

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

True thanksgiving...does not mean that we stand before our riches, and then feel at ease in our souls because all is carnally and materially well. We must be thankful because God is good, always good to us as the God of our salvation. This goodness never depends upon anything; it always operates through whatever we may receive.

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MEDITATION

True Thanksgiving

Rev. H. Veldman

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever." Psalm 136:1

We are called to give thanks to God because His mercy endures forever. How strange! Do mercy and thanks include each other? Does not mercy presuppose misery and affliction?

How strange and wonderful is the underlying current of Psalm 136, called by the Jews the Great Thanksgiving! God is good. He is good, and there-

fore always good, because His mercy endureth forever, is unto everlasting. And then the psalmist sings of this mercy of the Lord, mentioning it not fewer than twenty-six times.

Shall we give thanks unto the Lord because He is good and because His mercy endureth forever—in our present age of great plenty? It is always com-

paratively more difficult to be truly thankful in prosperity than patient in adversity. Besides, we must give thanks because of His mercy. Mercy presupposes misery. Are His mercies upon us? Are we conscious of this? Do we know, also now, our misery? All through Scripture we read this. Only then can we be thankful.

Its Idea

Give thanks, or thank the Lord. The Dutch reads: Praise the Lord. The English is probably the better translation. We cannot exclude the word, praise. The element of praise cannot be separated from the idea of true thanksgiving. The Scriptures, too, speak repeatedly of blessing the Lord, as in Psalm 103:1, and this word, bless, means literally, to kneel, and therefore expresses the idea of true humility and contrition. However, the word of our text undoubtedly means, to give thanks.

The literal meaning of the Hebrew word, thank, is: to reach out and extend the hand. It means, then, that we point to all the good things we have received, that we count all our blessings, one by one. It means, too, that we speak of all these good things as gifts which we do not deserve but which we have forfeited, and that we then climb up to the living God, the Lord our God, and point to Him as the rich and beneficent Giver of all good, and then declare as before His face the praise of His Name, and also speak of that praise to one another, in the great congregation and in the midst of the world.

True thanksgiving always implies three things.

First, it is the acknowledgment of our own undoneness and unworthiness. We never deserve anything. Nothing belongs to man. As creatures, we are always under obligation to God. Even if we serve Him perfectly, we would still be the most unprofitable servants. However, we are not only undeserving, but also wholly unworthy. We are always miserable, naked, condemnable sinners. How tremendously important this is! We are so often unthankful and rebellious. So often we complain because we must suffer pain and discomfort. How different would be our attitude, as people of God, if only we would constantly be mindful of our sin and condemnation. How wonderful it would be if we would bear in mind the great God's wonderful goodness to us, utterly worthless sinners!

Secondly, true acknowledgment is always pure acknowledgment. We can never renumerate or recompense the Lord. What shall we render unto the Lord for all His benefits to us? We own nothing, and can therefore never repay the Lord. How little we understand that the poor widow's mite has more value before God than what the rich give of

their abundance! We so often think that our contributions deserve God's favour and recognition. Indeed, true thanksgiving is pure acknowledgment. All we can do is say, "thank you," to the living God. And then it behooves us to fall down upon our knees and thank the Lord that we might be able to say it.

Thirdly, true thanksgiving is also always praise. Of course! This can never be lacking if, as guilty, condemnable sinners, we have received the amazing grace and salvation of the Lord. When a beggar receives a beautiful suit of clothes, he will surely not wallow around in the mire with it. And if, as spiritual beggars we have been gifted with salvation, we will surely not wallow around with it in the mire of sin. True thanksgiving means true joy of heart and mind and soul. Then we will surely point to God and praise Him as the God of our salvation, ever declaring the praises of our God.

Its Content

God is good.

God is good in Himself. God's goodness has been defined in the past as His Self-Desirability. Now it is surely true that the Lord desires Himself. This is fundamental. However, this definition really does not tell us what the goodness of God is. It states only a result of the goodness of God. It does not answer the question: why does the Lord desire Himself?

That God desires Himself is because He is the God of infinite perfections. God is good. God is the Holy One, the Righteous One, the God of all light, truth, and faithfulness. Whereas God is the God of infinite perfections, as the Triune God, His goodness is therefore His Self-Desirability, that the Lord desires Himself. He knows Himself as the only absolute Good, and therefore desires Himself alone.

God is therefore also the overflowing Fount of all good for all who fear Him. Indeed, God is always good. The attempt has been made to generalize the goodness of God, to speak of a general goodness to all men. This attempt, however, is a complete failure. The trouble is that they view this goodness of God from only one aspect, namely the aspect of God's benevolence, kindness, pity. They forget that God's goodness is His Self-Desirability, that the living God eternally loves and seeks Himself. Indeed, there are other aspects and phases of this goodness of the Lord.

The Lord is always good. When the creature is viewed as evil and perverse, then this goodness of the Lord is known as His wrath. When the creature is viewed as sinner, always impure, then this goodness makes him miserable, is known as His

curse. And when the sinner is viewed as guilty and worthy of punishment, and the goodness of God punishes him with temporal and everlasting punishment, then that goodness of God has the name of His righteousness and justice.

It is exactly for this reason that God's goodness is always particular. That God is good means that He is the God of infinite perfections, always seeking Himself. There is, therefore, never any kindness, benevolence, compassion for the reprobate wicked whom the Lord eternally and sovereignly has known and knows as wicked, whom His soul loatheth because He always loves Himself. And it is for this reason that He is filled with kindness and mercy only for His people, and this only in Christ Jesus, that He desires their good even as He desires Himself, and that only for His own Name's sake.

