. The other consequence of violating our conscience is that we live with an evil conscience. This remains, more or less, in our consciousness all the time and results in deep inner distress, anxiety, fear, worry, turmoil of soul and the terrible

consciousness of guilt. There can be, for a man, no peace and joy, no happiness and contentment as he lives in violation of his conscience. As this sense of guilt and this deep-seated dread continue to plague him he will be affected by it in all areas of his life. He will not be able to function in his calling any more as he ought before the face of God. He will, if I may use an illustration or two, begin to snap at his children and his wife; he will become dissatisfied with his lot; he will not work as he ought in his daily calling. His whole life will be affected. And, when someone points out to him that he is not being faithful before God in his daily calling, if he refuses to confess the wrong that plagues his conscience, he will strike out in anger, blame others for his problems, try to shift the responsibility for his wrong to other people or to circumstances in his life, and thus aggravate his conscience more than ever.

It is clear to see that this can become a very complicated matter. One sin leads to another and one wrong brings other wrongs in its wake. And the conscience is violated in more ways and aggravated by this all until the problems increase beyond a person's ability to cope with them. The man who snaps at his wife and his children knows he ought not to do this, but seems incapable of stopping. He will often tell his pastor: "I know that it is wrong, but I cannot help myself. Tell me how to stop doing it." There is no easy answer. It does not help merely to tell him to quit. For his anger against others is the result of another sin, more deeply imbedded in his soul. And nothing will help until the distress of his conscience is healed through confession and the healing power of the blood of Christ.

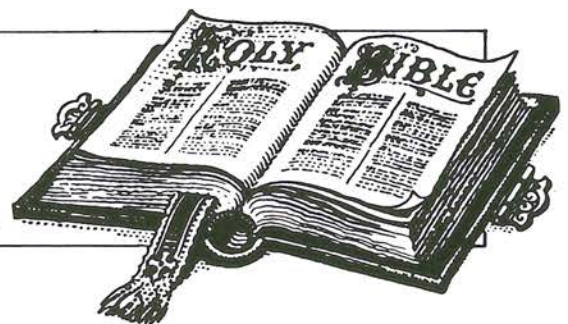
It is exactly because of the complexity of it all that, if a person persists for a long time to walk with an evil conscience before God, he loses track of the tangled threads that go to make up his problem. When he comes to his pastor for help, he is literally unable to tell his pastor what the trouble is. He acts in strange and un-Scriptural ways, but does not understand the reason for it.

All can often be traced back to the conscience.

But we must terminate the letter. Farewell.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

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FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Galations

Rev. G. Lubbers

PAUL IS JESUS' BRANDED SLAVE-SERVANT
continued, (Galatians 6:17)

Do not overlook the great truth, the well-established fact, that I, Paul, bear such singularly distinguishing marks—"stigmatē." None of the enemies of the Cross bear such marks, do they? It was Paul's peculiar relationship to "Jesus" which caused Paul to receive these marks, these welts in his body, which never would be removed on this side of his death of martyrdom outside of the city of Rome. The KJV followed the reading which has "Lord Jesus." However, the best attested readings have simply "Jesus." And that is in this case very meaningful.

Let us try to see this.

When Paul tries to show the real, historical identity of the Crucified One, he speaks of Jesus, the One Who came to save His people from their sins. This is the Name JESUS which was on the title of accusation on the Cross at Calvary. Several texts will indicate Paul's usage of the name "Jesus." Writes Paul, "...for if he that cometh to thee preach another *Jesus*, whom we have not preached (heralded),...ye might well bear with him." Here is the point of identity, historical identity. Of particular interest I find what Paul writes repeatedly concerning the name "Jesus" in II Cor. 4:5ff. "For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus, and ourselves servants for *Jesus'* sake." That is the exact point that Paul underscores here in Gal. 6:17. In II Cor. 4:10 he speaks about "bearing about the dying of the Lord *Jesus* in the (his) body." Does this not include the "Stigmata" of being a slave for *Jesus'* sake and the gospel's sake? In this connection Paul speaks four times of the name "Jesus" in the verse 10, 11, 14 in II Cor. 4. This is well worth our special notice.

This name of Jesus is the precious name of God's holy Child, the only name given under heaven. It is the name given to the Son of God in the flesh, Jehovah our righteousness. He is the Jesus of Nazareth, whom the enemies' wicked hands nailed to the Cross. But God raised him from the dead (Acts 3:13; 4:13, 17, 18). Those who hate the Christ say "Jesus accursed" (I Cor. 12:1-3). The name of

Jesus is the hated name by Jewish unbelief. He is the chief cornerstone, this hated Jesus, Who is become the chief of the corner; He is elect, precious in the sight of God, a very chosen cornerstone on which the entire church is built as a spiritual temple (Acts 4:11; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16; Matt. 21:42).

The marks of *Jesus* Paul bears! He is unmistakably a slave-servant of this Jesus. Behold his stigmatē! Jesus claims him as his own (Gal. 1:15). Paul was a chosen vessel of Christ to suffer many things for Jesus' sake. It was all given him out of grace, wondrous grace (Acts 9:15, 16; Phil. 1:29; I Cor. 15:1, 10; Eph. 3:8, 9).

GREAT BLESSING TO THE GALATIAN BRETHREN (Galatians 6:18)

When we compare this final farewell-blessing with the blessing in Galatians 1:1-5 we notice that this is a very mellow, touching, and warm farewell from this great apostle, who loves this church so very dearly. The last term of this farewell is "brethren." We have called attention to this term at length when we explained Gal. 6:1. We shall not repeat in any detail.

To these brethren Paul speaks of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." This Christ is now viewed as the exalted Christ, Lord over all. Of him Peter spoke on Pentecost, saying, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, both *Lord* and *Christ*" (Acts 2:36). This is the One, Who, because of the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9). He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings (Phil 2:11; Rev. 19:16). And He is our Lord, Who has bought us with His own blood from our sins, and has washed and cleansed us by His Spirit. Yes, He is as the exalted Lord the very effulgence of the glory of God, the very expressed image of God's being, Who has inherited a name far above that of the greatest of angels about the great white throne (Heb. 1:1-4; Col. 1:17; Eph. 1:20). He is *our* Lord, Who has purchased and redeemed us with His own blood. He is the Lord of the entire church. And Paul included himself in this "benediction." He does not say, the "grace of *your* Lord

Jesus Christ be with your spirit." Nor does he say, the Grace of the *Churches'* Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Paul is here an ambassador, but he *remains a member* with the other members of the church, when he expresses this final benediction. I do not doubt that the deep and throbbing consciousness that a minister of the Gospel, too, is such a member of the church, and receives the very blessing which he "lays upon the congregation" causes him instinctively to close his eyes, as being at once a grateful recipient with the church of this blessing. This is a very spiritually delicate matter, where the minister takes the shoes from off his feet! How delicately and lovingly Paul speaks of "*our* Lord Jesus Christ" in all of his epistles to the churches. This is particularly true in all the benedictions which Paul utters (Rom 16:24; I Cor. 1:2; 16:23; II Cor. 1:2, 3; Gal. 1:3; 6:14, 18; Eph. 1:3; 5:20, 6:24; Phil. 4:23; I Thess. 5:9, 28; Philemon 25).

