

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

New Year!

A time for the world of the wicked to ring their bells and shoot off their guns, signaling their rash desire for better things to come. A time when they will frivously cast about their well-wishes of happiness to their fellowmen, opining that the new span of time will bring forth something new under the sun, not considering that they are still in an old world..

A new year, but an old world! That is the truth that confronts every man on the first day of a new year . . . We still reside in an old world of which Solomon attests: "Vanity of vanities . . ."

See "A Prayer for Jehovah's Mercy"—page 146

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MEDITATION

A Prayer For Jehovah's Mercy

Rev. M. Schipper

"Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in Thee." Psalm 33:22

A prayer of the righteous!

A prayer which may be uttered by them as individuals, but also as is the case here, collectively, in the company of those who are like-minded with them. A prayer which may be offered at any time, but most opportunistically in their respective houses of worship on the morning of the first day of

a new year, as they gather in the camp of the righteous, before God's face. For when this Meditation is read, our old calendars will have been changed for a new one, revealing that we have been brought in the providence of God into a new era of time.

New Year!

A time for the world of the wicked to ring their

bells and shoot off their guns, signaling their rash desire for better things to come. A time when they will frivolously cast about their well-wishes of happiness to their fellowmen, opining that the new span of time will bring forth something new under the sun, not considering that they are still in an old world, the same world in which they abode in the year that is passed.

A new year, but an old world! That is the truth that confronts every man on the first day of a new year. Not yet have we seen the fulfillment of the prophecy of the seer of Patmos, who in vision beheld a new heaven and a new earth. Not yet have we seen the firmament rolled up as a scroll, and the elements burning with fervent heat. We still reside in an old world of which Solomon attests: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." All is still vanity and vexation of spirit.

Indeed, we are still in an old world! Where the sun and moon continue in their orbits. Where there is still war and rumors of war. Where there is sickness and death. Where the travailing mother still cries out in her pains. Where the rich still gloats over his wealth, and the poor continues to beg for the crumbs that fall from his table. Where kings and presidents still come to their seats of authority and power. Where evil continues to develop. Where the church of Christ is still tried and tested, and where the panoply of God must still be put on, and the battle of faith still endured. Where the pale horse of Revelation still rides victoriously, and where many tears shall still fill our eyes. Such is the reality in the world also in the year which now lies ahead of us.

What then shall we say as we stand in the house of our God on the morning of a new year? Shall we boast of our resolutions we know shall not be kept? Shall we foolishly imagine and then prate about the peace and material prosperity and the betterment of our economy we carnally aspire to achieve?

Nay rather, the righteous will take upon their lips and utter from their hearts the prayer of the psalmist: Let Thy mercy, O Jehovah, be upon us, according as we hope in Thee.

A prayer expressing humble dependence!

They who utter this prayer realize that they are helpless in themselves. All their carnal self-confidence has begun to dissipate. Moreover, because they are ignorant of the way in which they must walk, and the difficulties that may befall them as they traverse that way, they sense the need of a Guide upon Whom they can depend. And because in principle they have lost their natural pride, having been humbled into the dust, they have also learned through the hard way of experience not to inform their Guide as to where He must lead them.

Rather, they cast themselves with all their anxieties into His hands.

Indeed, they know and they express it, that apart from Him they are nothing and can do nothing. They are dependent on God Who is truly God. On God, Who by His Word created the heavens and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. Who laid the foundations of the earth, and divided the seas from the dry land. Who gathers the waters of the seas together as an heap, and layeth up the depth in storehouses. Who bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought, and Who maketh the devices of the people of none effect. Who loveth righteousness and judgment, and Whose goodness filleth the earth. Who, because He is Jehovah, will be their faithful, unfailing Guide. His eye is upon them that fear Him, upon them who hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Yes, truly, their soul waiteth for Him, for He is their help and their shield. This is what they believe and experience who utter the prayer: Let Thy mercy be upon us, O Jehovah!

A prayer also expressing child-like trust!

O, indeed, we will also confess that our trust in Jehovah is often lacking and weak. How often is our trust placed upon an arm of flesh; whether that trust be in our own powers or in the help of man! How often, when all things appear to be against us, that we fail to believe that all things work together for good to them that love God! How often that we do not experience the peace that surpasseth understanding! Whose heart is it that does not tremble at the sight of adversity? Who has not remembered when his voice was raised in rebellion because of the oppression of the enemy? Who of the righteous refuses to admit before the face of Jehovah that his rebellion and distrust still rise up out of the old nature in which he still dwells in the world, and that that old nature still often appears to have dominion over him?

Nevertheless, O wonder of grace! we believe that if Jehovah's mercy is upon us we lack nothing!

In Jehovah's mercy He loves us! Accordingly He has predestinated us and given us unto His Son to be redeemed by Him. In that mercy He has purposed to deliver us from our deepest misery, and to make us participants in the highest good. And it lies in the very nature of that mercy that it transcends above our deepest woes and brings us at last into eternal bliss. This is what we have learned of Him in His saving Word. And nothing shall fail of all that He has purposed; for His Name is Jehovah, the everlasting and immutable God. If then it is His mercy that determines to deliver us from our awful woe and to bring us into the highest glory, would it not then be utter folly not to put our complete trust in Him?

Moreover, in His mercy we may be assured that He will also determine our way in this new span of time. And if in that time to come He will require of us that we suffer, so that our eyes are filled with many tears, will He not also then show unto us His mercy? To be sure, that is normal in the ways of Jehovah — through the way of suffering He leads to eternal glory. On that way we may be sure that His mercies fail not, yea, that they are there every morning. And so we pray: Let Thy mercy be upon us, for we trust in Thee.

A prayer expressing calm assurance!

For does not the psalmist add: According as we hope in Thee? Actually, according to the Hebrew text, the expression is: According as we hope to or for Thee. And that means that our prayer, "Let Thy mercy be upon us," is a prayer of hope that looks in eager expectation to Jehovah for its fulfillment. Our hope looks for and waits for Him to fulfill our prayer for His mercy.

We must be careful here not to conclude that our hope is the ground or condition which we fulfill before He will show us His mercy. Jehovah's mercy is not dependent on our hope; nor does Jehovah wait to show us His mercy until we hope for Him.

The truth is, that our hope is already the fruit of His mercy which is upon us. All the benefits of salvation flow to us in the mercy of God; and hope is not to be excluded from those mercies. This is precisely also what the psalmist says. According as we set our hope for Thee, and all our expectation looks to or for Thee, so let us see that our prayer for Thy mercy is already in fulfillment. It shall be answered to its fullest extent, because we already taste the first principles of it in the hope that vibrates in our hearts, that looks in holy expectation for Jehovah.

So there is calm assurance. Hope, throughout the Word of God, and as it is expressed in the text, is never doubt, but always calm assurance. When we use the term, there is in it always the element of doubt. When you, for example, ask me whether I will do this or that, and I answer: I hope so; then there is in my answer a certain hesitancy and even

doubt, because I am not certain that I shall perform what you are inquiring about. There is so much that could happen that would make it impossible for me to perform. But the Word of God never uses the term in this manner. Always it signifies assurance, expectation. The reason for this is the fact that hope is a grace of God. It is that work of God in us that causes us to rely upon Him, and to look to and for Him Who is the absolutely sure One, Who will fulfill all our expectations. Hope, here, is the unwavering expectation that the prayer for Jehovah's mercy will surely be heard, and positively realized.

Comforting, calming assurance, that, no matter what may betide, all is well!

This hope the world never has. Indeed, the wicked are without God and without hope in the world. Though the wicked may appear, also at this change of the year, to live in high expectations, and though they may extend to others their well-wishes for prosperous times ahead, their expectations are vain and their well-wishes as fickle as those who express them. The Scriptures describe the wicked as being like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. Verily, there is no peace and rest for the wicked. As we already remarked, Solomon writes over all the expectations of the wicked: Vanity of vanities. All is vain, idle!

But he whose hope is fixed on and waits for Jehovah has already found in principle the mercy for which he prays. Without fear and with calm assurance he walks with uplifted head, confident that the favor of his God is upon him. Assured also is he that the good work which Jehovah his God has already performed upon him He will continue and finish it even unto the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, as he looks for Jehovah as He shall appear in the face of our wonderful Saviour, he continues to pray: Let Thy mercy continue to be upon me until I shall be swallowed up of Thy mercy in everlasting bliss.

And all the righteous pray it with him, and say:
Amen!

Editor's Notes

Back Bound Volumes. Our Business Manager informed me recently that he has available a good many copies of back bound volumes. Sorry to say, it is no longer possible to obtain some of the early volumes, nor even some later ones—unless you are

fortunate enough to get them secondhand from a private source. But here is the list of volumes available from our Business Office: Volumes 7, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 49,

50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55. All of these are in black binding only, and the price is \$10.00 each. The new bound volume (No. 56) is also available; price, \$12.00.

* * * * *

Publication News. Our Business Manager also informs me that he has completed distribution to Book Club members of *The Voice Of Our Fathers*. If

for some reason you have not received your copy, please contact Mr. Vander Wal. Distribution of Rev. Engelsma's *Hyper-Calvinism And The Call Of The Gospel* to Book Club members is planned for after the Christmas rush at the post office. One more note: all our RFPA books are back in print now, some of them at new prices. There will be a new catalogue available soon.

EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The E.P.C. of Australia—Revisited (3)

After reluctant farewells at the Launceston airport, we began to make our way northward to mainland Australia, and eventually to Brisbane, in the southern part of the large state of Queensland. There were two attractions to the north: the one was the warmer weather (sounds strange to us of the northern hemisphere, doesn't it, that warmer weather is to the north), and the other was renewal of acquaintances with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Brisbane and their young pastor, Rev. Chris Coleborn. Pastor Coleborn had warmly welcomed us to Brisbane long before we left Grand Rapids, and had promised to show us the sights in the Brisbane area and to take us to the Australian "midwest."