It is exactly this aspect of God's goodness that receives all the emphasis in this word of God. Indeed, we do not have here merely a bit of dogma. We do not thank the Lord only because of the virtue of God's goodness. In this sense God is also good to the wicked, maintaining Himself as the only good God. This is in itself no ground for thanksgiving. But the psalmist here is exhorting the people of the Lord to give thanks unto God for His goodness, for the revelation of that goodness in all the riches of blessings for His own.

Indeed, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good. That God is good is the content of this thanksgiving. It means that we have seen and observed in all our life the goodness of the Lord upon us. It means that we know and say that we have received from the hand of our God nothing but good. Indeed, we shall not give thanks only for those things which we classify as good, omitting the things contrary to our flesh. We shall confess that God is good, that He is therefore always good in whatever is our portion and lot.

Hence, give thanks unto the Lord for He is good. He is good, always, good in all things. Count your blessings, name them one by one, and do not omit any. And, may the content of our thanksgiving ever be this goodness of the Lord. True thanksgiving does not consist in the things of this world. It does not mean that we stand before our riches, and then feel at ease in our souls because all is carnally and materially well. We must be thankful because God is good, always good to us as the God of our salvation. This goodness never depends upon anything; it always operates through whatever we may receive.

Its Ground

His mercy endureth forever.

God's mercy is but an aspect of God's goodness,

and we read of it that it endureth forever.

Indeed, in this present time is much misery. It may appear differently at times. But the reality is that this world is really the valley of the shadow of death. Indeed, the curse of God upon sin is present everywhere.

How, then, can we say that the Lord is good, always good? Is He good when He sends misery and sorrow and death? And then, do we thank God for that goodness? Mercy is the love of God whereby He is moved with pity and compassion because He loved us with an everlasting love. God's mercy is His love and desire to deliver us out of all our misery, to make us conformable unto the image of His Son in heavenly life and glory. And God is merciful, desires to deliver us out of all misery and death, also when He sends us misery and sorrow and death?

This mercy endureth forever. It is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him. This is also emphasized in this text by the name Lord, or Jehovah. Jehovah is the I AM, the Rock, the Unchangeable One. His mercy is therefore everlasting.

This is the ground for all true thanksgiving. Eternally in God's counsel, and through all the history of this world, God is moved by mercy and compassion; it is the divine motive that controls every divine activity, whatever happens in the world, including the creation of the world, whatever the Church may experience, whatever we may personally experience upon our way.

This is also the content of this psalm. Twenty-six times the psalm speaks of this ever-enduring mercy. In the verses 4 through 9 we read of His creative wonders. Then we are told of His wrath upon our enemies, upon Egypt and Sihon and Og, and that He gave His people their land for an heritage. Always He is the mighty God, the God of unchangeable love and mercy.

Therefore we can give thanks, always. Indeed, God is good, always good, always overflowing with all the blessings of His lovingkindness. Therefore we know that all things are always working for our good, because His mercy endureth forever.

Indeed, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good.

His mercy endureth forever.

*The Standard Bearer
makes a thoughtful gift
on any occasion.*

Editor's Notes

The Unnamed Student. His name is Jon Smith. He is second from the right in the picture of the seminary students in our special seminary issue. We first thought that our Yankee typesetter automatically rejected the name of anyone from the Deep South. But careful investigation proved that the omission was a human error. Sorry, Jon!

Publication Un-news. Several of our books, reprints and new, are being delayed at the bindery. We urge you, however, to get your Christmas orders in; we expect to be able to fill them. We also urge you—again—to join the RFPA Book Club. As long as *The Voice Of Our Fathers* is not yet published, you can join the Book Club and take advantage of the big, first-copy discount of 30% off the regular price of \$18.95. Write to: RFPA, Box 2006, Grand Rapids, MI. 49501.

EDITORIAL

The E.P.C. of Australia—Revisited

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Various other obligations have prevented me until now from telling you a bit about my summer experiences in Australasia and in Singapore, as I promised. This delay was not all bad: for it also enabled me to see things a bit more in perspective and to reach more mature judgments. In the rush of travel and the excitement of new and interesting experiences the latter is not always possible.

Our chief purpose was to visit Australia, where we spent a total of three weeks. We also spent a week in New Zealand (the North Island) and a little more than a week in Singapore; but about these parts of our trip later. Some five years ago, when, along with the Rev. C. Hanko, we visited various churches in that part of the world in what turned out to be a hectic, fast-paced trip, my wife and I dreamed of the possibility of returning some day on a vacation-trip, seeing more of the country, and enjoying more of the hospitality of the saints with whom we had become acquainted in that part of the world. This time I travelled in no official capacity for the churches; and we could set our own pace and draw up our own itinerary. And while our chief purpose was vacationing and sightseeing, our plans were such that we spent much time with fellow-saints who had urged their hospitality upon us five years ago and who, true to their word, gladly received us and acted as our hosts and guides. We purposely planned our itinerary so that we would be with brothers and sisters of the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches especially on week-

ends. Already before we left home, we had been invited to preach and speak in these churches; and on all three Lord's Days of our stay in Australia we had the opportunity to preach the Word as well as to speak, conduct question hours, and lead Bible classes.