From this "*our*" Lord comes "*grace*" which can only come from Him because it belongs to Him, merited for us the church, the freeborn sons of Sarah. This is all that the Galatians need. They need grace for grace from the fulness of Christ. The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth became through Jesus Christ (John 1:16, 17). All the grace which Paul has so highly extolled and so ably defended in this letter must come upon the Galatian believers!

It must be particularly with their "*spirit*." It was the great emphasis which Paul placed on the work of the Spirit of Christ in this entire letter, which seems to be the background of Paul's nomenclature here. It was the Spirit of Christ which testifies with "*our spirit*" (Rom. 8:15, 16). In this Spirit we cry, Abba, Father. Paul is not speaking of "*spirit*" in general, but he is speaking of those whose "*spirit*" is quickened by the Spirit of regeneration, so that in their spirit they consciously know God and have fellowship with Him as reborn sons and daughters, so that they bring forth spiritual sacrifices to God (I Peter 2:5). This grace is the grace of Christ through the Holy Spirit with the Galatians. In this bounty of the Spirit Paul shares in his "*spirit*" with the "*spirit*" of these Galatians. Thus the church serves God in an acceptable way. God is a Spirit and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Paul ends with this same emphasis on the "*spirit*" in Phil. 4:23; II Tim. 4:22; Philemon 25.

When our "*spirit*" is touched by grace we sing and jubilate in the Lord our righteousness. Mary sings, being filled with the Spirit, "*My spirit shall rejoice in God my Savior.*" And thus "*in her spirit*" she sings—she sings prophetically the glad strains of the Prophetess, Hannah. She sang in a time when the word of God was scarce in Israel. Men and

women did not jubilate in the Lord (Luke 1:46; I Sam. 2:1-10). But when the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with our spirit, then the content of the soul which would magnify the Lord, our God, speaks out in glad and joyful confession! Such a church the Galatians must be! Only thus shall they be when the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with their spirit! And this Spirit of Christ must constantly give our spirit that grace. By grace are ye saved from moment till moment; it is the constant flow of the gift of God! It is particularly noted in Scripture that John the Baptist grew and waxed in spirit. He grew in spirit in the preparation of his calling as the forerunner of the Lord. And in this strength of his spirit, wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit, he can speak in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17).

Now this fervency of spirit (Rom. 12:11) must also be the portion of these Galatians. They must in no sense of the term halt between two opinions. All is of Christ or nothing is of Him. They must not be as those who mumble and peep. They must fearlessly and gladly confess that salvation is by grace alone, without works of law which we perform. They must come together and gladly confess in their spirit that salvation is of God alone, the Lord our righteousness. And thus glory in the cross of Jesus Christ, by which they are crucified to the world and the world is crucified to them! This is what Paul would impress on their souls and minds in this bold and rugged handwriting, "*with mine own hand*"!

These words of Paul shall stand. They have stood throughout the ages. They are fresh as the dew of the morning, causing the bruised reed to revive and the dormant faith to respond. They are as the balm of Gilead in the stricken conscience of the believers. They are precious words, than which there are none more worth keeping. Keep them; they are your life. Believe them and you shall stand unashamed in the day when Christ shall judge the living and the dead. Here is the fountain opened to the house of David and we drink from the wells of salvation (Zech. 13:1; Is. 12:3).

And now Paul ends with the solemn and meaningful "*Amen*." All that Paul has written bears the stamp of the "*Amen of God, the true and faithful witness.*" Who is the beginning of the creation of God (Rev. 3:14). For the term "*Amen*" means, it shall surely be, it is certain to come to pass. It is the eternal Word and oath of God, Who cannot and Who does not lie. Paul is so certain that all he writes is yea in Christ, and in him Amen, to the glory of God the Father, that he dares to call down the anathema of God upon anyone who would preach anything else than what he here writes, preaches, and defends in this letter (II Cor.

1:18-21 (Gal. 1:7, 8). This Amen is the seal of God upon this writing!

And so this letter is closed as solemnly as it was begun, full of indignation against false preachers, and tender as a father to his children, now reproving, then exhorting, or pleading; it was with birthpangs that the apostle writes here. Would that he could change his voice! He will labor till Christ be formed in these believers once more.

That is also our aim in these labors of inter-

preting this great letter. It is a work which entailed much joyous labor over a few years. These years did not seem long to me for the love of writing on this great gospel story which never grows old. It tells of God's great love for us His freeborn children, born from above, Jerusalem the golden. May these our feeble and imperfect efforts be blessed by the Lord, our God. I commend this work to Him, and lay it upon His altar of consecration, and look humbly for the reward of a weak, but faithful servant. Amen.

Report from Singapore

BELOVED IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST:

Greetings in the name of the Lord and King of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we labor on your behalf. Many many things have happened since our last report to you. All the things that have taken place in the last few months are evidences of how busy we are being kept in Singapore. Also we rejoice to see the young people of the G.L.T.S. so actively and zealously involved in so many different areas of labors in the church of Jesus Christ. Our own young people in America could learn much from their example. It is indeed amazing how much of the work and activity of the church in Singapore is carried on by young people. So many of the things that happen are particularly exciting because they are things which we would probably never experience in America. I can only give you a very brief account of some of the major events of the last months.

We rejoiced to have Mr. and Mrs. Dewey Engelsma with us for an extended period of time. Since the Engelsmas had been here on two previous occasions they were well known and well loved by the G.L.T.S. They performed many labors in the midst of the G.L.T.S. and greatly helped and encouraged your missionary and his family. Especially appreciated was the much wise counsel that they gave on almost countless matters to the young people here. Really to appreciate the value and significance of this counsel you must remember that the majority of members of the G.L.T.S. do not have Christian mothers and fathers from whom to ask counsel. The home of the Engelsmas was visited by members of the G.L.T.S.

almost every day that they were here. It was with much sorrow and the shedding of many tears that the G.L.T.S. bade farewell to the Engelsmas.

By the time that you read this report one of the young couples from here will be with you in the U.S.A., the Lord willing. Mr. and Mrs. Lau Chin Kwee were just married. They will be in the U.S.A. for a period of about two years while Mr. Lau takes up studies at our seminary. We all give thanks unto the Lord that He has opened the way for their going to the U.S.A. There is a very great need for the training of young men for the ministry. The fields are ripe for harvest and the laborers are few. I have been giving seminary instruction to Mr. Lau Chin Kwee and Mr. Tan Boon Kwang for the past couple of months. I have been giving instruction in homiletics and hermeneutics. These classes will continue even after Mr. Lau goes to the U.S.A. Another class of instruction in Greek grammar will be given to Mr. Francis Quek. As we see the work expanding here and the great potential for the work it is not at all unrealistic to think of three or more ministers for the work.

In the middle of June the G.L.T.S. had its annual June camp retreat. This retreat was held in Penang, Malaysia which, if you look on your maps, you will find is in upper Malaysia. We traveled to Penang with a group of members of the G.L.T.S. on a chartered bus. This is a trip of about 16 hours. I could easily write this whole article just telling you about this retreat. We had some really memorable experiences travelling through Malaysia. The retreat itself was a most blessed experience. I was asked to speak four different times during this

retreat. I gave a series of messages on "Our Christian Pilgrimage." The fourth message was on the subject of "God's Purpose in Marriage." There was much opportunity for personal counselling and a good opportunity to get better acquainted with some of the members of the G.L.T.S. We received a very good impression of the godliness of the young people of the G.L.T.S.