Before we reached Brisbane, however, there were two other scheduled visits. The first was an extremely brief one in Melbourne. We had a five-minute running visit with Rev. and Mrs. Ian Morgan, whom we had also met five years ago. Mr. Morgan had a piece of literature pertinent to the history of the E.P.C., and he was gracious enough to come the long distance from his home to the Melbourne airport to deliver it. A change in flight schedules shortened our stopover in Melbourne, however, with the result that we had about enough time to exchange warm greetings and then to say good-by again. From Melbourne we went some 500 miles north to Sydney. Miss Marjorie Martin, whom many of our people know through her extended visit in the U.S., met us at the Sydney airport, took us to our motel, and later in the evening entertained us for dinner at her little apartment not far from downtown Sydney. That evening we also met Mr. John Steel, whom some of you know through his visit to the States, and his fiancée, Miss Robin Taylor, and Rev. and Mrs. John Stafford. Our stay in Sydney was for a couple days, mostly filled

with sight-seeing to the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, and to downtown Sydney and its beautiful harbor. Evenings were spent visiting. We had the unusual experience of visiting a Protestant Reformed family, Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Jabaay (Faith Church), thousands of miles from home. And we spent an evening at the home of Rev. and Mrs. Stafford; regrettably Mr. Stafford was sick that evening, so we did not have much chance to chat with him. But it was good to meet again with these folk of the (independent) Reformed Presbyterian Church in that area.

But on Thursday it was on to Brisbane, another 500 miles north.

There we were met at the airport by Pastor Coleborn in his little Subaru—just big enough for three passengers and their luggage, if you put one large bag up on top. Our first stop was at the manse, where we met the pastor's wife, Christine, and their toddler son, Peter, and had afternoon coffee and evening tea (dinner), and began the long process of catching up on events of mutual interest and of our seemingly endless theological discussions.

But I must back track a bit in order to explain. Five years ago Rev. Hanko and I paid only a very brief visit to Brisbane, arriving late one afternoon and leaving early the next morning. We spent a long evening with the congregation at that time, delivered a lecture, conducted a question hour, and enjoyed an informal social hour afterwards. At that time Rev. Hanko became rather well acquainted with (then) Student Coleborn. In fact, they chatted so much that Rev. Hanko was almost late for our plane in the morning. But Mrs. Hoeksema and I did not really have much opportunity to become acquainted; that came later by correspondence. In the interim, Student Coleborn became Pastor Cole-

born, shepherd of the Brisbane E.P.C. He also married; and the pastor and his wife have one young son and another child soon to be born, the Lord willing. So when we arrived at the manse, there was much getting acquainted to be done, as well as many subjects of conversation on which to catch up.

Pastor Coleborn is, I would say, all pastor. He is a sincere and godly young man with a deep interest in the things of God's Word and of the Reformed faith. Invariably when we were together, our conversation turned to things theological. He claimed to have saved up innumerable questions and subjects for discussion during the five years between visits; and when we parted at the airport, he claimed that the list of questions had not yet been exhausted. When he took us sight-seeing in the Brisbane area, we would be busily engaged in a discussion of some topic, and he would say, "I'll have to put a comma there for a moment, and call the ladies' attention to this or that point of interest." Thereupon we would resume the conversation.

Brisbane is a large, modern, busy metropolis. It is situated on the coast, has a large harbor; and in the immediate Brisbane area is a busy resort area called the Gold Coast, which reminds one much of such American resort areas as are found, for example, along the Florida coast.

The small Brisbane congregation is rather widely spread throughout the Brisbane metropolitan area. They do not have their own church property, but meet in a rather centrally located building near downtown Brisbane. Appropriately enough, the building is called the "House of Bread," though the

name has nothing to do with the Bread of Life. On our Sunday in Brisbane, I was privileged to lead their Adult Bible Class and to preach on Isaiah 59:21 in the morning service, and on Philippians 3:20 in the evening service. Again, I preached as I would at home; and I found a very attentive and receptive congregation. We enjoyed meeting the people of the congregation and visiting with several of them during the day, both at the pastor's home and at the home of our gracious hostess, Mrs. Ann Walker, with whom we had stayed also five years ago.

Again, my general impression of the congregation at Brisbane is that they are genuinely interested in the Reformed faith. They have also grown in their understanding and appreciation of the truth of God's covenant. And in Brisbane, as in Launceston, there is a lively interest developing in Christian education.

On Monday morning we left the Brisbane airport for five days of relaxing at an ocean resort a few hundred miles north, at Hayman Island in the Great Barrier Reef area. But Pastor Rodman — I wrote earlier that as moderator he was visiting the various churches at this time — was scheduled to arrive at Brisbane shortly before our departure. We were eagerly looking for one another, therefore, in the Brisbane airport. What a joyful reunion we had in the airport! And how we talked for twenty minutes!

We were scheduled to return to Brisbane on Friday afternoon and to travel to a place called Chinchilla over Sunday. But about that next time.

Thanks, Mr. Treasurer!

Being a treasurer of an organization is, I suppose, usually considered to be a rather staid and prosaic job, rather routine and dull. After all, it involves, for the most part, keeping accurate records of a lot of dull figures.

But there is great benefit for any organization in having a good treasurer. And this is especially true, I think, when it comes to our denominational, or synodical, treasurer.

Our churches have lost such a good treasurer with the retirement of brother Charles Pastoor — known to many of us simply as "Charlie." He became our synodical treasurer by the appointment of the Synod of 1957, and he retired at the end of fiscal 1980.



What are the attributes of a good treasurer?

There are several. He must keep accurate records. He must, of course, be trustworthy. He must be prompt. All these are attributes of a good treasurer of any organization.

But there are also attributes, I think, which should especially characterize a man who fills the position of synodical treasurer. For one thing, he must be devoted to the cause of our Protestant Reformed Churches. For another, he must have an understanding of the situation and the needs of the individual congregations with which he has to work so much. Further, he needs a sympathetic understanding of the various denominational labors of our churches. And he must have a good overview of the assets and the needs of various synodical funds, so that he will be in a position to inform and advise the various committees whose funds he handles and so that he can advise synod

and its finance committee each year when it is time to establish the synodical budget and to determine the assessments for the year.

All these attributes brother Pastoor has manifested in the twenty-two years of his tenure as treasurer. And along with this, let it be said, there has always been the bonus of his droll humor.

This means, too, that our brother has been a singular gift of God to our churches.

As he retires from his position of treasurer, we express our sincere thanks to him; and above all, we express thanks to our faithful covenant God Who supplies His church with such servants. And may the Lord continue to bless brother Pastoor and his family in the midst of our churches.

Welcome, too, to our new synodical treasurer, Mr. Richard H. Teitsma!

At Year's End—Two More Retirees

As I write this, the end of the year 1980 is approaching. I am reminded of the fact that with the retirement of two more of our older ministers, our churches have in a sense reached the end of an era.

I refer, of course, to the fact that during this past year the Rev. Robert C. Harbach and the Rev. John A. Heys attained the status of minister emeritus in our churches.

It is not my intention to repeat the various biographical details which were included in this year's synodical Yearbook. These are available to all our families in that little booklet.

With the retirement of these two brethren, our churches have undergone a considerable transition; and all of the older generation of our ministers are now retired, though, fortunately, not inactive. Rev. Harbach, who was older when he came to us, became a minister in the post-1953 era and was a minister in our denomination for 25 years. Rev. Heys, a son of First Church, is the last of what might be termed the early generation of our Protestant Reformed ministers; he labored in the ministry of our churches since 1941. By the way, Rev. Heys has the distinction of being the musician among our ministers. He was organist in First Church before he entered the ministry; and he also has the distinction of making a contribution to our *Psalter*.

None of our retired ministers stops working

when he retires, of course. And these retirees are no exception. We are glad about this. It not only eases the shock of retirement for them, but also for our churches. May the Lord continue to bless them in their remaining years, and cause them to be a blessing to our churches in the labors which they may still accomplish.

Permit me the observation, however, that what might be termed a "changing of the guard" has been accomplished in our churches. Due to various circumstances, there is a considerable gap between the older and the younger generation in our ministry. Perhaps I myself belong between the two generations, since I am now the only pre-1953 active minister. For the rest, all our ministers are post-1953 and most of them are post-1960. In fact, if the Lord keeps all our men in good health, it should be several years before there are any new retirees.

There has been a transition, therefore. Our ministry is now preponderantly young.

From this point of view, I think we may be thankful, first of all, that our retirees are still active. It eases the transition, and it helps to steady the ship.

Secondly, however, we may all be reminded also that the burden of the labor and the urgency of the calling to be faithful to our heritage falls with heavier impact upon our younger men. The

"changing of the guard" must not mean a change in our ecclesiastical course, and it must not mean decreased emphasis upon our Reformed distinctives.

We have an example to emulate, a tradition to preserve, and a heritage to cherish!

GUEST ARTICLE

The Necessity of Reformed Apologetics

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

II. Apologetics Considered as in Practical Use

A candidate for the ministry in our churches, among other subjects, is examined in Controversy (C.O., Art. 4). This is done in order that he may demonstrate something of his ability to defend the truth over against the attacks of false doctrines and heresies. After his ordination he signs the "Formula of Subscription," by which he declares and promises diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the doctrine contained in the Three Forms of Unity, to refute and contradict the errors rejected by the Synod of Dort, to exert himself in keeping the church free from such errors. This is to promise to be ever alert and active in a Reformed apologetic. The biblical injunction to this end is found in Jude 3, "I...exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once (for all) delivered unto the saints." This is what apologetics is, defense of the faith.