I spoke of visiting *Australia*, but actually that is a bit of an overstatement. Actually, Australia is a large land, as large in area as our United States. Our visit was limited to the eastern coastal area, from the island-state of Tasmania far to the south to Hayman Island, several hundred miles north of Brisbane, Queensland, in the north. That took us from the southern temperate zone, where, since we were in the Southern Hemisphere, it was very definitely winter, to the tropical area in the vicinity of the Great Barrier Reef. As far as vacationing and sightseeing were concerned, this area was quite enough to try to enjoy in three weeks' time. It is along this eastern coastal strip that you find most of Australia's national population of some thirteen and a half million; and it is here, too, that you find the large cities, such as Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane. Although Australia as a whole is much more sparsely populated than our country, it is in many respects like our own country. The population is cosmopolitan. Its large cities are much like our large cities, though perhaps their social problems are not as acute as in our large cities. The standard of living is much like the American standard of living. And, generally speaking, the

religious and ecclesiastical situation in that land is much as it is in our own land.

We entered Australia at the Melbourne airport, where we had to make a connection to Launceston, Tasmania, almost 300 miles to the south across Bass Strait. But it was at Melbourne airport that we had our first contact with God's people in Australia. Pastor Van Baren had told us about his correspondence by letter and sermon cassettes with a Mr. Cameron Hope, of Mornington, Victoria, some 50 miles south of Melbourne. While we were not able to go to Mornington, we did have a rather long layover at Melbourne; hence, we had suggested to Mr. Hope by letter the possibility of a short visit at the airport. What a pleasant surprise it was to meet Mr. Hope and his elderly mother there in the vast reaches of the Melbourne terminal! Mr. Hope had taken time off from his work and travelled up to Melbourne with his mother just for the sake of face-to-face acquaintance and Christian fellowship for an hour or so. Virtually their only spiritual nourishment is by means of cassettes from Hudsonville and Hope Churches and through our *Standard Bearer* and other literature. It is probably difficult for us even to understand the circumstances of such isolated people of God. But it drew my attention more than once that in the vast reaches of Australia one finds similar situations in various places—one or two or a few people of God who love and long for the Reformed truth living isolatedly and in some instances far from other likeminded Christians. One wishes that both for their own sake and for the sake of the churches they could be gathered together.

At the Launceston, Tasmania airport we were met by Mr. Viv Connors; and it was at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Connors that my wife and I and our daughter Candace had our headquarters for a week's unforgettable stay in the beautiful island-state of Tasmania. It was winter in Tasmania, but the winters are not nearly as severe and snowy as our Michigan winters. Nights can be rather cold and frosty, so that a few quilts and an electric blanket are welcome in bed; and a blazing fire in the hearth or an efficient gas heater are welcome in the livingroom. But when it doesn't rain, the days can be rather mild and pleasant even though there is a bit of a nip in the air. I must concede, too, that it was not as cold as five years ago. Besides, whatever of cold there was, it was certainly overcome by the warm hospitality and the Christian fellowship of the Tasmania folk, and especially of the Connors. It is sometimes said that you don't really get to know people until you get your feet under the same table with them. Well, we became fast friends with the Connors.

Tasmania is one of the centers of the Evangelical

Presbyterian Church, and there are several congregations there; the other center is in Queensland, well over a thousand miles to the north. The E.P.C., some of you will recall, is a group of churches which made a long and amazing journey during the 1950s from virulent Arminianism and crusade evangelism to the Reformed faith and a full commitment to the position of the Westminster creeds. Pastor Charles Rodman told the first part of that story in the *Standard Bearer* several years ago; I still wish and hope he will finish that story some day soon. (Please take note, Brother Rodman!) Through a marvelous series of developments they came to a denial of the idea of a general, well-meant offer of salvation; and through an equally marvelous chain of circumstances, while they thought they were all alone in the world in their doctrinal position, God in His good providence brought them into contact with us. That was the beginning of our friendship and our contact.

Five years ago, in behalf of the Contact Committee, Rev. C. Hanko and I made a whirlwind tour of the Tasmanian churches. We spent an evening at Burnie, from Saturday afternoon to Sunday noon in Launceston, a Sunday evening in Winnaleah, and a Monday evening in Taranna. Each time we barely became acquainted, and then we hurriedly moved on. This time there was opportunity for more thorough acquaintance. We spent the entire week of our stay in northern Tasmania, visiting in Launceston, at Burnie in the northwest corner, and at Winnaleah in the northeast part. Mr. Connors is an elder in the Launceston church, is clerk of that congregation, and also clerk of Presbytery (classis). He took the week off from his work as a building contractor and acted as our chauffeur and tour guide. Needless to say, we had much opportunity to talk with one another as we travelled; and on those days when the ladies went off by themselves, he and I spent many an hour discussing the truth, telling about our churches, and discussing both those things on which we agreed and on which we have differences, as well as discussing the progress of the relationships between our churches. All of our discussions were unofficial, of course; and we were both well aware of this. Nevertheless, we became better acquainted and came to a better understanding of one another's positions and attitudes.

One day out of our week we spent on a combined sightseeing and visiting trip westward along the rugged north coast of Tasmania to Burnie. There we visited Pastor and Mrs. Fisk, newcomers to Australia and to the E.P.C. since our visit five years ago. Mr. Fisk and I had known one another by correspondence when the Fisks lived in South Africa. Now we met one another face to face for the

first time, and we spent a good half day of fellowship and discussion of our common faith there. We were only sorry that we were unable to revisit some of the Burnie folk whom we had met five years ago.