During the time since our last report we had two marriages in the G.L.T.S. These were the first in the G.L.T.S. and therefore they were very special. Since I am not a Singaporean citizen I was not able to do the actual marrying in either of these weddings. However, I did in each case preach the wedding sermon. The unique thing about this experience was that in both cases the sermon was translated into the Chinese language because a large part of the audience could not understand English. It is very encouraging to see these marriages and to look for the ones that are coming in the future. The G.L.T.S. will be greatly strengthened by the establishment of Christian homes. The new homes are already very much the centers of Christian fellowship.

No doubt the greatest highlight in all of our ministry here so far came on the Lord's Day on July 13. On this Lord's Day the sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to six young people and we heard the confession of faith of another one. It is a very rare experience for any of our ministers to baptize an adult believer and especially rare to baptize six at once. For this baptism service our Reformed liturgy was used. Each of the candidates were asked one by one to give answer to the five questions of the form and then each came forward to be baptized. Several of the young people that attended the pre-baptism class received very strong opposition from their pagan homes to their being baptized. Some were even completely prevented from being baptized. We stand amazed at the persecution these young people have to face in their own homes because they are Christians. Baptism is considered, and rightly so, the official mark of being a Christian. While some parents would permit their young people to attend the worship services of the G.L.T.S. they have very strong opposition to baptism. We are greatly encouraged by the faith of the young people in face of persecution and opposition. Only a couple of weeks ago we began a new pre-baptism class at the request of several young people. This class now has eight members who desire to be baptized.

The official membership of the G.L.T.S. is now 78. We continue to have good attendance at the worship services, especially in the last few weeks. Our attendance lately is over 110. The Lord continues therefore to add numbers to us. We

continue very often to see new faces at the worship services.

The organization and institution of the church here has been considerably slowed down. This is due especially to the decision of our last synod that the church could not be organized here before the young people are ready to subscribe to our Three Forms of Unity. This decision came as quite a large disappointment to the G.L.T.S. and also to your missionary. The heart and center of our work, almost from the time of our coming here, has been to work zealously toward organization. Now we see this organization postponed for at least a year. The reason for disappointment over this decision is not because we do not see the need of the adoption of creeds for the newly organized church here. In fact there is much encouraging evidence that there is a very great concern about a creedal basis for the church. However, it is strongly felt that creeds cannot be adopted before they are carefully studied. Such careful study will take quite some time. Presently there is no final decision on this matter in the G.L.T.S. The decision of our synod seems to be at least somewhat accepted and there is an attempt to work in its framework. It is our earnest prayer that the G.L.T.S. can be led through a careful study of our creeds and to an eventual adoption of them. This will take quite some time and a lot of instruction and learning. We must remember that the G.L.T.S. has never before had the opportunity to study the Reformed Creeds.

Because of the growing numbers, we are impressed with the urgent need for a new place of worship. Added to the fact of our growing numbers is the fact that word is out that the Kampong in which we are worshipping will be demolished in the next few years to make room for urban redevelopment. To purchase a building suitable for worship would be astronomical in cost and most likely far beyond the means of the G.L.T.S. Suitable places to rent are virtually unavailable. The search for a new place is actively being pursued.

At the end of July we had the privilege of having the Hoeksemas here with us in Singapore for nine days. As some of you have probably heard from them personally or otherwise, they too were kept very busy when they were here. Prof. Hoeksema was asked to give a series of lectures on the general theme of "The History of the Reformation and the Five Points of Calvinism." The members of the G.L.T.S. did a lot of work publicizing these lectures. They were held in a local Presbyterian Church. The response was very good. For three nights in a row we saw audiences of about 200 people. We look for continuing and lasting effects of these lectures. We were impressed by several things. First, there seems to be a goodly number of

people in Singapore interested in the Reformed Faith. Secondly, we were heartened by the evident appreciation for the ministry of our churches and for the truth that we hold dear. Furthermore, it reminds us again of the potential of the work in Singapore.

Speaking of the potential of the work, we see this in several areas. One area of potential is for expanding the work into Malaysia. Already the G.L.T.S. has contact with a group of young people in Terengganu, Malaysia who are very interested in the Reformed Faith. This group has in the past contacted some of our churches in the U.S.A. for our Protestant Reformed literature. Presently the G.L.T.S. has been asked to send large packets of tape recordings to them. The present need is to concentrate on the work in Singapore to establish the church here. Also we do not have the manpower to be able to help the group in Malaysia extensively. There is further a great need to begin a Chinese ministry in the G.L.T.S. Even with present contact which we have with the older Chinese-speaking community, if we had the resources we could begin this work immediately. Mr. Boon Kwang, one of the students for the ministry, is concentrating his efforts in learning the Chinese and becoming equipped to be a Chinese minister

for the G.L.T.S. On a broader scene we see very much that Singapore is becoming a center in the Far East. Many of the countries of the Far East have closed their doors to any Western missionaries or even any missionaries at all. Other denominations see Singapore as the main center for the training and sending out of missionaries.

I have told you in the past something of the pagan culture in which we live. We see so many striking incidents of this all around us. This month is known in Singapore as the month of the Ghosts. This is a time when the spirits of the departed dead are released for a time from hell to roam the earth. Many rituals are performed on account of this, some of which are intended to entertain these invisible spirits. Near our apartment there is a large tent which serves as a Chinese theater where performances are put on to entertain the spirits. For quite a few successive evenings we have heard the loud drum beatings and symbol clashing of these rituals until very late into the night.

How wonderful that the Lord has His people here and that we have the great privilege to labor in their midst. What a joy it is to see the effect and progress of the preaching of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in this place.

Rev. Arie den Hartog

GUEST ARTICLE

Northern Light

Mr. M.A. Straayer

This letter comes to you from our most northerly congregation; greetings in the name of our Lord.

It is more than a year ago that we informed you through these pages of our *wel en wee*, and today we can start off by mentioning that we are still the only congregation in our denomination situated in Canada, a country larger than the United States. In the middle of the prairie, our congregation has enjoyed continual growth also in the past year; from 64 we now count 81 members, and three expectant mothers.

The Lord willing, by the end of our fifth year of existence we should have grown from 34 at institution to 84 members. We have, therefore, seen an almost exact yearly growth of 10 members, 2

families (one from inside and one from outside), 3 births, and 2½ professions of faith per year.

We now count 16 families and 7 confessing individuals. We have five older families, three middle group families, and eight young families. Since our church was instituted, 12 babies were baptized and there have been 11 confessions of faith, for a total presently of 39 confessing members and 42 baptized members.

Figures can be boring; but they also in a real sense show us our blessings, blessings we don't realize so much in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, also in the everyday life of our congregation and denomination. How richly the Lord is blessing us!

Not all was happiness. Our congregation also experienced sadness when four souls (one family) which did become members in 1978 left us at the beginning of 1979. It is sad to hear the word of the Lord, "They went out because they were not of us." There was further sorrow when a baptized teenager was erased; that is painful, and then there is nothing left but prayer. Also then we may experience that in these things God's grace is sufficient for us, and that God's children experience also then that the worrying and the sadness is completely taken away and we can leave it all in the hands of our God, who becomes all in all.