But it is also witness. Witnessing to others of the truth of the gospel by life and word is to be done any place and any time, in season and out of season. The reason for the activity of witnessing, as expressed in the great commission of Matthew 28:18-20, is the discipling of the nations. We are to witness to Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Yet as to this defense and witness, the Christian is not to take a neutral stance anywhere in order to secure a point of "contact" or a "common ground" between faith and unbelief. The Christian (apologete) must avoid all appearance of neutrality, must be perfectly honest (neutrality is dishonest), must make no secret of the fact that he accepts Reformed Theology as *the* theology. Therefore let him make it known that he cannot stand indifferently to his own personal faith.² This means that the believer in his witness to unbelievers, and in amicable argument of the Christian position, must not begin by attempting to authenticate the scripture, so that the

non-Christian accepting this attestation will then accept the scripture as genuine to go from there believing it. Scripture is already inherently authentic. For the benefit of the unbeliever, he need not and must not first attempt to establish the truth of Christianity over against his objections or wrong views. The truth is already established in the infallibly inspired scriptures, in the Presbyterian and Reformed Confessions and in the pure preaching of the Word of God. The latter comes with the authority of Christ. Hearing and receiving that preaching is to bow to Christ and to acknowledge His absolute Lordship as God of truth. The point here is that the Christian witness must not propose to set out to reason with the unbeliever according to the principles of human logic, thence together to reason on into salvation. The thinking of the natural man cannot lead to God. Also a sound apologetical approach, in the interest of defending scripture against some of its greatest difficulties, must not describe (or think of) these as "apparent paradoxes." The term *paradox* is philosophic, rationalistic, and irrationalistic. The Christian would do better in adopting a new term which allows for only "hyperdoxes" in scripture. We have *hyperdox* (hyper = over, beyond + doxa = an opinion or notion) wherever truth transcends human understanding, as in the instances of the doctrine of the Trinity, the union of the two natures of Christ, and the relation and harmony between God's absolute sovereignty and man's responsibility. Our defense and witness presuppose the entire Bible and Christian faith as true. We do not try to prove this to the unregenerate; we assume this at the outset; it is the ground of all our life, thought, discussion, and declaration. From that ground we challenge the natural man to see that on his position there is no place to stand other than on sinking sand; there is no way to tell truth from falsehood, and there is nothing in the world that can be accounted for.

The Church, from the very beginning, has been engaged in apologetical defense and witness. In the Apostolic Church there was controversy with Juda-

²*Principles of Sacred Theology*, A. Kuyper, 50, 51.

ism, Heathenism, and Gnosticism. Then within the Trinitarian Controversies there were mainly the Arian and the Sabellian controversies. Within the Christological Controversies there were the Apollinarian, Nestorian, Eutychian, and Monophysite controversies. Within the Anthropological Controversies, there was the Pelagian controversy. In the Medieval period there were controversies over the Spirit proceeding from the Son as well as from the Father, over the doctrine of the two wills in Christ, over Predestination and over various theories of the Lord's Supper. In the time of the Reformation, the great controversy was with Romanism. Calvin was the Reformed apologist of this period, and his ability in controversy was superior. He fought Libertinism, Free-willism, Unitarianism, and Astrology. In our own day, the Church has had to combat Modernism (originating from Germany) and the cults. In our own denominational history there was the "common" grace controversy and the conditional theology controversy.

Since there is always controversy, there is always some form of apologetics. What is needed is Reformed Apologetics. We need this to keep our thinking in line with God's thoughts, our preaching in the power of His Spirit and Word, our witness unwaveringly to Christ and the triune God, our conduct self-consciously and determinedly based on the holy principles of the Reformed Faith. Our apologetics are then not only defensive but offensive. More importantly, with the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, they pierce through the deceptions and hypocrisies of men to expose their refuges of lies, their untenable positions. Our apologetic method must function in a never-to-be denied, never compromised faith which presupposes the whole system of the gospel.

Every form of reasoning, argument, preaching, and witness is on some foundation. There are fundamentally only two foundations, the false and the true (Matt. 7:24-29), the foundation of men and the foundation of God.

On the one foundation, man makes himself the first and final point of reference. His mind is the only frame of reference. "Man is the measure of all things."³ So said Protagoras ages ago and the atheistical mind today still agrees. But on the other foundation, God, speaking through Christ by His Spirit in the infallible scriptures, is our first and ultimate orientation point. If we consistently stand on this only safe ground, then we do not attempt to prove to men the existence of God. Rather, on this foundation we challenge men to believe that God is, and that He is the Rewarder of them that dili-

gently seek Him. Our whole approach in our witness-bearing presupposes all the truth of scripture and of our confessions. Especially must our thought and attack be based on the doctrine of God, the doctrine of creation, the doctrine of man and his fall and the doctrine of scripture. For above and back of all reality is God. He is our environment, not pantheistically, but "in Him we live and are moved and have our being." Humanistic thought puts God out of His own world, out of business and out of existence. Thought and converse without Him at any point is to lift up His name and all things into nothingness. Nor is there knowledge or intelligible statement of anything in "the real world" apart from the Creator-creature relationship. But man makes himself creator and makes a god in his own image. He thinks of himself as "creator of the universe." Man, the creature, is potential God, or God enough for the free-thinker. He is the greatest creator we know on earth. Man is not under the law; he makes the law. Man is the creator of himself and of society.⁴ Man worships the creature, rather than the Creator. Christians in thought, word, and behavior serve and worship the Creator. Christians believe there are two kinds of being: original, eternal, and divine being, and derivative, temporal, and human being. Man's derivation from God is not pantheistical or emanationistic. The triune Creator, remaining in His aseity (independence) and immutability, created man a creaturely reflection of Himself with creaturely personality, heart, soul, mind, will, and strength.

Then without scripture, the only written revelation of God to man, there is no rule or standard to determine truth from error. There is no way to distinguish the Narrow Way from the Slough of Despond. Without the Bible, it is impossible to know the meaning of life. Without it we would not know what sin is, nor where forgiveness is to be found (Ps. 130:4), nor have any hope of heaven. Men do not share a common knowledge which finds confirmation in the Bible. True knowledge is objectively found written on the pages of the scriptures. Reality must be seen through the lens of the scriptures. "In Thy light do we see light." In these facts of scripture: God, Creation, Fall, Redemption, and that body of truth found in our Confessions, we have the thesis, position, stand, and orientation of a Reformed apologetics.

To the extent that we give diligence earnestly to contend for the Faith, to that extent we all use Reformed apologetics, in defense, in attack on the enemy, and in witness, whether conscious of it or not. But how much better, in the sense of the term herein explained to be apologetically self-conscious!

³*Student's History of Philosophy*, Rogers, Macmillan, 1928, p. 87. See also *The Doctrine of God*, Bavinck, p. 30 and *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology*, Rand, Mentor, 1979, p. 10.

⁴*The Philosophy of Revelation*, Bavinck, p. 46, 323.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Evangelism and the Reformed Faith (1)

Rev. David Engelsma

It is strange that it should be supposed that the relationship between the Reformed Faith and evangelism is uneasy and uncomfortable. It is stranger still that men should charge that the Reformed Faith and evangelism are incompatible. Yet this is the case. Many outside of the Reformed Churches contend that the Reformed Faith makes evangelism (or "soul-winning," as they like to call it) impossible. Many who profess to be Reformed are now echoing this charge. What is worse, they are busy radically revising the Reformed Faith in the interests (they say) of evangelism. Read the studies that set forth the foundations, the messages, and the methods of missions: universal love; universal atonement; salvation dependent upon the free, sovereign choice of the sinner. Listen to the evangelists: "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life"; "Christ died for you"; "You can have this wonderful salvation and be born again, if only you will accept Jesus."

Then, there is the danger that those who love the Reformed Faith as God's own truth become suspicious of evangelism; openly or secretly grant the validity of the charge that the Reformed Faith and evangelism are incompatible; and decline to engage in the work of evangelism.

It is the duty of those to whom God has given the inheritance and responsibility of the Reformed Faith to show the perfect harmony of this Faith and evangelism. To do this, we must ourselves see clearly that they are compatible.

What Evangelism Is

Over the years, in our country at any rate, a certain, definite idea of evangelism has developed. It is necessary, first of all, to subject this idea to the test of Scripture. Speak of evangelism, and one probably thinks of an elaborate, expensive campaign to gather many people to a meeting that will be conducted by a specialist, the "evangelist." One thinks of a specific kind of religious meeting—one in which the music, the message, and the other elements are carefully geared to get men to make a decision for Christ. One thinks of an activity that culminates in "the invitation," or "altar call." And one thinks of a religious work which concludes by

reporting, how many hundreds, or thousands, "got saved," or "came forward."

This is evangelism in the popular mind. To do evangelism is to do something like this; and to oppose this is to run the risk of being criticized as unevangelistic, not mission-minded.

This whole great structure, fondly regarded as evangelism, imposing and impressive as it appears, needs to be tested by Scripture. Take, for example, the element so important to modern evangelism, and so prominent, the invitation, or altar call. The altar call is thoroughly un-Biblical, apart now from the perverse theology which underlies it—the theology of the goodness and freedom of the will of the sinner and the sovereignty of his will in salvation, what Paul repudiates in Romans 9:16 as the teaching that salvation is of him that willeth. It is un-Biblical to demand, in Christ's Name, that someone express the spiritual activity of repentance and faith by walking to the altar. It is un-Biblical to equate coming to the front with these spiritual activities and, thus, with salvation. It is un-Biblical, grievously so, to obtain this result by the psychological, emotional pressures that are exerted. The Christian Church never knew of such a thing before the early 1800's, when Charles Finney introduced it.

For the answer to our question, "What is Evangelism?," we do not look to popular notions, but to Holy Scripture.

In reality, evangelism is the preaching of the gospel. This is the meaning of the word, *evangelism*—a Biblical word in the Greek of the New Testament. The usage of the word shows this to be the meaning. In Luke 2:10, the angel says to the shepherds, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy...." "I bring you good tidings" is, in the Greek, "I evangelize you." When the apostle tells Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist," in II Timothy 4:5, he is telling him to preach the Word of God, as the preceding verses prove. Evangelism is the activity of publishing, or announcing, the "*evangel*," the gospel, i.e., the glad tidings of Jesus the Christ, crucified and risen.

This answers the question, whether a Reformed

Church believes in evangelism and whether Reformed saints are to be zealous for evangelism. The gospel must be preached! This must be done within the established church, among the saints already called out of the world; for their ongoing comfort and edification, they are continually to hear the good news. This is why we come to church every Lord's Day.

But the gospel must also be preached outside of the church already established in the truth; this is necessary for the saving of the as yet unconverted and the straying. This is what we mean when we speak of evangelism: the activity of proclaiming the good news to those outside the congregation. Evangelism, then, is the same as missions.