Another day and a half was spent in a delightful visit to Winnaleah and the northeastern part of Tasmania. Again, sightseeing was part of our purpose: we headed toward Mt. William National Park and its abundant wildlife, to see in their natural habitat such strange creatures as kangaroos, wallabies, and wombats. But we also purposed to visit the folk of the E.P.C. of Winnaleah. Five years ago we had made a hasty visit and had enjoyed a Sunday evening fellowship meeting at the home of Peter Carins. At that time, due to some severe troubles, the congregation at Winnaleah was broken up. In the interim the breach has been wonderfully healed; and we met several old friends there, but also many new ones. Besides, in the interim of five years Pastor Philip Burley has shifted from Rockhampton, some 400-500 miles

north of Brisbane, to Winnaleah. In addition, Pastor John Lyons, now retired, drove in from nearby St. Helens. The result was that we had a truly enjoyable get-together. On the way to and through the park the men travelled in one car and the ladies in the other. At the end of the afternoon's ride the men had to admit they had missed some of the sights along the way. The reason? We were deeply involved in a theological discussion about post-millennialism!

In the evening at Winnaleah we enjoyed a fellowship dinner with many of the congregation. At this meeting I had the opportunity to introduce our Protestant Reformed Churches, our history and our doctrinal stand, particularly with reference to common grace, and fielded a few questions afterwards.

A large part of our contacts, however, was in Launceston. About this and about the rest of our Australian visit, however, I shall write later.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

November 15, 1980

Dear Timothy,

In our last letter we finished our discussion of the conscience in the life of man and particularly in the life of the regenerated child of God. We have now to turn to the question of the place of the emotions in man's life—and again, particularly in the life of the Christian.

This is a very difficult subject to discuss, and we need not, I think, enter into the question in detail. Such detailed discussion would carry us very far afield and would not serve any good purpose so far as I can see. Yet some understanding of the emotions is important.

If one should make an effort to define the emotions, one immediately runs into a problem. The problem has been faced many times in the past, and I do not know a better way to formulate the problem than this way: Are the emotions a separate faculty of the soul? This is really not such a clear way to state the problem because the question immediately arises: What is meant by *faculty*? Let's

not get too involved in that question for now; let's be content with saying that a "faculty" is a power which the soul possesses and which power is a particular function of the soul. It is generally conceded that the soul has especially two such powers or functions: the power of thinking and the power of willing; or, the faculty of the mind and the faculty of the will. Now the question which we face is this: Are the emotions (or feelings, or affections, —whatever you want to call them now) a separate power or faculty in the soul distinct from and functioning alongside of the mind and will?

There have been those in the past who have taken this position. Dr. H. Bavinck, in his book, *Principles of Psychology*, discusses this matter at length and points out the dangers of doing this. I will try to summarize what he says about this.

The chief danger which Bavinck sees in making the emotions or feelings a separate faculty is that this causes the feelings "to stand outside the control of the understanding and will, and thus

outside responsibility and guilt." His point is that responsibility and accountability before God rest upon man's rationality and morality. That is, a man is responsible before God because he has a mind and a will by which he is able to know the difference between good and evil and know that it is his calling before God to do the good. But if the emotions are given independent status, alongside of the mind and the will, then all such actions which arise out of the emotions are also outside the boundaries of responsibility and guilt.

This is an interesting point which Bavinck makes because it is exactly what is happening in our day. The trouble is that not only is it true that emotions are given a place in the life of the soul alongside of (and relatively equal to) the powers of mind and will, but the emotions are even given a position of superiority in the life of men. There have always been those who have stressed the importance of "feeling." They have said that emotions are the important thing. One ought to live in such a way that his emotions come to full expression, that, as a matter of fact, he is guided by his emotions in all that he does. This sort of position has all but determined the kind of world we live in today. Not only do emotions guide and direct men in all that they do, emotions even determine at last what is right and what is wrong. It is the emphasis which people place upon feeling. Whatever gives them pleasure in an emotional sense is what they do. They seek their pleasure in "fun" because fun makes them *feel* good. They go to drugs and alcohol because they give them a lift, give them a high, make them *feel* good for a time. Whatever *feels* good one does. And the motto for a hedonistic age is: "If it *feels* good, do it."

But this same idea becomes a kind of standard of right and wrong. When people do something which is contrary to God's Word and this is pointed out to them, then they cannot imagine that anyone would possibly question the morality of their conduct because, after all, it was fun to do and it gave them a thrill and, "Do you want to take all our fun away?" This same attitude is becoming increasingly common among our children. They seem to have the idea that if they feel like doing something, they have a perfect right to do it, and the good feeling which it gives them to do it is perfect justification for doing it. That places the act beyond all criticism and outside condemnation.

This principle is literally taken over in the area of law and jurisprudence. The man may, in a fit of anger, murder his wife. But the very fact that he was emotionally aroused by the anger which consumed him makes him innocent of murder and excuses what he has done. And so the court declares him not guilty on the grounds that he was

not responsible for his conduct since he was so emotionally aroused.

How correct Bavinck was when he pointed out this danger. As, increasingly, this idea that the emotions are a separate faculty gained ground, so also did the idea grow that whatever conduct in man is rooted in the emotions is beyond the pale of responsibility and guilt.