We still are worshipping in the same place, although it had been sold and now again is being sold. Actually, we should buy it, but there is just not enough money to swing the deal. It would also add an additional \$24,000.00 per year to our budget; and that is just too much at this time. We do realize that in the future we will never be able to buy a property such as this at the present asking price. We are thankful when also in these things we did and do experience the communion, the love, the care and compassion from our sister churches in financial help.

As our congregation grows older, we are again growing back into that old faith and knowledge which we once had, but which we had lost. We do experience a spiritual growth as well as growth in numbers. As years go by, we feel also that we become more part of the total denomination, and in a direct sense feel more attuned to its life.

Among the new families this year is one family (5 souls) from Calgary. This family moved 190 miles to become members of our church; and I know that there was joy not only in Edmonton and Lynden and Prospect Park—and now Singapore—but also in heaven.

Our outreach in Calgary has at present come to a stop. Sometimes one thinks this is the place to start, for surely God still must have a remnant here; this is a big city, here must be prospects to start a church, to do church extension work. And one wonders if not in so doing he passes by the place where the Lord calls us to labour. Something of this is our experience. While traveling to Calgary (190 miles south of us), we bypassed Lacombe (80 miles south of us). We didn't consider Lacombe, never looked at Lacombe. But today 12 of our members live in Lacombe (2 families and 4 individuals).

Today these members travel every Sunday a 160 mile round trip to church. And at present our minister goes every other Wednesday to Lacombe to study the Belgic Confession with our members and visitors. May the Lord bless this endeavour.

We often wonder about our labour of church extension; much of our mission effort does not seem to bear fruit. *And yet....* Last year Rev. Harbach expressed some of that feeling to me when I was on business in Victoria. Here was a field, and here he laboured faithfully; and there did not seem to be any growth. *And yet* our first member from Lacombe heard the first Protestant Reformed preaching from Rev. Harbach in Victoria while visiting his sister during his winter holidays. When he became a member of our church, he did not have much hope for more members in the Lacombe area, not even his brothers; but today they are members, and then another family and one other individual from Lacombe joined. Since Rev. Moore started teaching in Lacombe, another family has joined, and their infant daughter has just been baptized in our church. The brother said he was never going to travel 80 miles to go to church, but the Lord's call is irresistible.

We marvel at the Lord's doing; His ways are not our ways. He gives the increase as He pleases and where He pleases. Our thoughts and our planning are brought to naught, and it makes one realize he must sit still and listen to the call from Macedonia. Oh, the apostles also never considered Macedonia. And when we hear the call, let us not expect large numbers and/or fast growth. No, we must expect to come to Philippi and find no Sabbath services or observance; only a few women (no men) gathered by the river (no worship place) that were still trying to understand the Word. And out of that small beginning God started the march of His church in Europe.

May the Lord use us, even us; and may we hear the call from Macedonia. May we be faithful to the faith once delivered to the fathers; and may we be found willing to go to Philippi, yea, even to the uttermost ends of the earth. Then, in faithful obedience, we may expect blessings, even great things. Then our times may be dark, and the revelation of the Antichrist at hand, but we may still obey God's command and enlarge the tent. Then future generations may still say of us, "By faith...."

Know the standard and follow it.
Read The Standard Bearer

IN HIS FEAR

Keeping the Fortress

Rev. Wayne Bekkering

The pressure on the Christian home in our day is tremendous. That the institution of the Christian home still stands is a wonder of God's grace. Satan has raged and wooed, and yet the Christian home still stands and will stand until Christ comes again. Yet the pressure mounts.

Satan has organized and mobilized an army of female soldiers ready to batter the fortress of the Christian home. The beauty of Satan's military is that it is "all volunteer" and that you can stay at home and fight. In Satan's army there are both active and reserve troops. The active liberators plan the strategy and mount the offensive, while the reserve troops carefully study the battle plan, implement it to the extent that they are able, and gain new recruits. What Satan's valiant liberty-seekers have in view is to free their poor unliberated sisters from the smelly holds of the home.

The irony of the situation is that Christian wives and women are not "poor unliberated sisters," but are unspeakably rich and free in Christ Jesus. In fact, to be "liberated" by Satan's freedom fighters is unbelievable bondage. Neither are the would-be liberators "sisters," but evil foes. The "smelly holds of the home" though not without toil and trouble is the place where our covenant God commands His richest blessing.

The battle line is clear cut. With respect to the home the Scripture speaks much. Women are called to be keepers at home (Titus 2:5). The idea of the "keeper" in the text is not a military term, but keeping the home certainly involves a battle. To keep the home is to wage mighty battle against Satan and his army.

The Christian home we view as the fortress to be kept. The keepers are faithful obedient wives. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds (II Cor. 10:4). The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, gives all that is needed to stand fast to victory.

The keepers' first line of defense is to *occupy* the

fortress. Satan and his liberators have a whole arsenal full of ploys to get the keepers to leave their post of duty.

FIRE ONE! Women *need* to get away.

Satan has strategically placed a child care center just around the corner and has it staffed with liberated "sisters" who just adore children (but have none of their own).

The wary keeper does not venture far, so as to be there if needed. A strange courage bolsters the keeper the more she goes out and the longer she stays away.

Now, where to go? That is a problem especially in enemy territory. There is coffee with "girls." But the keeper returns wounded by gossip, slander, and backbiting. There is shopping. Again the keeper returns, wounded this time by covetousness, discontent, and financial folly.

FIRE TWO! We need extra income. Inflation makes it necessary. If there is going to be a fortress to keep, the keeper has to work out of the home. That logic sounds a bit strange. What is the criterion of "need of extra income"? Lord's Day 50 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks: "Which is the fourth petition (of the Lord's Prayer)?" The answer: "Give us this day our daily bread; that is, be pleased to provide us with all things necessary for the body, that we may thereby acknowledge thee to be the only fountain of all good, and that neither our care nor industry, nor even thy gifts, can profit us without thy blessing; and therefore that we may withdraw our trust from all creatures, and place it alone in thee."

FIRE THREE! The mother needs to work to help provide a Christian education for the children. This, Satan believes, is his blockbuster: the principle and the practical tied together. He knows that the moment the mother walks out of the door she has given her children quite an education. She has taught them that what God says in His Word is either not true or it is unimportant. Christian education is required in the Word of God, but never, never at the mortal expense of the

home—the loss of the keeper. There must be other ways. The keeper had better spend her time in the home laboring from morning until night (Prov. 31), helping to provide a Christian education for her children. There God will bless and prosper her labors. If and when the day comes when honestly one cannot provide Christian education without the mother working out, then we must keep the home intact and the keeper in the home. That is order of the Word of God.

FIRE FOUR! This is one of Satan's most frequently used and effective shots. This one Satan launches right into the fortress. The keeper remains in the fortress, but is rendered unable to function because she is glued for hours to a certain electronic device. This device is programmed almost entirely by Satan's armed forces. This device is aimed most directly at the keeper and is calculated to inflict a wound upon her. The strange thing about the wound that Satan inflicts with this device is that it feels so good that the keeper keeps going back to be wounded again.

FIRE FIVE! This is one of Satan's long range missiles designed ultimately to lure the keeper out of the fortress, thereby to destroy it.