We may take our definition from the "Form of Ordination of Missionaries" of the Reformed Churches. It distinguishes between ministers who labor in the congregations already established and those called and sent to preach the gospel to those without, in order to bring them to Christ: "...it is necessary that some labor in the congregations already established, while others are called and sent to preach the Gospel to those without, in order to bring them to Christ" (*The Psalter*, pp. 74, 75). Evangelism, therefore, is the activity of preaching the gospel to those outside the congregation already established in the truth, in order to bring them to Christ.

Evangelism is not limited to work done with heathen, with those who make no profession of faith in Jesus the Savior. On the contrary, it includes the work of the Church with those who profess Christianity and belong to a church, but who are either ignorant of the truth of the gospel or have departed from it. To bring the gospel to such is not "sheep-stealing," but sheep-gathering; it is not "fishing in troubled waters," but fishing for men.

When Jesus in Matthew 9:37, 38 instructed His disciples that the harvest is plenteous, but the laborers few, and that they, therefore, must pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest, His reference was not, primarily, to the heathen, but to the multitudes of God, under the care of the priests and scribes. By false doctrine,

apostasy, and simple lack of the Word of God, these people were spiritually sore distressed and, therefore, proper objects of evangelism.

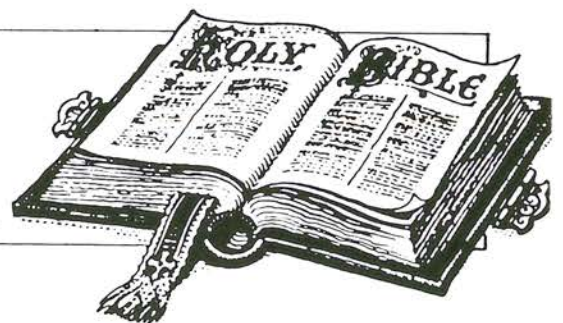
Paul's ministry shows that the work of evangelism is not exclusively with professed unbelievers. He brought the Word to the Jews first; and when confessing Christians strayed, as they did in Galatia, the apostle urgently evangelized them.

John Murray, the Presbyterian theologian, contended that evangelism must not be limited to work among the unsaved.

The word "evangelism" has generally been understood to apply to the propagation of the gospel among the unsaved. In dealing, however, with the obligation that rests upon the church of Christ to witness to the gospel it does not appear that the various activities of the church that may properly be embraced in the work of evangelism have exclusive reference to those who are reckoned, in the judgment of the church, as without God and without hope in the world. Particularly is this true when it is remembered that many believers in Christ have so inadequate a knowledge of the gospel, and so impoverished a conception of the Christian life, that a considerable part of the work of the church, properly regarded as evangelism, must needs have as its aim the instruction and edification of such believers. The evangelism that the true church of Christ undertakes must therefore contemplate the bringing of the gospel in its full import and demands to those who, though believers, are nevertheless the victims of ignorance, unfaithfulness and compromising associations. ("The Message of Evangelism," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, Vol. 1, p. 124, published by The Banner of Truth Trust).

This is why the Reformation was an evangelistic enterprise, a missionary activity. Some have dared to criticize the Reformers for a lack of interest in missions. Defenders of the Reformers, seemingly stung by the charge, have responded that the Reformers were too busy for missions, but that Calvin once sent several missionaries to Brazil. The truth of the matter is that the Reformation itself was missions—a gigantic, energetic, world-wide mission work, with abundant and enduring fruits. The gospel was proclaimed to multitudes in many nations who were fainting and scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd, perishing in the ignorance and lie of Roman Catholicism.

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

A Shining City on a Hill

Rev. R. Flikkema

It is always fitting at the time when a new year comes upon us to reflect on all that has happened in the past, and, having done so, to look with the eye of faith to the future. With respect to the past, all of us can see what has happened in all its details. Not so, however, with respect to the future. None of us can see what the future holds in store for us in all its detail. But, nevertheless, that does not mean that we cannot see at least some of the details which the future holds in store. We can see some of the details in so far as God has revealed those details to us in His Word. And to those details which God has revealed in His Word we must look with the eye of faith—with the clear eye of faith, with the anti-thetically clear eye of faith. It is the purpose of this article to look at one of the details of the future as God has revealed it to us in His Word with the anti-thetically clear eye of faith. And that one detail has to do with two cities.

I suppose that it would be best if we had a description of those two cities before our eyes. It is really not all that difficult to describe them. And it is not because those two cities are so very much different from each other. So different are they from each other that there really, except for one detail, is nothing similar about them at all. But even with respect to that one detail we must with the eye of faith see that the similarity is really a false similarity, a very deceptive similarity. What is that false, deceptive similarity? It is this. Both cities appear to be very shining cities built on their own hill. Both cities constructed on their hills seem to shine forth with a great radiance. Both cities appear very glorious and brilliant to behold. And because they do, both cities seem to provide a ray of hope for the citizens of those cities. But the simple fact of the matter is that the shining, radiating, glorious brilliance of the one city is not shining, radiating, glorious brilliance! And, therefore, the ray of hope which that city seems to provide its citizens is no ray of hope at all! But on the contrary it is a ray of despair. It is a ray of sorrow. It is a ray of certain and sure destruction.

And why is it that? It is that because that one city which only appears to be a shining city on a hill is filled with corruption. Corruption and sin fill its

streets to overflowing. The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are the passwords for entrance into that city, and the motto by which that city lives. And, too, inseparably connected with that is this, that in that city the citizens of the city live for the honor and glory of man. They worship man! They fall down before man! They praise almighty man! Man in that city sets himself up to be somebody. Man's word is: I am strong. I am powerful. I am the author and finisher of my destiny; By me kings reign or do not reign. By me nations are conquered or are not conquered. It is all because of me and my strength and my might and for my honor and glory.

But what about that other city? As I said above, that city is so very different. This city in distinction from the other one is in all its reality a shining city on a hill. It does shine! It is all-glorious. It does radiate forth with awesome brilliance. And because it does, it does indeed provide the citizens of that city with a ray of hope, not only, but with hope itself. And it does exactly because of the fact that God, the almighty God of heaven and earth, is in the midst of her. The glorious God of infinite virtues and perfections is in the midst of her. God's glory as it radiates forth from Him fills the city, all the highways and byways of that city, all the homes of that city, and all the citizens of that city. On the throne of that city sits that all-glorious God with Christ Jesus, His only begotten Son, to Whom all glory, might, and honor has been bestowed. And the citizens of that city? They, with the hope of the glory of God within them, do not serve sin. They do not live for the pleasures of sin for a season. Their motto is not the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. But on the contrary they live for and their motto is the glory of God! For God's glory they live. For God's praise they live. For the worship and service of their all-glorious God they live and move and have their being. That is a description of those two cities.

Now then, if we with the eye of faith look back at all that has happened in the history of the world, we can see those two shining cities on a hill. That one so-called shining city on a hill came to manifestation already at the time of the Tower of Babel.

Once again it came to manifestation at the time of the great King Nebuchadnezzar with his vast empire. Again it came to manifestation in the Persian, Greek, and Roman kingdoms. Especially did it come to manifestation in the Roman kingdom! Rome to all the civilized world of its day was a shining city on a hill. Rome appeared all-glorious, brilliant, and wonderful to behold, providing a ray of hope for all the citizens of its city and kingdom. But Rome was not shining. Rome was not brilliant and wonderful to behold, because Rome was corrupt. It lived for itself, its own glory and its own lusts.

But there is the past. Now let us look to the future. We know from the testimony of Scripture that the so-called shining city on a hill will come to manifestation again. And when it does, it will appear more shining and more brilliant and more all-glorious than ever before. But, once again, the clear testimony of Scripture is that when it does come to manifestation, as it most surely will, its shining, as was the case in the past, will be no shining! Its brilliance will be no brilliance! Its glory will be no glory! And it will not be because, as was the case in the past so will it be the case in the future, it lives for man, for man's honor and glory, and for the sinful lusts and pleasures of man.

Do you see that so-called shining city on a hill? I do! And when I say that I do, I do not mean that I see it in the future. But I mean that I see it right now! "Well," you say, "That is absurd. To be sure Scripture says that it will come to manifestation in the future, but the time of its manifestation is not yet." My response to that is that I am not being absurd when I say that I see that so-called shining city on a hill right now. Let me explain. On January the twentieth a new president will be installed into office as President of the United States. Maybe some of you who are reading this article voted for him. It really does not matter. But if you did, you must have been struck by a slogan which that man used repeatedly during his campaign for office. That slogan was this: "I have a vision of a shining city on a hill". When I heard that, those words embedded themselves in my memory. I started thinking about those words. I asked myself: Of what kind of a shining city on a hill does he have a

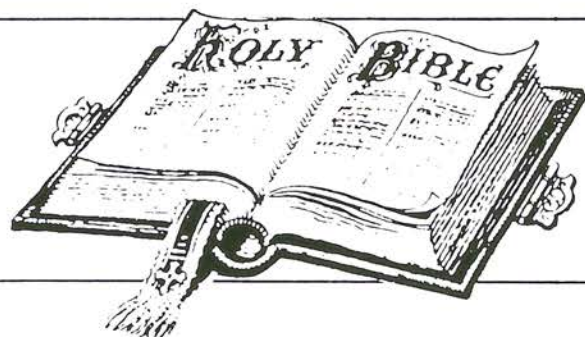
vision? Is it a city that only appears to be shining, but is not? Is it a city that lives for man's honor and glory rather than God's honor and glory? Is it a city which is motivated in all that it does for the advancement of man's sinful lusts and pleasures rather than the worship and praise of almighty God? Which shining city on a hill is he talking about? When I asked myself that question, the answer to that question became obvious. Obviously, the answer had to be one city or the other. And obviously my answer was, not the real and true shining city on a hill, but the false and deceptive shining city on a hill!

This vision of a false and deceptive shining city on a hill is in reality the very same vision of that false and deceptive shining city on a hill that the Apostle John had. If you read the Book of Revelation you will discover that John, under the inspiration of the Spirit, describes that city. And furthermore, he gives to it a name, the name "Babylon"! And that is exactly the name which we as we look to the future with the antithetically clear eye of faith must also give it.