Bavinck goes on to point out that when this same principle is carried over into the area of religion, then it becomes mysticism in all its different forms. He writes, "Feeling, released from the discipline of the faculties of knowing and willing, becomes an independent fountain of knowledge; and the balance is broken both in the life of the individual man and in that of the people." So it is in the area of religion especially in what we call today, Neo-Pentecostalism. Sometimes such mysticism takes the extreme form of making one's feelings the criterion of truth so that special revelations come through the subjective faculty of feeling. But, more often than not, religion is reduced to feeling spiritually "high." The knowledge of the faith is spurned and the discipline of the activity of the will is ignored—all to make room for "feeling good." Religion is not so much what you believe. Religion is what you feel.

There is a great deal of this today also within the church of Christ. It is obvious, though, that this must be avoided like the plague.

On the other side of the coin, however, there has always been a certain tendency to deny the emotions altogether. It is, of course, impossible to do this in any kind of absolute sense. It is impossible to take the position that man has no emotions, or, at least, that man ought not to have any emotions, that emotions are the baser side of man, the more animal side, the lower aspect of his being. Man ought, if at all possible, to keep his emotions and feelings under such total control that he never does anything in an emotional way nor reveals that he has feelings of any kind.

It seems to me that this is sometimes the consequence of taking the opposite position, namely, that the emotions are not a separate faculty of the soul, but are simply a part of the functioning of the mind and the will. To use a figure: is the human person like a chariot pulled by three horses (the mind, the will, and the emotions), or is the human person like a chariot pulled by two horses (the mind and the will)? If the latter is true then what are the emotions? The possible and seemingly ready answer is that the emotions are only another part of the mind. Just as the mind of man thinks, reasons, ponders, understands, remembers, etc., so does the human mind also "feel." The emotions or

feelings are a part of the work of the mind—one function of the mind among many.

But it is this position which, it seems to me, has led to the idea that we ought not really to be emotional people at all. We ought, in so far as we are able, to keep our emotions so rigidly in check that they really never influence our conduct in any respect. We ought never to be angry. We ought never to be sad—no matter how we are afflicted. To show grief when a loved one dies is wrong, and the more we can refrain from showing any grief, the more spiritual we are. We ought never to allow our emotions to show through; then people will never know how we feel inside ourselves or how we react to what happens to us and to others. The less emotional a person is, the more he is to be praised.

It seems that this has sometimes been the position among us, and I wonder sometimes whether this is not, in fact, a characteristic of the Dutch—especially in comparison to other nationalities which are very emotional. We are ashamed to show our feelings quickly, are embarrassed by our emotions, hide them from others when we can, and try to control them in our own lives.

Is this the way it ought to be? Ought we to be such creatures of the mind and will that every part of our life is so completely intellectual and volition-

al that there is no room for emotions at all?

It ought to be obvious immediately that this is impossible. Even if it were desirable, it simply is not possible. We are creatures who are emotional, and all the theorizing in the world is not going to change that one whit. We may draw up many rules of conduct which, whether written or unwritten, disavow the emotional in man and make any show of emotions a shame; but that is not going to alter the fact that man cannot be anything else but a creature of feeling, a person with affections, one who came from the hands of his Creator with the power of emotions. He may try to control them, to hide them, to act as if they do not exist; but they are there and they will be a part, an enormous part, of our life whether we will or not.

Even if we succeed in hiding our feelings from others, they are inside ourselves. They are there, uncontrollably there; they are there because we are made to "feel"; and without "feeling" we would not be the kind of creatures God made us.

We want to take a look at the Scriptures and see what they have to say about all this. But we shall have to wait until next time.

Your brother in Christ,
H. Hanko

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

The Objects of Missions

Prof. Robert D. Decker

The question with which we are dealing is this: who are the proper objects of mission work? To whom or to which peoples ought the church direct the preaching of the gospel? In our last contribution we considered whether or not the church should perform mission work among the Jews. This is the question of what is sometimes called "the priority of the Jews." In that connection we presented a rather lengthy quotation of the late Dr. J.H. Bavinck (cf. Bavinck's *Introduction To The Science of Missions* pp. 69-72).

In that book Bavinck takes the position that Scripture makes no distinctions other than that the mission had to "begin at Jerusalem." In support of his contention Bavinck cites Luke 24:47 and Acts 1:8. In the former passage Christ opened the minds

of the disciples so that they understand how the Old Testament Scriptures teach "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his (Christ's) name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." In the Acts passage we find Christ saying: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Bavinck argues that the Jews enjoyed a *temporal* priority in that the gospel began at Jerusalem, but this priority holds no longer. The reason for this according to Bavinck is twofold. Israel, because she rejected Christ, forfeited all her rights and privileges with respect to the gospel. Moreover, all the promises to Israel are in principle fulfilled in the

person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence, in Bavinck's opinion, there is no special urgency to do mission work among the Jews.

With this position we must take issue. In Romans chapter eleven the Apostle Paul uses the figure of the olive tree and its branches as an illustration of the church and its members taken from both Jew (the natural branches) and Gentile (the wild branches). In verses seventeen through twenty-six we read, "And if some of the branches be broken off (Israel), and thou, being a wild olive tree (Gentiles), wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." This passage teaches that the natural branches (Jews), once cut off because of their unbelief, may be grafted into their own good olive tree again. God is able to do that. They may become part of the church once more. This is the special position and privilege of the Jews who are the natural branches of the good olive tree. The wild branches, once cut off because of unbelief, remain cut off. Hence mission work among the Jews ought never be ignored.