Titus 2:4 says that the young women should be taught by the older women to love their husbands, and to love their children.

The thrust of Satan's missile is to emphasize that children need a lot of time and attention, and that it costs a lot of money to insure the quality of life and education that they deserve.

Family planning is heralded to be the program of health and safety that keeps the keeper from experiencing the agony and embarrassment of not being able to insure the "accepted standard" of life quality.

The keeper may take the position of faith that God is the One Who will plan her family. She is quickly assured by friend and foe that such is folly and not faith. After all God gave us a mind to use. Besides, if everyone thought like that, soon there would be no standing room on this planet. And think of the quality of life!

The keeper persists, "Will God give me more children than are good for me? Do not all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose?" "That really does not apply; besides, that would be tempting God," is the answer. "How does one then make such a determination?" asks the keeper. The answer: "Reason." "Human reason." "Sanctified human reason."

The confused keeper points to the text and shows that the word "children" is plural. "How many

does that mean?" Quickly the answer is given, "2.3." "How did you make that determination?" The answer, "Reason." "Human reason." "Sanctified human reason."

Soon the 2.3 children are in school and the poor keeper is bored, and unfulfilled with nothing to do. What is the solution to her problem? Satan's long range missile finds its target.

Is there comfort and promise of victory for the weary keeper in her daily battle? The enemies' arguments seem to have weight—the pressing weight of popular opinion. Besides, the daily requirement of motherhood sometimes makes the keeper ask, "Is it worth it?" In her weary vigil she looks to God for help. Will God bless her? Will He defend her against many foes?

God graciously puts into the hand of the prayerful keeper the shield of faith wherewith she is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. He gives her the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Faith, God assures her in I John 5:4, is the victory that overcomes the world. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). This shows her that faith forms a solid confidence that undergirds her.

Faith is not some vague, subjective something, but for the child of God it gives an objective comfort out of the Word. Scripture always directs us to God, and God is the object of our faith.

We believe, don't we, that God by His eternal counsel and providence so governs and directs that all things come not by chance, but by His fatherly hand. In Scripture God reveals Himself to us as our God and Father for Jesus' sake. He assures us that we can rely so entirely on Him that we have no doubt but that He will provide us with all things necessary for soul and body. Whatever trials and difficulties He sends upon us in this valley of tears He turns to our advantage. (See Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 9 & 10.)

The keeper has the assurance that she shall be saved in (literally: through) childbearing if she continues in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety (I Tim. 2:15). Rev. Engelsma, in his excellent book on *Marriage*, writes concerning this text on page 78. "Motherhood is hard. But the answer for women who profess godliness is not to escape it, as is possible today. For she is saved by childbearing. The apostle certainly means the spiritual salvation of Christ crucified and risen. Ordinarily, the eternal salvation of the believing woman is tied up with childbearing. It is not the case that the woman enjoys salvation for the first time when she bears a child. Neither is it so, that childbearing itself saves in any sense. The text

shows this when it adds: 'if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.' Rather, childbearing is ordinarily the way, the earthly way of life, in which God saves believing women in the sense of maintaining their salvation and enriching it."

"Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the

fruit of the womb is his reward" (Psalm 127:3). God thus yields His blessing on the faithful keeper. Though many seek to draw her out of the fortress of the Christian home, and to shame her position, yet God defends her. And if God be for her, who can be against her?

Book Reviews

COMMENTARY ON JOHN'S GOSPEL, by Frederick Louis Godet; Kregel Publications, 1978; 1112 pages, \$19.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

Frederick Godet is probably not too well known to many of our readers, although in the field of New Testament scholarship he has earned for himself an important name. A word of introduction, therefore, is probably in order. The publishers tell us that he lived from 1812-1900 and "was one of the most influential Swiss Protestant Reformed scholars of his day. He was born at Neufchatel. . . , educated at the University of Neufchatel and studied Theology at Bonn and Berlin under Neander and was ordained to the ministry in 1836. From 1850 to 1873 he was professor of Biblical Exegesis and Critical Theology in Neufchatel at the Theological School of the National Swiss Church of the canton. In 1873, he became one of the founders of the Free Evangelical Church of Neufchatel and professor of New Testament Exegesis in the Free Evangelical Theological School. Godet was known for his firm defense of the Orthodox Christian position. He stood against the growing liberalism in Protestant theology and schools of his day. . . ."

This commentary is one of Godet's most important works and, as is evident from its length, is an exhaustive study of the fourth gospel. It is, however, a very technical work. In an introduction of 239 pages, the author treats all the critical problems which arise in connection with the gospel; in the text proper there are many references to critical and textual studies; and there is a great deal of Greek in the body of the commentary. All this makes it somewhat difficult for anyone but a trained student to use. We would not, therefore, recommend it primarily for personal Bible study or for Society preparation. We do recommend it highly to ministers and those who are trained in the Greek and in textual studies. For these latter it is almost a must in the study of John.

Nevertheless, while the commentary is indeed "evangelical," it is not Reformed. There is no strong emphasis on predestination (which doctrine appears again and again in John; Cushman, in his book, *The Sovereignty of Grace*, tells us that it was his study of John more than any other book which persuaded him of the truth of predestination and sovereign grace.) and on the doctrines of sovereign grace. This becomes especially evident in passages like John 3:16 where the author suggests a doctrine of universal love and universal atonement; John 6:37, 64, 65, John 10:26 — "the moral disposition is wanting to them that they may recognize in Him the divine Shepherd. . . ." and such like passages where such truths are clearly taught.

The book is full of many additional, interesting, and valuable notes on various subjects related to the gospel narrative as, e.g., the question of the date of the celebration of the last Passover and Jesus' crucifixion.

TULIP, THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE, by Duane Edward Spencer; Baker Book House, 1979; 75 pp., \$1.45 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

In many circles there is a return to a study of the truths of Calvinism by those who have been brought up in Arminian and theologically liberal circles. From this renewed study has emerged a number of books of which this book is an illustration. The author was himself brought up within a liberal Methodist Church where he was ordained a minister. After having studied the Scriptures and the writings of various Calvinistic authors, Rev. Spencer came to the conclusion that Calvinism was the truth of Scripture. He resigned his ministry in the Methodist Church and has, this past summer, become a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The book is an excellent summary of the truth of the five points. It sets these five cardinal doctrines forth in a clear, concise, and interesting way. It includes pertinent quotations from the Westminster Confession of Faith, a brief (and not wholly accurate) historical survey of the Arminian Controversy of the 17th Century, and a comparison of Calvinism and Arminianism with a host of helpful proof texts.

All the five points of Calvinism are treated, although the doctrine of reprobation is given no specific place in the book. Nevertheless, from scattered quotes it is evident that the author also accepts this part of historic Calvinism. We recommend the book to our readers as a brief and accu-

rate discussion of these truths so precious to the hearts of the people of God.

THE AUTHENTIC WITNESS, by C. Norman Kraus; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979; 199 pp., \$1.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

This book adds yet another volume to the plethora of books on the mission calling of the Church. But, while another volume is added, nothing new is contributed to the body of knowledge which the Church ought to have to perform her mission calling. Written from a liberal viewpoint, the book, in a rather masterful way, pours new and liberal meanings into old, orthodox theological terms. It can be, for this reason, deceptive.