But that, you understand, is not the only vision of a shining city on a hill that John saw, and that we with him see. For we also see that real and true shining city on a hill where God sits enthroned and where we as the people of God dwell. We see, to use John's words in Revelation 21:2, "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." We see, to use John's words in that very same chapter, verses 10 & 11, "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious." Indeed we see, to use John's words but once more in verses 23 & 24 of that chapter, "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it. And the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it."

That shining city on a hill is what we see. We see it with the antithetically clear eye of faith. And in seeing it we are exceedingly glad!

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MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

January 1, 1981

Dear Timothy,

In my last letter to you we began a discussion of the emotions in the psychical life of man. You recall that we discussed two possible dangers which must be avoided in considering the emotions. The one is the danger of making the emotions such an important part of man's life that they become a power in man's life independent from his mind and will. When this happens, the foundations of morality are undermined and a man no longer is responsible for what he does. And, one lets his life be governed by mere "feeling" so that he allows his conduct to be determined by "what pleases him." The other danger is that we deny the emotions altogether, act as if they do not exist, and try to regulate our lives in such a way that our emotions never reveal themselves. This is, of course, really impossible; but the danger is that we try to live in such a way that our emotions are suppressed. Both these dangers must be avoided.

The Scriptures speak often of emotions and we ought, even though briefly, take a look at what the Scriptures have to say about this matter.

If we look at the Scriptures, it is rather startling to discover that God is often described as having emotions. We are aware of this, of course; but the fact remains that we do not often live in this consciousness. We usually think of God as if He had no emotions at all. In our own thinking we often consider God as being cold, unmoved, without any feeling, not reacting in an emotional way to what happens on this earth and what happens in our own lives. If we think about this, I think that the reason why we have this idea of God is that we have a great deal of difficulty in imagining what emotions are like in God. The Scriptures teach that God is, in His own being and essence, the absolutely unchangeable One. He is from eternity to eternity the same. And, even as He is unchangeable in His own essence, so also He is unchangeable in all His works and in all His attitudes towards men. He eternally and unchangeably loves His people and He eternally and unchangeably hates the wicked. The problem is that when we think of emotions, we think in terms of our own emotions; and, in us,

emotions always involve change. One day we are filled with love towards God and our lives are filled with the consciousness of God's goodness to us. But soon that love grows colder and God is far from our thoughts. There is nothing quite so changeable in us as our emotional life. Because emotions always involve change in us we cannot see how God has emotions without also changing from one moment to the next. And so we, to preserve God's unchangeableness, fail to reckon at all with the fact that God is indeed a God of emotions and feelings.

This is a very difficult problem, and there are no easy solutions to it. But we must remember that our emotional life (as well as the life of our minds and wills) is but a dim and creaturely reflection of what is perfect in God. Although it is true that God is unchangeable, it is also true that God is emotional. And whether we can ultimately understand this or not, the fact remains true.

There are countless texts in the Bible which speak of these emotions, and we must be careful to be faithful to the Scriptures also in this respect. To fail to do this has serious consequences in our own lives. To give but one example: our failure to reckon with the fact that God is angry with us when we sin leads us oftentimes to take sin less than seriously. Anger is a powerful emotion. In God it is much more so than in us. When God is angry with us, we know it, for we lose the consciousness of His favor and love upon us. But failing to take this into account, we continue oftentimes in our ways of sin and act as if God's anger is really nothing at all. Convincing ourselves that God has no real emotions, we think very little of His anger, when His anger ought to deter us from a sinful course of conduct.

Let us look at just a few passages of Scripture which speak so emphatically of God's emotions.

Already in the days prior to the flood, when the wickedness of men was great in the earth, "It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart" (Genesis 6:6). Although no emotion is specifically mentioned, it is not difficult to see the emotional impact upon God

of the suffering of Israel in Egypt: "And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them" (Exodus 2:24, 25). Nor is it difficult to sense the Lord's anger with Moses when we read: "And it came to pass by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him" (Exodus 4:24). Or: "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses, and He said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother?" (Exodus 4:14). When Israel made the molten calf, God said to Moses: "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them" (Exodus 32:10). Who can fail to see the profound love of God which is everywhere mentioned in Scripture, but which is so sharply emphasized in Deuteronomy 23:5: "Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee."

Especially in the Psalms one finds expressions which, if they were not in the Scriptures, we would not dare to use. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure" (Psalm 2:4, 5). "The Lord shall abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (Psalm 5:6). While surely one of the main themes, if not the main theme, of the Psalms is God's hatred of the wicked and His love for His people, this is expressed by many different emotions which the Psalmists ascribe to God. The Lord is repeatedly called upon to *arise* in order to punish wicked and deliver His people. God is described as *forgetting* His servant (13:1), as showing marvellous loving-kindness to those who put their trust in Him (17:7), as *forsaking* the Psalmist and being far away from him (22:1), as rebuking David in His wrath and chastening him in His hot displeasure (38:1), as hurrying to help David in his troubles (38:22), as awakening from sleep and rising from bed to come to the assistance of His people (44:23), as, on the one hand, hiding His face, and, on the other hand, lifting up the light of His countenance upon His saints (51:9). And so we could go on. God's attributes, e.g., are often described in such a way in Scripture that they reveal to us deep emotions on the part of God towards His saints. He loves His people so greatly that He did not even spare His own Son to die the terrible death of the cross for their sins. His lovingkindness is so great that His heart is moved to save them from all their troubles. His longsuffering is towards them so that He can scarcely bear to see them suffer in this world, but He comes to save them as quickly as possible. In His mercy He is profoundly affected by their misery and longs to make

them happy and blessed. When they sin against Him, He is angry with them, hides His face, chastizes them as a father chastizes his son; but this is also in love that He may correct them and teach them His ways. All these expressions show us the deep emotions which move the heart of God.

In the same way Scripture not only speaks often of the emotional life of men, and particularly of the people of God, but even describes the calling of God's people in emotional terms. The very heart of the law is to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and minds and souls and strength. And love is profoundly emotional. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but fear is, after all, a deep concern that we do not make our God angry by breaking His commandments and by doing that which displeases Him. Formal sacrifices are an abomination to the Lord because the Lord has pleasure in a broken spirit and a contrite heart. He who has not cried in anguish for his sins does not know what it means to be sorry for them. James, almost angrily, tells us: "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." At the same time, Scripture admonishes us to rejoice in the Lord, in fact, to rejoice always. We too must show compassion towards those in need just as our Father in heaven shows compassion to us.

The Scriptures make it very clear that, while we share with all the wicked the emotions which God has created in us, here also there is the sharpest antithesis between the life of the wicked and the life of the people of God. Anger is certainly proper in the life of the people of God, but it must be *anger* against the right things and anger for God's sake, not the uncontrollable rage of the ungodly. The people of God weep too—just as the world; but when God takes a loved one from them they weep not as those who have no hope. There is happiness in the life of the saints, but not the ribald mirth, the silly joking, the inane banter which characterizes a wicked generation which tries to hide its great sorrow with an outward and external cloak of "fun." Every emotion in the life of the child of God must be brought under the control of grace and must be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. Here too, from a spiritual point of view, we share nothing with the world.

What is important to attain this high calling is to understand that emotions are not a separate "power" of the soul alongside of the mind and the will. The emotions also are part of the functioning of the mind and the will. The emotional life of man, when it is as it ought to be, is a certain phase of the activity of our minds and wills. I am not sure that "phase" is the right word here; perhaps it would be better to speak of "characteristic." However that

may be, we will probably be able to understand this a bit better if we give some closer attention to the different kinds of emotions. But this shall have to

wait till another letter.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

Dogmatic Religions Finished?

Christian News, Sept. 1, 1980 presents a report of the "First Global Conference on the Future." This conference, meeting at Toronto, dealt with the subject also of religion. It presented a religion which can only be characterized as antichristian. It ought to serve as warning concerning things to come, and make one aware of the trends evident today. The article reports:

According to Hinduistic mystic Charlotte Waterlow, "Dogmatic religions are finished."

According to former Roman Catholic Howard Didsbury, following Alfred North Whitehead, "we're moving toward" a less divisive "God as process."

And Evangelical Christian theologian Ted Peters agrees with Didsbury that division is deplorable.

The three were on the panel for "Religion in a Technological World," a session at the First Global Conference on the Future.

Introduced as "exciting" by Peters, Waterlow, director of the New England Branch of World Federalists, said that she was an evolutionist. She said that a return to religion was necessary.

However, she did contend that, be they Christianity, Judaism or Islam, "Dogmatic religions are finished." She explained, "Divisive dogmas can't survive in a world that respects human rights."

Waterlow maintained that a heaven on earth was possible and said she agreed with Jesus that religion should be judged by its fruits.

She said she sees a religious awakening happening now and stated that "today it's embarrassing to talk about God, not sex."

"We should try to make man as he should be—in the image of God," Waterlow concluded.

..."Toleration achieved in the course of centuries of dedication and sacrifice is jeopardized by the rebirth of such movements of religious fanaticism. The fanatic regards tolerance not as a positive good but as a necessary evil. The Righteous, were he in power, would espouse intolerance. In former times, behind the unctuous utterances of concern for the wayward, the Righteous had the dungeon, the rack and the block to ensure compliance!"

Didsbury also stated that "interfaith dialogue may be the future of the ecumenical movement," adding that this "would probably shock..." the audience.

Increasingly one hears of "interfaith dialogue." The thrust is that all religions have "truth". None can exclude others. None ought to condemn others. Surely this is all of that old lie of the devil who would persuade men to determine for themselves the good and the evil.

Rock 'N Roll

Another report in *Christian News*, Sept. 8, 1980, tells of a group of young people who destroyed thousands of dollars of rock and roll records when they came to realize what a sinful investment they had made. The action came after hearing a speech from "Tony Dyer, minister of youths at the First Baptist Church of Winter Park, Florida." The report of his speech was:

Mr. Dyer talked about what rock musicians have

said about themselves in magazines such as *Rolling Stone*, *Circus*, *Billboard* and *People*, according to Don Witzel, Calvary's minister of youths. He also examined the words to various hit songs.