As a matter of fact the Apostolic Church certainly did not ignore the Jews, their "kinsmen according to the flesh." Almost agonizing over their unbelief and rejection of Christ the Apostle Paul ardently desired their salvation. This is what he writes in Romans 9:1-5: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish

myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are the Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." This is strong language! The Apostle had "great heaviness and continual sorrow" in his heart. He even went so far as to say, "I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

This same Apostle, in a beautiful confession in this same letter to the Romans, characterizes the gospel this way: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (1:16). It is always to the Jew first and then the Greek. For centuries the gospel was limited to the Israelites, with only a very few exceptions. The ministry of Christ was almost exclusively to the Jews, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." In obedience to Christ's command and after the pouring out of the Holy Spirit the Apostles began at Jerusalem, proceeded to Samaria and then to the uttermost parts of the world. Even in their going to the uttermost parts of the world the Apostles preached to the Jew first and then the Gentile. The great Apostle Paul who is known in the church as the apostle to the Gentiles followed that procedure in his missionary journies. Having been ordained by the church at Antioch, Barnabas and Paul embark on their first missionary journey. Concerning the first stop on that journey we read: "And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had John also to their minister" (Acts 13:5). The same is true of Antioch in Pisidia (vs. 14). Here Paul preached a rather lengthy sermon to the Jews, showing from the law and the prophets that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God. After this sermon we read, "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath" (vs. 42). When on the next Sabbath day the unbelieving, envious Jews began contradicting Paul's preaching, Paul and Barnabas in the boldness of faith had this to say to them: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth" (vss. 46, 47). Notice how the apostles put that: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you." That was

necessary because the gospel is "to the Jew first and also to the Greek." When the gospel was rejected by the Jews the apostles preached to the Gentiles. The fruit of that preaching was this: "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region... And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost" (vss. 48, 49, 52). Thus the apostles continued from place to place in spite of the repeated rejection of the gospel and persecution by the Jews. They went first to the synagogues (cf. Acts 14).

It may be said, therefore, that the Jews did enjoy a certain priority as the natural branches of the good olive tree. The gospel came first to them and then to the Gentiles. Indeed it was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to them. Through the Jews' rejection of the gospel the Word of the Lord goes to the Gentiles. It may also be said that the Jews still enjoy a certain priority in that as

natural branches of the good olive tree they may be grafted in again. For this very reason, should the Holy Spirit open the door and show the church the way for work among the Jews, the church ought to preach to those people of whom according to the flesh Christ came. This in brief is the Bible's teaching concerning the Jews and their relationship to and position in the church of all ages.

This does not mean there will be a mass conversion of Jews near the end of the ages as many erroneously teach citing Romans 11. In this connection the restoration of the Jewish state in Palestine has no particular significance from a Biblical point of view. The fact is that God has His elect in every nation under heaven, both Jew and Gentile. These the Son of God will gather by His Spirit through the preaching of the Word. In this great work the church must not and need not be ashamed of the gospel for: "...it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth, the Jew first and also the Greek."

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

What Is Anti-Semitism?

Time, Sept. 29, 1980, presented an interesting account in its religious section of a certain religious leader who said that God does not hear Jewish prayers not made in Christ's Name. He was promptly labeled "anti-Semitic" and many of his fellow church members berated him for the same "sin."

Last June in St. Louis, well-organized conservatives at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention elected a stem-winding preacher named Bailey Smith, 41, as president of the nation's biggest Protestant group (13.4 million members). Smith... managed to keep a low profile until a big August political rally in Dallas, organized by the rising Protestant right. Reporters flocked to a press conference where Ronald Reagan was holding forth in favor of biblical creationism, and so most of them missed Smith's address to 5,000 in the main arena. Said Smith: "It's interesting to me at great political battles how you have a Protestant to pray and a Catholic to pray, and then you have a Jew to pray. With all due respect to those dear people, my friend, God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew. For how in the world can God hear the prayer of a man who says that

Jesus Christ is not the true Messiah? It is blasphemous."

Sensing more anti-Semitism than due respect, "those dear people" decided Smith's words should not go unnoticed. Last week the American Jewish Committee sent transcripts around the country. Smith persists in his opinion, but many S.B.C. members are embarrassed over their leader's theology. Said Jimmy Allen, head of the radio-TV commission and a former S.B.C. president, Smith's statement "doesn't represent the position of most Southern Baptists. God listens to the needs of every person who calls on him."

This reaction is of more than passing interest—it is also deeply disturbing and perhaps indicative of that which we can expect in the future.

But what did Jesus say? Did He not claim, "...neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him" (Matt. 11:27)? Again, Jesus said in John 8:42, "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me." And did Jesus not say, "I

am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the father, but *by me*" (John 14:6)? Now, would any dare to accuse Christ, a Jew according to His flesh, of being anti-Semitic? To maintain that one comes to God through Jesus Christ alone is the teaching of Scripture. It is the truth that every child of God must confess. If this "doesn't represent the position of most Southern Baptists," then they can not claim to be Scriptural, nor do they maintain Scripture. It is nonsense that when one quotes what Jesus said, he is therefore anti-Semitic (or anti-Hindu, or anti-Moslem). He rather maintains the

truth that Christians have ever maintained: access to God's throne is only through Jesus Christ our Lord, God's Son.