Index

TEXTUAL INDEX

Esther.....	JK	36
Psalms 119:152.....	RCH	229
Jeremiah 33:19-21.....	MS	170
Luke 1:41-45.....	MS	98
Luke 2:15-16.....	HV	122
John 19:30b.....	HV	266
John 20:8.....	CH	290
John 21:15-17.....	MS	316
I Corinthians 2:9, 10.....	MS	386
I Corinthians 16:13, 14.....	MS	458
Galatians 5:16, 17.....	GL	12
Galatians 5:18-21.....	GL	63
Galatians 5:19-21a.....	GL	104
Galatians 5:19-21a.....	GL	138
Galatians 5:21-24.....	GL	179
Galatians 5:22-24.....	GL	224
Galatians 5:23-26.....	GL	254
Galatians 6:1-5.....	GL	281
Galatians 6:1-5.....	GL	308
Galatians 6:4-10.....	GL	346
Galatians 6:10-16.....	GL	393
Galatians 6:14-17.....	GL	465
Galatians 6:17-18.....	GL	490
I Timothy 4:1-3.....	RCH	183
Hebrews 11:11-12.....	HV	50
Hebrews 11:17-19.....	HV	194
Hebrews 11:20.....		338
Hebrews 11:21.....	HV	410
Hebrews 11:22.....	HV	482
Hebrews 12:3.....	MS	242

I Peter 3:15, 16.....	MS	26
II Peter 3:10-13.....	CH	146

BOOK REVIEWS

<i>Authentic Witness, The</i>	CK	499
<i>Biblical and Near Eastern Studies</i>	HH	286
<i>Christian Soldier, The</i>	HH	239
<i>Commentary on Galatians</i>	HH	358
<i>Commentary on John's Gospel</i>	FG	498
<i>Concerning Scandals</i>	HH	22
<i>Consummation of History, The</i>	HH	46
<i>Deeper Faith, an Exposition of the Canons of the the Synod of Dort, The</i>	HCH	46
<i>Elders' Handbook, The</i>	HH	406
<i>Faithful Sayings in the Pastoral Letters, The</i>	HH	358
<i>Final Curtain, The</i>	HH	237
<i>God's Eternal Good Pleasure</i>	HH	334
<i>God's Man</i>	HCH	237
<i>God's Ultimate Purpose</i>	HH	190
<i>He Gathers the Lambs</i>	CH	224
<i>Het Scharlaken Koord</i>	HH	167
<i>Holy Spirit, The</i>	HH	95
<i>I Believe in the Church</i>	HH	405
<i>Inspiration</i>	HH	478
<i>Jesus As They Saw Him</i>	HH	239
<i>Jesus of Nazareth in Word and Deed</i>	HH	286
<i>Maker and Craftsman, the Story of Dorothy L. Sayers</i>	HH	22
<i>Nurturing Children in the Lord</i>	GH	118
<i>On Your Way Rejoicing</i>	HH	431
<i>Perspectives on Pentecost</i>	HH	214

<i>Piety of John Calvin, The</i>	HH	71
<i>Safe in the Harbor</i>	HH	405
<i>Schilder Trilogy, The</i>	HCH	71
<i>Sermons on Job</i>	HH	310
<i>Sovereignty of Grace</i>	HH	454
<i>Stories Children Love</i>	GH	214
<i>Story Bible For Young Children</i>	GH	143
<i>Story Bible for Older Children</i>	GH	191
<i>Studies in Exodus</i>	HCH	286
<i>Studies in Genesis</i>	HH	238
<i>Theological Dictionary of the O.T. V. III</i>	HCH	22
<i>Time Is Fulfilled, The</i>	HH	238
<i>To Be Near Unto God</i>	HH	238
<i>Tulip, The Five Points of Calvinism in the Light of Scripture</i>	DS	498

—A—

AELC and the Trinity, The.....	GVB	43
About Registration for Military Service.....	HCH	245
About the Covenant of Grace.....	CH	253
About the Fifth Commandment.....	CH	233
About the Image of God in Man.....	CH	444
About the Keys of the Kingdom.....	CH	234
About the Origin of the Soul.....	CH	425
Advantageous providence.....	CH	74
Annual Secretary's Report RFPA.....	DH	93
Another "Victory" Like This.....	GVB	471
Antichrist, In Praise of.....	HCH	77
Apostasy: Its Sinister Nature.....	RCH	183
Are You Troubled by Current Events.....	GVB	356
As to Change in the Student Aid.....	HCH	293
Assault on the Christian Home and Family: The International Year of the Child.....	WB	208
Assault on the Christian Home—Marriage.....	WB	348

—B—

Bear One Another's Burdens.....	RGM	156
Beginning Our Homes in the Fear of God.....	AdH	88
Believer's Calling in Missions, The.....	RDD	203
Believing While Dying.....	HV	410
Bible Reading and Bible Knowledge.....	GVB	381
Binding of the Strong Man, The.....	WB	446
Biology, Creation and.....	GVB	231
"Blue-penciling" the Psalms.....	GVB	42
Boer Gravamen, CRC Decision on the.....	HCH	440
Boer Gravamen, Christian Reformed Reactions to the Study Report on the.....	HCH	417
Boer Gravamen, Reactions of the CRC Decision on the.....	HCH	462
Boer Gravamen, The Study Report on the.....	HCH	365
Boer Gravamen, and Scripture, The Study Report.....	HCH	366
"Burns Plays God".....	GVB	152

—C—

CRC Decisions on the Boer Gravamen.....	HCH	440
CRC or CCC.....	GVB	382
Call to Separation, The.....	RM	188
Called a Christian.....	CH	434

Calling in Today's Ecclesiastical World, Our.....	HH	53
Calvary's Victory Cry.....	HV	266
Can a Classis Depose a Consistory? —Revisited.....	HCH	485
Canons and Reprobation Reinterpreted, The.....	HCH	391
Canons and Reprobation Reinterpreted, The (2).....	HCH	414
Christian News.....	GVB	358
Christian Reformed Reactions to the Study Report on the Boer Gravamen.....	HCH	417
Christian Rock Music.....	GVB	232
Christians and Muslim Mosques.....	GVB	383
Church in New Zealand.....	GVB	65
Churches in Court.....	GVB	67
Concerning Christ's Contradiction.....	MS	242
"Conservative's" Answer for Discipline, A.....	GVB	113
Continuing in the Fear of the Lord in Our Homes.....	AdH	158
Correspondence and Reply.....	JH	351
Covenant of the Day and Night, The.....	MS	170
Creation and Biology.....	GVB	231

—D—

Daane the Scholastic.....	HCH	127
Decretal Theology—Dead Wrong, James Daane on.....	HCH	125
Discipline, A "Conservative's" Answer for.....	GVB	113
Dr. Daane Recalls.....	GVB	472

—E—

Eating and Drinking.....	KK	180
Ecumenism to the "nth" degree.....	GVB	328
Ecumenism With a Vengeance.....	HCH	319
Editor's Notes.....	HCH	197
Editor's Notes.....	HCH	317
Editor's Notes.....	HCH	341
Editor's Notes.....	HCH	413
Editor's Notes.....	HCH	461
Educate Our Children?, Why.....	GVB	207
Election and Reprobation Inseparable in Calvin.....	HCH	318
Environmental Pollution.....	KK	429
Esther—God's Providential Care (concluded).....	JK	36
Evils of Gambling Multiply.....	GVB	153
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	12
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	63
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	104
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	138
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	178
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	224
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	254
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	281
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	308
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	346
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	393
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	465
Exposition of Galatians.....	GL	490