"It's not the type of music, nor the beat" that's most disconcerting about rock music, Mr. Witzel summarized. "It's the musicians themselves and their lifestyles and the actual lyrics of their music, ...lyrics which are often pornographic in nature."

Mr. Dyer's approach was "not sensational at all,"

Mr. Witzel continued. "He just asked them to listen, to form their own opinions. He just gave the information and the sources from which it came."

Mr. Witzel said he didn't learn that the youths wanted to destroy their records until they asked him about it Sunday morning.

In a telephone interview, Mr. Dyer said his message was prepared this summer from more than a hundred hours of reading, plus reflections on the four years he spent in a rock band before his 1969 conversion to Christianity.

He recounted a number of examples of wayward rock 'n rollers from his reading: Kiss, and Earth, Wind and Fire engage in Satan worship. Several members of the Beach Boys have dabbled in the occult, as has Robin Gibb of the Bee Gees, who has also ventured into ESP. And for a hobby, Mr. Gibb does pornographic drawings.... Linda Ronstadt was quoted as saying, "I sing better after shooting smack (heroin) in both arms." Among those killed due to drug abuse have been Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones, Keith Moon of the Who, Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin.

"I don't know of any rock group that doesn't use drugs," Mr. Dyer said. "In what rock musicians say and do, you've got the greatest argument" against their music.

Today's growing decadence, Mr. Dyer said, was "born 15 years ago" in heightened drug and sex oriented music. "And if you look back through history, when a country gets caught in perversion, sex and drugs, they've gone down the tubes eventually," he said.

The message comes through loudly and clearly. Young people can often plead that there is some music, produced by the above "musicians" which appeals to them. Yet if this music and the musicians are what the above speaker claims, there is absolutely no place for this in our lives. Light and darkness may never mix. It is a terrible thing if, in the church, there are those infected by the same evil passions as revealed in this rapidly degenerating world.

The "Soft Line" on Hell

One final article is of interest in *Christian News*, Sept. 22, 1980. It gives a review of the book, *Unconditional Good News: Toward an Understanding of Biblical Universalism*, written by Rev. Neal Punt, pastor of Evergreen Park Christian Reformed Church in Illinois. Punt appears to minimize the terrible reality of hell. The title of the book already suggests something amiss. C.N. reports:

Reformed theologian Alexander De Jong comments on Punt's book in the Forward: "Punt writes with restraint. He patiently probes the position of those with whom he disagrees, and gently nudges forward those whom he considers too narrow of vision to see the broad sweep of biblical universalism. In this book the reader finds no strident language or impatient argumentation. The author does not imply that the Reformed community needs to be verbally chastised for its narrow predestinarian vision."

..."Unconditional Good News" is not easy for the layman to understand. Its thesis is perhaps best summarized on the back cover:

"In this stimulating scriptural study, Neal Punt suggests that these texts (in the Bible which refer salvation to 'all men') create a problem because most Christians try to fit them into a theology which presupposes that all persons are outside of Christ except those the Bible declares to be saved. Salvation then is the exception, not the rule. Punt wants to turn this

around, and work from the presupposition that all persons are elect in Christ except those expressly declared by the Bible to be lost. This, he believes, does far more justice to the positive, world-embracing, universal dimensions of the gospel."

Unlike what he calls the "absolute universalists," Punt does not believe that all people will eventually go to heaven. He says it is unscriptural to say that no one will experience God's eternal wrath. Punt's novelty seems to be his contention that everyone is saved unless he consciously rejects Christ; therefore, to warn people about the danger of eternal damnation is wrong.

On p. 134 Punt says, "To say that our first purpose in bringing the Word is to make the hearers tremble before the wrath of God is sub-Christian. God's grace is the loud accent of the message of Scripture, and God's wrath is threatened so men may accept His overture of grace."

Also on p. 130, "Biblical universalism necessarily implies that we may never propagate or cultivate the point of separation between belief and unbelief (the antithesis) simply to make that division become apparent to everyone. God's Word is not intended to engender opposition or to arouse hostility."

The *Christian News* then comments:

The Punt book seems to be part of a theological trend suggesting that all are bound for glory on a train

to heaven. In the April *U.S. Catholic*, author Robert Short boldly declared that "hell is not real" and demanded that the Christian Church teach that God is letting every human being who has ever lived (including Charles Manson and Adolf Hitler) into His everlasting paradise....

...Some Christians have been wondering why few professional theologians and writers have been trying to combat universalistic trends and standing up for what Christ taught about hell....

It would appear, from the review, that another step is taken from that Scriptural truth of predestination. Where reprobation is denied, soon all must be "elect." Then too one must question the existence of hell and insist at least that it be not mentioned too prominently in the preaching of the Word. The writer of C.N. has good reason for his concern.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Promise Reaffirmed

Rev. John A. Heys

Belatedly Jacob ordered his family to put away their idols. He knew all along that the members of his family had them and were worshipping them. And we may assume that if his sons had not made it necessary for him to move away from Shechem because of their murder, and had God not ordered him to return to Bethel, he would not have commanded this putting away of the idols and of worshipping the gods represented by them.

Jacob certainly reveals himself here as a spiritually weak covenant father; and it was only the grace of God that realized in his family a God-fearing people in later years. It is an inviolable rule that what one sows one reaps. He who plants the seed of wheat is of that seed going to get wheat and not thistles. And he who sows thistles must not expect to get wheat but thistles for his crop. Rachel sowed idolatry in the family and reaped a family of idol worshippers. Jacob sowed the seeds of unconcern about this idolatry and reaped children who adopted idolatry as their way of life. Instead of a strong sermon against this idolatry of which he was aware, Jacob now merely hides the idols. And instead of smashing the idols to pieces, he makes it possible for his family and others to dig them up and use them again in the future. The earrings which they also gave up had some connection with use of these idols, and had symbolism for the idolatry, so that separation from them also must be made. And these very earrings again are proof that Jacob knew of the idolatry. It was before his eyes whenever he saw his family.

What is to be seen of Jacob here, we must see in ourselves. It was written and preserved so that we might learn from this part of history's light. And we take note of the fact that God called him to return

to Bethel; and it is with a view to this fact that Jacob orders the putting away—not the destroying—of the idols. For Bethel was the place where God had appeared to Jacob during his flight from Esau and unto his uncle Laban. Here was God's face. Here Jacob saw God. In fact, he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place" (Genesis 28:16). That being the case, Jacob realized that these idols had to go. And are we not that way, so that there are times when we think that we can let down the bars, times when it does not make too much difference what we do, and again times when we have to be very careful of our walk of life? Are there times and places in our lives when we behave as though idolatry is in order? There are times when we are sure that we ought not curse and swear, and speak filthy language; but there are also times in our sinful judgment that these can come from our lips. How silly we can get! Before and with the world we will take God's name in vain, but let an elder, a minister of the Word, or our parents be within hearing distance and we stop. I have often told my congregation that I am not God, and if they dare to take God's name in vain when I am not around, God is there, and they must give account to Him, not to me. When you live in Shechem you must walk as uprightly as in Bethel; and in the shop or office as well as in the church building, before and after the services as well as during them. And it means that at work as well as in church we must sing that which glorifies God. If we are not afraid to do these things while God is watching from out of heaven, we are foolish to be afraid of men. It was Jesus Who said, "Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him Which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

One truth that ought to grip us as we trace the

life of Jacob is the unchangeable grace and unfailing mercy of God. That grace and mercy not only moved Jacob to build an altar and thereby display before his idolatrous family his own trust in God, but these also explain the fact that God repeats and reinforces the same promise that He gave to Jacob at Bethel some thirty years before this moment. All the evil Jacob committed, all his failings and unfaithfulness before God cannot change God and make Him unfaithful. We are saved *by* grace and *in* mercy. Let us see that clearly and never deny it. Let us also see that it is because God sees His people in Christ, and imputes to them Christ's works of righteousness, that our sins and shortcomings do not keep us from the promises of the gospel. And all these failings and weaknesses on Jacob's part are recorded here to show us this great faithfulness of God. It is not written simply, or in the first place, to show us Jacob's sins but God's covenant faithfulness.

God does not withdraw the smallest part of the promise that He gave Jacob thirty years ago. Returning now to Bethel God does not say to Jacob, "Well, Jacob, it took you so long to get here, and you have in so many ways and at so many times turned away from Me, and brought up an idol-worshipping family, I will have to amend My promise. I will have to qualify matters." Instead God gave him the same promise and now more richly.

God reconfirmed the change of his name from Jacob to Israel. Every bit of the land promised to Abraham and Isaac He now again promises to Jacob, not expecting any part of it. He promised faithfulness and through it the bringing forth of "a nation and a company of nations" and that "kings shall come out of thy loins." And Jacob responded with the setting up of a pillar and with calling the place Bethel, that is, "House of God."

In this Chapter, Genesis 35, two other incidents are recorded, and both of these events brought deep sorrow in Jacob's soul. Deborah, his mother's nurse, died, and Rachel his most beloved wife also died. One of these deaths is mentioned before God appeared with the confirmation of the promise. The other is recorded after this word of comfort from God. The sweet is between the two bitter experiences. The gospel is given on a background of death and sorrow. The good news is set forth between the two incidents of sad news and deep misery.

Now Deborah's death comes somewhat as a surprise, but not because her death was unexpected or unusual. She was a very aged woman, having served Rebekah faithfully for many years. The unusual element is that she died at Bethel where Jacob was now living. Sometime in the past she

must have left Isaac's home to live with Jacob. This happened most likely while Jacob spent those ten years in and around Shechem. As Rebekah's nurse whose life with Rebekah was also closely interwoven with Jacob's—for she cared for both Esau and Jacob all through their childhood—she was strongly attracted to Jacob. Rebekah's love for Jacob spilled over onto her and into her soul, for she also loved Rebekah dearly. It was however Jacob's faith that endeared him to her above Esau, who had also been her care and concern in those childhood days. And this was so because Jacob displayed faith in God, while Esau did not. Jacob committed many sins and had his evil nature. But little sparks of faith did manifest themselves, while in Esau there were never any such manifestations. And hearing—most likely through Esau after he had returned from meeting Jacob—that Jacob was again in the land, she must have made the wearisome journey to spend the last few years of her life with the beloved son of her beloved mistress.