But the attack itself is disturbing. Will the Bible soon be outlawed because it is "anti-Semitic"? Will churches be closed when they preach this "anti-Semitic" truth of Scripture? Will our Christian Schools be forced out of existence because they too maintain this "anti-Semitic" truth? What does the future hold if these kinds of labels ("anti-Semitic") are thus applied—and presumably most within the churches agree?

And: License Teachers?

This same issue of *Time* contained another disturbing article about "licensing" teachers. The following is part of what was written:

Doctors are licensed. So are lawyers, hairdressers and real estate agents. Should schoolteachers be licensed too?

At present, most public school teachers are required only to hold state certificates. Unlike licenses, these are usually awarded automatically when teacher candidates graduate from an accredited education program. Once granted, such certificates usually extend through a life-time of teaching—unless the holder is convicted of a crime or proved flagrantly incompetent....

...Adler's plan: Require teachers to pass state board examinations before being allowed into the classroom. Tests of teacher competency are already required in 14 states. But as Adler sees it, such tests should be designed more broadly, to measure knowledge not just of teaching theory and basic pedagogic skills but of history, great literature and art. Further-

more, says Adler, the tests should be prepared "by the leading critics of our school system and of our teachers." Adler's plan could enhance opportunities for educated aspirants to become teachers by performing successfully on the licensing exams, while making the mere accumulation of required education course credits less important....

The proposition that teachers ought to be competent should be a truism. The proposition to have teachers tested and licensed, is a matter of deep concern. Who draws up the tests? Who measures the results—and by what standards? A teacher who is so foolish as to believe still the creation account, will he perhaps fail the test? What of a teacher who still believes in God and Jesus Christ His only-begotten Son? Will such a teacher be regarded as "anti-Semitic"—and therefore fail to receive a licence? Competent teachers—yes; licensed teachers by the state which may likely exclude those who serve God—no. The suggestion leads to increased state control and regulation.

The Reformed Ecumenical Synod

This past summer the R.E.S. met in Nîmes, France (Southern France) from July 6 through 25. According to the R.E.S. News Exchange, there were a hundred delegates from 38 member churches. There was some question whether the R.E.S. would even survive in light of various disagreements which had arisen among the member bodies. There is disagreement about the dual membership in the

R.E.S. and the World Council of Churches. Some Reformed churches are members also of the W.C.C. There was also the continuing disturbance about the doctrinal laxity of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands.

At the beginning of the sessions, Dr. Paul G. Schrottenboer "had expressed concern...that exces-

sive attention to internal problems would prevent the churches from undertaking their service together in the world today. He also urged the Synod to spend more time in praise and prayer. Both pleas were heeded."

The final conclusion of the meeting was that "in the end all major decisions except one or two were taken almost without dissent."

Among the various actions taken was that the Synod decided to undertake a "biblical, historical, contextual" study on human rights.... The report of the Synod also informs that the "RES takes decisive action on homosexuality." The report states:

In its decision the Synod recognized the intention of the GKN (Reformed Church in the Netherlands) in their pastoral concern in drawing attention to the suffering, despair and experience of rejection to which homosexual persons in many cases are being subjected. The Synod also stated "in accordance with the traditional Reformed understanding of Scripture" that all homosexual practice is sin. It further stated that "any advice or counsel that weakens the resistance to sin does not help but actually harms both the struggling person himself and others who might be affected through him."

The Synod concerned itself again with the "social injustices" in South Africa and urged its member churches there to seek to remove such structures. The Synod initiated another "final" study on the W.C.C. in order to resolve this troubling issue. Presumably the Synod of 1984 will make a final decision concerning dual membership in R.E.S. and the W.C.C. Also, the Synod presented a 21-point statement concerning the social calling of the church. As part of its statement, the R.E.S. declared: "the church should realize, however, that our whole world is burdened with structures that

create poverty, injustice and oppression. All systems of our modern age are, to a lesser or larger degree, at fault at this point. In its prophetic ministry the church should not only reject all totalitarian systems, whether they are of a left-wing or a right-wing nature, because in such systems injustice is built into the very fabric of the system, but it should also critically evaluate and challenge the so-called capitalistic social order by asking questions whether a society which considers as its primary value the pursuit of material abundance and uses all its resources for the fulfillment of this pursuit, can be a just society."

Finally, about the GKN, the Synod decided:

Following many hours of discussion in Advisory Committee, the RES agreed without debate in plenary session that the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) had exercised discipline in the case of Dr. Herman Wiersenga, whose views on the atonement were found to be without biblical warrant. At the same time the Synod expressed its regrets that the GKN had not restricted Dr. Wiersenga from expounding his "impermissible" views in his official work. The Interim Committee had reported that in their opinion the GKN had "faithfully" exercised discipline in the case, but the Synod substituted for this the word "officially."

In the case of Prof. Harry Kuitert, whose views on Scripture are currently being studied by the GKN Commission on Church and Theology, the Synod took note that the case is still in process and that a report on the matter would be published in the coming months.

The quotations above came from the R.E.S. *News Exchange* of Aug. 12, 1980. Though the report in that *News Exchange* is very brief, one does receive the impression that the R.E.S. is concerning itself increasingly with social issues—while papering over the doctrinal disagreements which persist.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

A Sinful Reaction to Sin

Rev. John A. Heys

Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, was defiled by Shechem the son of Hamor. Although Jacob the father of Dinah was in the land promised him, and as far as the letter of the law is concerned was complying with the command to go to the land of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac, he tarried for about

ten years in the vicinity of Shechem. Hamor the father of Shechem was disturbed by the immoral conduct of his son, and he was fearful of the consequences of his son's sinful liberties taken with Dinah. Subsequent events reveal that he had reason to fear what Jacob's family might do. Yet we

must see the truth of Psalm 105:14, 15 here as the explanation for that fear. We read, "He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea He reprov'd kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not My anointed, and do My prophets no harm."