—F—

Faith of Joseph, The.....	HV	482
---------------------------	----	-----

Fear of God in the Home, The	AdH	19
Fear of God in the Home, The	AdH	158
Fear of the Lord, The	RGM	401
Fearful Jacob Meets Fearsome Esau	JH	426
Final Orders to a Militant Church	MS	458
(Fornication), "Porneia"	GVB	205
"Freedom" of Religion	GVB	41
Further Grief of Mind	JH	61
Further Threats for Christian Schools	GVB	473

—G—

GKN and the Homosexual, The	GVB	423
Gambling Multiply, Evils of	GVB	153
God's Eternally Founded Word	RCH	229

—H—

Hans Kung	GVB	357
Harry Boer is Right!	HCH	101
Harry Boer is Wrong!	HCH	102
Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day X Q. 27	CH	2
Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day X Q. 28	CH	74
Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XI Q. 29, 30	CH	218
Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XII Q. 31	CH	362
Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XII Q. 32	CH	434
Homeward Bound	JH	256
Homosexual, The GKN and the	GVB	423
Homosexuals, Ordination of	GVB	115
Homosexuals in the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands	GVB	263

—I—

In Praise of Antichrist	HCH	77
In Pursuit of Excellence	RDD	423
Incarnation, The	DE	279
Incarnation (conclusion), The	DE	306
International Year of the Child, Assault on the Christian Home and Family	WB	208
Is the OPC Next?	HCH	271
Isaac's Faith	HV	338

—J—

Jacob Meets Esau	JH	162
Jacob Refuses Protection	JH	476
James Daane on Decretal Theology —Dead Wrong!	HCH	125
Jesus is the Christ	CH	362
Joy of Singing	GVB	328

—K—

Keeping the Fortress	WB	496
Klooster on Hoeksema's Views	HCH	128

—L—

Ladder of Grace, A	JH	115
Last Time: How Are We Living, The	RF	129
Last Time: How Are We Living, The	RF	160

Last Time: How Are We Living, The	RF	235
Last Time: How Are We Living, The	RF	275
Last Time: How Are We Living, The	RF	301
Last Time: How Are We Living, The	RF	396
Letter from Covenant Protestant Reformed Church		355
Letter to Timothy	HH	39
Letter to Timothy	HH	83
Letter to Timothy	HH	111
Letter to Timothy	HH	165
Letter to Timothy	HH	201
Letter to Timothy	HH	248
Letter to Timothy	HH	272
Letter to Timothy	HH	296
Letter to Timothy	HH	332
Letter to Timothy	HH	373
Letter to Timothy	HH	403
Letter to Timothy	HH	448
Letter to Timothy	HH	487
Looking Upon Jehovah	RM	86
Love at First Sight	JH	135

—M—

Minister: Specialist or Shepherd, The	WGB	324
Minister, To Be a	GVB	231
Mission Principles	RDD	32
Missionary Report From Singapore	AdH	492
Missions and Preaching	RDD	344
Missions and the Local Church	RDD	369
Missions by the Word of the Risen Lord	RDD	68
Missions: God's Word	RDD	322
Missions in the Book of Acts	RDD	106
More of the "Unchurched"	GVB	66
More on Benevolence	CH	470
Mother of My Lord, The	MS	98

—N—

New Chapter in the Westminster Confession?, A	HCH	29
New Zealand, The Church in	GVB	65
News from Birmingham	RVO	131
News From China	RDD	81
News from Lansing	SH	277
News From Our Churches	KGV	24
News From Our Churches	KGV	72
News From Our Churches	KGV	95
News From Our Churches	KGV	120
News From Our Churches	KGV	144
News From Our Churches	KGV	168
News From Our Churches	KGV	192
News From Our Churches	KGV	216
News From Our Churches	KGV	264
News From Our Churches	KGV	288
News From Our Churches	KGV	312
News From Our Churches	KGV	359
News From Our Churches	KGV	383
News From Our Churches	KGV	407
News From Our Churches	KGV	432
News From Our Churches	KGV	456
News From Our Churches	KGV	479
News From Our Churches	KGV	503
Northern Light	MAS	494

—O—

OPC Next?, Is the	HCH	271
Of Creation	RVO	283
Of God	RVO	185
Of God's Eternal Decree	RVO	210
Of Holy Scripture	RVO	90
Of Holy Scripture	RVO	140
Of Providence	RVO	378
Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof	RVO	467
Of Writing and Publishing	HCH	5
Old Argument in New Garb, An	HCH	174
Omitted Text, An	HCH	389
On Situation Ethics	GVB	65
Oops! A Nine-Billion Year Mistake	GVB	153
Ordination of Homosexuals	GVB	115
Orthodox Christian Reformed Church, The ...	GVB	262
"Ounce of Mother," An	GVB	421
Our Calling in Today's Ecclesiastical World ...	HH	53

—P—

Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	14
Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	59
Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	133
Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	320
Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	371
Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	418
Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	474
Pass the Word	HCH	7
Peter's Restoration	MS	314
Pillar of Witness	JH	298
"Porneia" (Fornication)	GVB	205
"Porneia" Again, ...	GVB	261
Prayerful and Proper Preparation	JH	398
Praying For Politicians	WGB	108
Presbyterian Amalgam?, A	HCH	269
Prebyterian Amalgam?, A (2)	HCH	436
Pre-Seminary Graduation Address	RDD	423
Pre-Seminary Graduation—Class of 1980	HCH	413
Prevailing by the Power of Prayer	JH	375
Principles of Missions	RDD	176
Principles of Missions	RDD	250
Providence of God	CH	2
Pseudo-Westminster	HCH	221
Pursuit of Excellence, In	RDD	423

—Q—

Question Box	CH	57
Question Box	CH	154
Question Box	CH	233
Question Box	CH	252
Question Box	CH	425
Question Box	CH	444

Question Box	CH	470
Questions Concerning Rachel	JH	351

—R—

Reactions to the CRC Decision on the Boer Gravamen	HCH	462
Reactions to the Merger Proposed	HCH	439
Reformation of the Church, Pamphlet on the by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	14
Reformation of the Church, Pamphlet on the by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	59
Reformation of the Church, Pamphlet on the by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	133
Reformation of the Church, Pamphlet on the by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	320
Reformation of the Church, Pamphlet on the by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	371
Reformation of the Church, Pamphlet on the by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	418
Reformation of the Church, Pamphlet on the by Dr. A. Kuyper (Translation)	HH	474
Reformed Doctrine of Reprobation, The	DE	34
Reformed Doctrine of Reprobation, The	DE	258
Reformed or Baptist—Either...Or	HCH	341
Reformed Vocabulary	HCH	390
Replete With Errors	HCH	173
Report from Singapore	AdH	329
Report of Classis East	JJH	72
Report of Classis East	JJH	240
Report of Classis East	JJH	432
Report of Classis West	DE	48
Report of Classis West	DE	336
Reprobation, The Reformed Doctrine of	DE	34
Reprobation, The Reformed Doctrine of	DE	258
Reprobation Inseparable in Calvin, Election and	HCH	318
Reprobation Reinterpreted, The Canons and ..	HCH	371
Reprobation Reinterpreted, The Canons and (2)	HCH	414
Revealed By the Spirit	MS	386