We may believe that it was a blow to Jacob when she died. The name that he gave to the place of her burial, namely, Allon-bachuth, which means, "Oak of Weeping," reveals this. And God brought Jacob on that sorrowful background that reaffirmation of the promise.

We ought not, however, quickly brush aside this little note of Deborah's death. As a child of God, and as a faithful nurse, she has not only her name recorded in Holy Writ, but also a note of her death. From Genesis 35:27 we learn that Jacob at last came to his father Isaac in Hebron. But not one word is mentioned about Rebekah, his mother. Not because her death is not worthy of being recorded, or that she had not the strong faith of Deborah, but because she was not living anymore and had died while Jacob was in Padan-Aram. And as a faithful servant of Rebekah, Deborah sought, after Rebekah's death, to be of service yet in the covenant line, in the church of God. Isaac did not need her. Esau had married heathen wives and displayed no interest in God's kingdom. But in Jacob's family there were children being brought up in the fear of God's name. And as a nurse, as one who had spent her life caring for children, she is eager to spend her last few years doing what she can for the children of God.

Such faithfulness is worthy of note and presents an example for us today. Our churches may be thankful that our ministers are granted emeritation and not retirement, and that God still arranges work for them to do in our churches. What an example Deborah sets for us in these days of early forced retirement while we are yet able to do so much with the minds and bodies which God gave us wherewith to serve Him. Surely there are many

kingdom causes wherein the retired, who are still strong of limb and in relatively good health, can serve those who are not given such strength of body and clarity of mind. Instead of idleness and empty sports, does God not call us to visit the aged and feeble in their moments of loneliness in the nursing homes? Does not the Word of God say that herein is true religion and undefiled before God that one visits the fatherless and widows in their affliction (James 1:27)? We who still have good eyesight, are we not given this to read for those who can no longer read and who want to be edified by good Christian literature?

The world takes care of its blind and senior citizens with failing eyesight. Should the church be behind, or lead the way? The blind and those with failing eyesight can get cassette recordings of many of the magazines the world produces. Should not the able bodied among the retired who have good, clear voices read our *Standard Bearer*, *Beacon Lights*, *Theological Journal*, and other worthwhile material on cassette tape, remembering that inasmuch as we do this to the least of our brethren, we do it to Christ Himself? And those not so gifted—and we do have men and women who are retired who can do this reading and recording—can certainly help in the preparing of and recording of the cassettes, the

mailing out and receiving back, keeping record of where they go, and of who has heard this or that tape, or even to deliver them personally. If it is too much to serve the other members of the body of Christ here below, are we ready and willing to go into the new Jerusalem where this will be our joyful work?

Remember Lot's wife as a warning, but remember Deborah as an example. My Bible says, "Six days shalt thou labour" not, "you may work six days, if you want to do so." Does there not come with life a calling to be busy with the things of God's kingdom here below? With the gift of life, is there not always the calling to use it before God's face? Must we read Matthew 6:33 to say, "Seek ye in the first part of your life the kingdom of God and its righteousness"? Or is that seeking the kingdom first a calling to make seeking the kingdom a priority until the last breath of earthly life? With the gift of life to the child of God comes the calling to look for opportunities to serve the rest of the body of Christ.

Serve one another, live for one another now, and you will have the assurance of the promise to live together in the heavenly Canaan, with all the pleasure of being members of the body of Christ, and that yours is a pure religion and undefiled.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Of God's Covenant With Man

Rev. Ron Van Overloop

Our readers will recall that we have been treating the first two sections of Chapter VII of the Westminster Confession, which chapter bears the title "Of God's Covenant with Man." These first two sections deal with the subject of God's relationship with Adam before the fall. This relationship is identified in section two as "the covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience."

We concluded in the last issue that the doctrine of the covenant of works as it is generally accepted today is different from the doctrine of the covenant of works presented in the Westminster Confession. The generally accepted doctrine of the covenant of works is presented in the writings of Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, James Thornwell, Louis Berkhof, and many others. In the last issue we presented serious objections to this conception.

We contended that the conception which the Westminster Confession presents of the covenant of works is to be found in men who lived at the time of and even sat upon the Westminster Confession, such as Thomas Goodwin (1600 - 1680) and Thomas Brooks (1608 - 1680).

Also we have already seen from Goodwin's writings that the relationship God had with Adam came about not after Adam was created, but by virtue of Adam's creation. Thus the covenant of works as conceived by Goodwin (and therefore also by the Westminster Confession, we believe) was essential and not incidental.

We ask for your patience as we continue this study for we must quote extensively from these men. We believe that we must do so to substantiate further our claim that the present day generally accepted doctrine of the covenant of works (justly criticized by Rev. H. Hoeksema in his *Reformed*

Dogmatics) is different from the conception of the covenant of works in the 1600s. Also we believe that from Goodwin and Brooks we can learn what is the conception of the Westminster Confession on the covenant of works.

Thomas Goodwin held that the relationship God had with Adam before the fall was not an alternate possibility of God's, but was merely the first step of God's plan to bring His people to eternal salvation in Christ. The "covenant of works" is inferior to and used of God to lead to the covenant of grace. The former is not equal to, but is subservient to the latter. The "covenant of works" was not considered another possible way to eternal life.

Our most holy, wise, and gracious God had, in His everlasting purposes, (as by the event appears) fore-ordained several estates and dispensations (whereof some are inferior and subordinate one unto the other, and whereof one is utterly contrary and perfectly opposite to that happiness He intended) which He would lead His elect of men through, as so many several degrees they take; yea, and oppositions and hazards they are to pass through, ere the last and most royal crown of glory be set upon their heads. And this He chose to do, to the end to magnify and set forth the glory of His own grace at last, as also to carry and lead us still on with wonder from one unto the other, and to prepare us to entertain that consummate happiness at last with unalterable (Qu. "unutterable"? - ED.) astonishment and adoration. God hath not dealt thus with the elect angels, who have had no changes; but us, the sons of men, he shifteth from vessel to vessel, and shifteth us first from one condition then another, till He hath brought us to that utmost refinement which may render us in the highest manner meet and capable of Himself immediately. To this end He at first created us in a pure and natural condition in Adam, and he the first of mankind; to let us see our *imum* or bottom, what by the law of creation it was that was our due, and how remote we were by that due from that glory He supernaturally in Christ, the second Adam, had intended; that since grace freely had designed us as higher, the disproportion might appear that so what was the gift of grace might rise up to its full glory. Then He lets us fall into sin and wrath, which utterly spoiled and defaced that first native beauty we had by creation, and plunged us into a contrary depth of misery. But then, after that again, He gives forth the gospel, which discovers Christ as a redeemer from sin and wrath, who withal brings a life and immortality to light, which by faith apprehended by us, puts us into the state of grace, and a participation of Christ, such as is suitable to the relation of the gospel in this life, far excelling Adam's state. (*The Works of Thomas Goodwin D.D.* vol. VII, Edinburgh: James Nicholl 1863, p.p. 34, 35)

Consider the following quote wherein we have the relationship of God with man defined as fellowship and that this is given as the identification of the covenant of works.

And then God gave him a soul, able to search into, and so to know the natures of all creatures..., and so to see God clearly in each of them; whom then, looking into his heart, he found by the covenant of works (as before he had tasted his favour in all the creatures) to be his God; from whence issued an unmixed peace and joy, such as fully satisfied his heart in fellowship with him, as thus known to be his chiefest good, joined with a promise of having this God to be for ever his, whilst he should thus continue to obey him (op. cit., P. 42.)

Thus we see a conception of the covenant of works taking form which is different from that of the "rather generally accepted doctrine of the covenant of works" of the last century.

What is meant by the promise of life mentioned as an element of the covenant of works in section two of this chapter of the Westminster? As the following quote shows, it refers not to eternal life, but only to a continued earthly existence.

1. The covenant he stood under was but *foedus naturae*, the covenant of nature, and such as, for the conditions of it, was due unto such a creature, and such as it became the Creator to make with him, if He at all made him. And therefore the foundation of that covenant was but the title of creation, and the primitive integrity in which God first made man, and there was nothing at all supernatural in it.

3. Answerably, the reward, the promised life and happiness that he should have had for doing and obeying, was but the continuance of the same happy life which he enjoyed in paradise, together with God's favour towards him. Which continuance in happiness was natural to him; even as our divines say that mortality (Qu. "immortality"? - ED.) was, namely, in this sense, that it was a natural due unto him whilst he should keep from sin, for God to preserve him in that state wherein at first he stood; and this preservation of him in that state, and in the favour of God, was the life promised, when God said, "Do this, and thou shalt live;" and not the translating him, in the end, unto that spiritual life in heaven, which the angels have, and which the saints shall have. And for this my reasons are—

1. Because Christ, in I Cor. xv. 47, 48, is called "the heavenly man," and the "Lord from heaven;" and that in opposition to Adam, when at the best, whom the apostle calls but an earthly man. And this difference in their condition he there evidently mentions, to shew that Christ was the first and only author of that heavenly life which the saints in heaven do enjoy, and He himself coming from heaven He carries us thither. But on the contrary, Adam, as he was of earth, so he was but an earthly man, (so ver. 47), and his happiness should have reached no higher.

2. That paradise that Adam enjoyed was but the type of the paradise above, and his Sabbath a type of heaven, as himself was of Christ. And therefore he was not to have entered into the heavenly paradise, except by this second Adam, Christ, whose paradise alone it was.

3. I observe, that the moral law (which was the law of nature) makes mention of no such promise as of going to heaven. It speaks no such language; but only, "Do this, and thou shalt live;" that is, live as thou dost, in God's favour, but yet still as on earth enjoyed.