—S—

Sarah's Faith to Conceive Seed	HV	50
Seminary Convocation	HCH	7
Seminary Convocation Address	HCH	7
Shepherd's Visit to Bethlehem, The	HV	122
Sin of Sodom, The	GVB	207
Singapore	AdH	451
Situation Ethics, On	GVB	65
Son of God Our Savior, The	CH	218
"State-Owned Children"	GVB	422
Student Aid, As to Changes in	HCH	293
Study Report on the Boer Gravamen	HCH	365
Study Report, Boer Gravamen and Scripture ..	HCH	366
Supplanter is Sent Away, The	JH	43
Synod of 1980	GVB	441

—T—

Teaching Our Children the Fear of the Lord ...	AdH	303
Test-tube Babies	HCH	199

That Troublesome and Sinful Triangle	JH	226
To Be a Minister	GVB	231
To Be a Minister	GVB	357
Toorak's Church "Marriage"	GVB	473
Trial of Abraham's Faith	HV	194
Trinity, The AELC and the	GVB	43
Two Magazines Unite	GVB	113

—U—

"Unchurched," More of the	GVB	66
Urgent Suggestion, An	HCH	461

—V—

Verhey Case Appealed (Again)	GVB	327
------------------------------------	-----	-----

—W—

What Gospel?	HCH	149
What Is Your Hope?	MS	26
What Ought We to Be?	CH	146

Westminster Confession?, A New Chapter in the.	HCH	29
Westminster Confession of Faith, The.	RVO	16
Westminster Confession of Faith, The Chapter I, Articles 1-5.	RVO	90
Westminster Confession of Faith, The Chapter I, Articles 6-10	RVO	140
Westminster Confession of Faith, The Chapter II	RVO	185
Westminster Confession of Faith, Westminster Confession of Faith, The Chapter III	RVO	210
Westminster Confession of Faith, The Chapter IV	RVO	283
Westminster Confession of Faith, The Chapter V	RVO	378
Westminster Confession of Faith, The Chapter VI	RVO	467
What of the Hostages?	GVB	421
Why?	HCH	197
Why Educate Our Children?	GVB	207
Wonder of the Resurrection, The	CH	290

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 18, 1980, our beloved parents, MR. & MRS. ARTHUR DEJONG will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We, their grateful children and grandchildren thank the Lord for sparing them these many years and for the training and instruction received from their hand.

Our prayer is that our Covenant God may continue to bless them and keep them in every way.

Frank and Joyce Antczak
Art and Sarah DeJong
Harold and Carol Brands
Ken and Marilyn DeJong
Wayne and Vicki DeJong
Jim and Becky Hanemaayer
George and Denise DeJong
Homer DeJong
Don and Cindi DeJong
Bill and Pat DeJong
Anita DeJong
Lewis and Janet DeJong
Esther DeJong
John DeJong
Ann DeJong
Henry DeJong
and 29 grandchildren

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 18, 1980, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. & MRS. BERT MARING, will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. We are grateful to God for their covenant instruction and guidance.

We confess with them that our heavenly Father has been ever faithful in the midst of the trials they have experienced in their years together. Our prayer is that our heavenly Father will continue to keep them in His abiding care.

their children & grandchildren,
Eugene & Ruth Ann DeBoer
Monica, Michael & Michelle
2 children have passed on to glory
Sheryl Lynn
Robert Alan

ANNOUNCEMENT

The League of Eastern Men's and Ladies' Societies will meet at Hope Church on October 1. Rev. Michael De Vries will speak on "The Implications of Our Personal Confession 'I Believe'." Everyone is welcome.

News From Our Churches

Rev. James Slopsema has declined the call he received from our Holland, Michigan congregation. Holland has now extended a call to Rev. Marvin Kamps.

Rev. Kamps had just declined a call from Redlands, California when he received the call

from Holland. Rev. Herman Veldman preached in Redlands during the month of August. Another of our retired ministers, Rev. John Heys, plans to preach in Redlands during the month of September and the first week of October.

Professor Homer C. Hoeksema has declined the

call extended to him by our Hope, Walker, Michigan congregation.

Rev. Heys conducted services at our home mission station in Birmingham, Alabama while Rev. Van Overloop and his family took their vacation. Rev. Van Overloop has begun a radio broadcast over a station in Birmingham. This one-hour broadcast on Sunday morning features the morning sermon preached by Rev. Van Overloop the previous Sunday.

A report to the South Holland congregation by the South Holland Council concerning the work of Rev. Van Overloop as missionary in Birmingham included the following: "We are pleased with the apparent results of Rev. Van Overloop's work thus far but we can see that missionary work, by its very nature, is very hard and slow with all kinds of disappointments and setbacks. We believe we must be patient and realize that missionary work is heeding the command of Christ to 'Preach the Gospel,' and we cannot evaluate the work by man's standard of success. We *are successful* when we obey God's command to go and preach—anything more is the Lord's blessing of the work and a bonus to us mere creatures if He 'saves such as should be saved'.... We strongly recommend, any who can, to go and see the work and the people. They love to see you come and you are treated royally."

Rev. and Mrs. George Lubbers celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with an open house (very well attended) on August 15.

By August 10, aluminum siding was on the new church building being erected in Wyckoff, New Jersey. The church steeple is the next project being worked on. Rev. Hanko writes, "Indeed, we have a beautiful 'church in the wildwood.' We long for the day when we shall, D.V., worship our God there."

Our congregation in Loveland, Colorado recently undertook a special project to place new Bibles and Psalters in the church. These new books were purchased with the proceeds of special collections and some special projects undertaken by various groups within the church, such as the Choral Society.

Mr. and Mrs. Lau Chin Kwee arrived in Grand Rapids from Singapore in mid-August. Mr. Lau will take a special two-year course in our Seminary. The Laus are members of the G.L.T.S. in Singapore, the group with whom Rev. Arie den Hartog is working. The Foreign Mission Committee of our churches has asked the council of our Southwest Church to make travel and living arrangements for their stay in Grand Rapids.

Rev. Lubbers spent a few weeks this summer preaching in Maine at the request of a church group there.

Rev. Michael De Vries, a son of the Pella, Iowa congregation, preached in Pella while Pella's pastor, Rev. Miersma, was on vacation.

The reader response to our request for help in translating a Spanish letter in the August 1 issue was overwhelming. Written translations arrived from California, Colorado, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Quite a number of phone calls were also received. The business manager was gratified that all of the translations agreed! Thanks for your help. More on this in a later issue.

This column is the 105th by the undersigned—and the last. After five years it is time for some "new blood." The new Church News Editor is:

Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek
1313 Wilson SW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

Please forward your news items to Mr. Kalsbeek. Those of you who have read the "Monday Notes" authored by Mr. Kalsbeek in his position as administrator of our Adams St. Christian School will agree that he is well qualified for his new position.

I would like to thank the pastors, clerks of classis, bulletin clerks, clerks, and "special correspondents" who were so faithful in sending bulletins and other items without which this column would be quite empty.

I would like to close with a phrase borrowed from my predecessor's predecessor on this page: "See you in Church!"

K.G.V.