4. This accords with the like law of nature towards all the creatures besides, who, by observing their laws, obtain not a higher station than they were created in, only thereby they keep their own. The moon, by all the constancy of her motion, attains not to the glory of the sun. Nor should man, by the moral law (which was to him but the law of nature), have attained the condition of the angels, had he fully complied with it,...

Yea, 5thly, I think that Adam's covenant, and the obedience unto it, was not able to do so much as confirm him, and secure him in that condition he was created in, so far was it from being able to have transplanted him into heaven. For,

(1) I know no promise for it, that after such a time, and so long obedience performed, he should stand perpetually. And without such a promise, we have no warrant so to think or judge of it.

and (2) Surely a creature being defectible, the covenant of nature with that creature, which proceedeth according to its due, and the obedience of that creature, could never have procured indefectibility, for that must be of grace; and He was more than a creature that did that for elect angels and men, even Christ, God-man. (op. cit., pp. 49-51)

Thomas Brooks gives the same presentation that the promise of life was not eternal life but the continuance of Adam's earthly, but very wonderful existence in Paradise.

The end of this covenant was the upholding of the creation and of all the creatures in their pure natural estate, for the comfort of man continually,... "In this

first covenant, God promised unto man life and happiness, lordship over all the creatures, liberty to use them, and all other blessings which his heart could desire, to keep him in that happy estate wherein he was created. (Thomas Brooks vol. V, Banner of Truth Trust reprint, Edinburgh and Charlisle, Penn. 1980, pp. 292 and 295)

It is noteworthy, in distinction from the generally accepted doctrine of the covenant of works held today, that the Westminster, Goodwin, and Brooks make no mention of a probationary period. In our opinion this is very telling.

What is our conclusion?

Although it might be difficult for us to know exactly and conclusively what the Westminster's conception of the covenant of works is, this much we can say, It is not the rather generally accepted, by present day Presbyterians or Reformed, doctrine of the covenant of works.

Briefly, it would seem that, according to the Westminster Assembly, the 17th century Presbyterian conception of the covenant of works was that created man owed God perfect obedience, that God voluntarily condescended in the creative act so Adam might rightly know and love Him, that Adam could lose this wonderful estate by disobeying and eating of the forbidden tree, and that Adam's wonderful condition in Paradise would have continued as long as he obeyed.

We would ask any who have more and better information on the 17th century concept of the covenant of works to contact the author. I confess that my studies and available research are limited. Any help, therefore, would be welcomed.

Question Box

Preservation and the Call to Repentance

Rev. C. Hanko

The question box has received the question:

Is it proper for a minister in addressing the congregation to use the words of our Lord as in Luke 13:3, 5, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," or something similar to that, when the Bible says that the *elect* can *never perish*?

It is, of course, extremely difficult to take a single statement that a minister might make in his sermon and judge that statement apart from its context. To lift a statement out of its context could possibly change the entire meaning of the statement, or

cause it to be understood entirely differently than was intended by the minister.

We do agree with heart and soul that the elect can never perish. There is no falling away of saints. When the minister addresses the congregation as, "Beloved congregation in our Lord Jesus Christ," he is deeply aware of the fact that he is not addressing unconverted people, but he is speaking to "saints in Christ Jesus," even though he is also aware of the fact that there may be, and likely is, a carnal element present. No believer of Reformed

persuasion, whether minister on the pulpit or listener in the pew, will want to ignore or say anything contrary to the doctrine of the preservation of the saints, "which God hath most abundantly revealed in His Word, for the glory of His Name, and the consolation of pious souls, and which he impresses upon the hearts of the faithful." "The spouse of Christ hath always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it, as an inestimable treasure; and God, against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her to continue this conduct to the end" Canons V, article 15.

Looking more directly at the text in Luke 13:3, 5, we see at once that Jesus is addressing the Jewish leaders in particular, with also others present. Jesus is answering those Jews who made it a point to tell Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. These Galileans had come to the temple for the purpose of sacrificing. Pilate, for some unknown reason, sent his soldiers into the temple, contrary to the Jewish law, and had, possibly in cold blood, killed these Galileans. The blood of these victims was mingled with the blood of the sacrifice, and therefore made the sacrifice impure and unacceptable before God. The conclusion of the Jewish leaders seems to be that these Galileans were such wicked people that God had struck them down and rejected their sacrifice. Reading the minds of these self-righteous Jews, Jesus warns them that if they do not repent of their sins, they also will likewise perish under the judgment of the living God. Our Lord even adds the incident that involved eighteen men of Judea who were killed, not by the violence of Pilate, but by a direct act of providence, for they were killed by the

falling of the wall of Siloam. This happened to people from the area of Jerusalem and not to despised Galileans. And again Jesus warns these self-righteous Jews, who feel no need of repentance, that they must repent before a greater evil befalls them. From the parable that follows it becomes evident that these wicked leaders were guilty of rejecting the Christ, and that they would seal their hatred against Him by nailing Him to the cross. Their judgment and condemnation would, therefore, be the greater.

It is conceivable that a minister is plainly preaching a sermon that condemns all those who are guilty of spiritual indifference, or cold complacency, or even opposition to the Word of God. These may feel no need for repentance, taking the attitude, "The people of the Lord are we." To those the minister might issue the warning, in order to stress the need of a hearty repentance, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Never, under any circumstances, should such a statement be made to deprive a sincere believer of the assurance of his faith. Never should such a statement undermine the truth of the believer's eternal security. The Word certainly has a twofold purpose and a twofold effect; it must always serve to condemn and admonish the wicked in their evil ways, but positively it must always strengthen the saints in their faith and hope in Jesus Christ.

It is my sincere hope that this may serve as a bit of help to the one who sent the question. Our Question Box is always open to those who search the Scriptures and have questions pertaining to the Scriptures and our faith in the Word.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On December 6, 1980, our parents, MR. AND MRS. UILKE TOLSMA celebrated together their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are thankful to our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents and we pray that our God will continue to keep and bless them in the years to come to the glory of His great and holy name.

"The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in Him; and all the upright in heart shall glory." (Psalm 64:10).

Arthur and Helen Tolsma
Tracy, Philip, Ryan
Fred and Netty Tolsma
Russell

Richard and Sharon Tolsma
Kimberly
Brian Tolsma
Irwin Tolsma

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

NOTICE!!!

On January 7, 1981, the Lord willing, the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, will install their new pastor, Rev. R.G. Miersma. Rev. G. Van Baren, pastor of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, will deliver the installation sermon and Rev. J.A. Heys, Holland's former pastor, will read the Form for Installation. This service will be held at 8 P.M.

All are invited. So plan now to attend this happy event and bring your family and your friends.

News From Our Churches

There has been a considerable amount of activity in our calling congregations since our last news column. Our Hope, Michigan congregation called

Rev. Flikkema, who is presently the pastor of our Isabel, South Dakota Church, and Rev. Miersma of Pella *accepted* the call of our Holland congregation.

Two immediate results of that decision are: Pella's formation of a trio consisting of Reverends Koole, Lanting, and Slopsema, and the planned installation of Rev. Miersma in Holland on January 7, 1981, with Rev. Van Baren delivering the message and Rev. Heys reading the form for installation.

From our Birmingham Mission Station we learn from Rev. Van Overloop that from 10 to 11 A.M. each Sunday morning one of his taped sermons is proclaimed on a 100,000 watt FM religious radio station in the Birmingham area. Rev. Van Overloop reports that although it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of this outreach, he does not doubt that the sermons are being heard. In addition to some contacts that have been made as a result of the broadcasts, an interesting incident involving a member of our South Holland congregation supports Rev. Van Overloop's belief. As I understand it, this member received some watermelons that were trucked in from the South. When it was learned that the melons came from Alabama, mention was made of the mission work of our churches in the Birmingham area. Further discussion brought to light the fact that the truck driver had even heard the name of our missionary pastor from somewhere. More careful contemplation revealed that he must have heard by means of our Birmingham radio broadcast.

Back in September an Edmonton bulletin announced, "The *Standard Bearers* are in the back of Church." Being so used to finding my own copy in the mailbox each time, this announcement took me a little by surprise. A recent conversation with our business manager cleared everything up, however. He told me that when the S.B.'s were mailed by bulk rate it took from six to eight weeks for the subscribers to receive their copies. (Consider, if you will, how old the S.B. news is even for those who live in the Grand Rapids area; then try to imagine how stale it would be six or more weeks later.) Determined to keep our Edmonton people current, Mr. Vander Wal sought out other mailing methods, with the result that they now receive the *Standard Bearer* in about one week. Though it costs slightly more, twenty-two copies of the S.B. are

mailed to Edmonton's clerk who in turn distributes them to the members of the congregation at the earliest opportunity.

That a considerable amount of church extension work is done by our congregations is evident from the number of bulletin announcements and newsletters we receive concerning this work. Following are some excerpts from responses to the church extension work of our South Holland and Hope, Michigan congregations: From Teiper, Taiwan: "Thank you for sending me tapes of the Word of God. I am serving Pastor in a small congregation in Taiwan...."

From Lancaster, Pa.: "We were members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Pa. but we had to leave as our minister was not of the old school, etc. We have been visiting other churches. We loan your tapes to others also who have left with us. I can't tell you what a blessing we receive from them. Could you continue to send them so we can hear a real sermon where we can receive a real blessing."

From Dundee, Scotland: "Having recently obtained and read the booklet 'Saved By Grace' by the Reverend R. Decker, I am most impressed by the truly Biblical and Reformed nature of the booklet and desire to read more. Would you be so kind as to send me the following? 'Pentecostalism in the Light of the Word'; 'God Is Our Refuge and Strength'; 'The Church Today....A Comparison'; 'Shall There Be Reformation No More'; 'The Christian's Social Calling and the Second Coming of Christ'; plus others if you have them. I notice that the Rev. D. Engelsma is the pastor of your church. Would you also send me a tape cassette of a sermon of his? I appreciate that as a stranger and a foreigner my requests seem like begging, but I would dearly like to have them."

From Lakeside, Calif.: "I have found your pamphlet on 'Good News For the Afflicted' a great comfort to those who have had much to suffer. Please send me 24 copies for use in pastoral work. If there is any expense, please bill me. Thank you. Sincerely in the Lord."