The speech of Jacob's sons shows that they also knew the letter of the law. For when Hamor requested Dinah for his son, they refused such marriage—even though Shechem and Dinah had behaved as one flesh, and the birth of a child might very well result from their evil deed—on the ground that their covenant daughters might not marry the uncircumcised. What God meant by this law is that no believer might marry an unbeliever. The mere act of circumcision does not make one qualified to marry a believer. His circumcision must be an act of faith. And Jacob's sons presented to Hamor the matter of a mere cutting away of flesh as a requirement for marriage in the covenant sphere.

These sons of Jacob also corrupted the whole idea of circumcision by demanding it of all the Shechemites. They had something far different in their minds and were speaking deceitfully. They used the things that are holy for their unholy purposes. And although it is true that they never intended to marry the daughters of the land, they left that impression, and proposed circumcision so that it could be realized.

Well may we ask in all this, "Where is Jacob?" He holds his peace until his sons know about the defilement of Dinah. He takes no action himself, and he lets his sons answer Hamor and Shechem. He also agreed to their corruption of the sacrament and that in this way there could be fellowship and intermarriage with these Canaanites. He put his sanction on such an outward conformity with the law, with keeping the mere letter of the law. A serious and momentous occasion was here. But God was not sought. His instruction was not coveted. And does Jacob recede into the background and keep silent because he realizes his sin in staying there in the land for ten years? He had nothing to do with the treachery and deceit of his sons, but is he silent in a feeling of guilt, or in a desire to stay here longer and enjoy life there in fellowship of the unbelievers?

Jacob had exposed his children to this very evil. He kept them where they could be influenced by the heathen. Just turn to Genesis 35:2 and read of Jacob telling his household to "put away the strange gods" that were among them. One cannot warn parents too often or too thoroughly about the dangers of exposing their children to the world, whether that be in the schools of the world, or the immorality and evil philosophies of the world's

books and television programs. When, some years later, Israel entered Canaan from Egypt under Joshua, God told them to break down every idol, and to destroy all the idol worshippers, lest it be a snare to their children. This command came from God and not from Joshua. It is not an idea of man that to expose your children to the world is dangerous. God warns us in all of Israel's history that the world is full of temptations for our children, and that we must do all we can to keep our children from these temptations and from falling in them. We may not see how close we can bring our children to them without getting burned!

It is not at all out of place today to warn parents of covenant children that they are too permissive as to where their children go, what they wear, and who they follow. Indeed, children will say—and we know that they do—"But everybody is doing it." **AND THEY MAY BE CORRECT**, that even in the church they are doing it! Then the answer of the covenant parent must not be, "But you are not going to do it!" Such an answer ignores and denies the truth that they are dealing with covenant children in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells. You can rile your child, stir up his flesh and put his old man of sin on the defensive that way. But your calling is to address and approach your child *in his new man in Christ*. Your answer therefore must be a calm and yet definite, "But the God Who made you, and Whose law you are obliged to keep, forbids it and calls you to come out from among the world and to be a separate people." We must not sell short the Spirit in our children any more than we must in the rest of the members in our church. All too often we think that we have to do it all; and the still small voice of the Spirit using the Word of God just does not seem to have the power that we think that we have ourselves for this awesome task of bringing up our children in the fear of God's name.

Taking all this into consideration one can begin to understand the words of Jesus when He asked, "Shall the Son of man find faith on the earth?" And we begin to realize that if the days were not shortened the very elect would be deceived. For our children live and grow up in a far more dangerous world than did the children of the patriarchs in the old dispensation. There were places where parents could keep their children relatively safe from the world, at least to a far greater degree than we can. Our children come in contact with hundreds more children of the world than did Jacob's children. The automobile, the places of work, the television and radio entrance into our homes, the easy access to the magazines of the world and to their filthy books all serve to expose our children to the world in those things that their flesh wants desperately.

Gone are the days when father and mother had their children home with them on the farm, from which it was a long and time-consuming journey to go and meet other families and the youth of the world. Jesus saw all this coming, and this is part of His reason for asking whether when He comes again He would find faith in our children. But we had better beware lest we use all this as an excuse for not forbidding our children fellowship with the world. Work with them we must; and therefore it becomes so important that parents do warn their children about making friends in the world, and against seeking careers that are going to take them away from the church that holds to the truth, and from worshipping God on the Sabbath day. They must be taught to come out from among the unbelievers and be a separate people.

Jacob's tarrying among the heathen not only occasioned the defilement of Dinah but also the murder committed by Simeon and Levi. And let it be remembered that these sins so often go hand in hand. Years later it is David who murders to cover up his adultery. And today many are the parents who do the same as Simeon and Levi. No, even though we used to hear of shotgun weddings, far more often is it today that parents of daughters (and strangely enough not of sons) have murder in their hearts, and even with the mouth declare, "I could kill him!" And this is true even when their daughters tempted these young men with their dress and ways, and the parents did nothing to stop their daughters from advertising themselves. Such hatred in these parents, and the hatred in Simeon and Levi does not spring forth from a love of God. It is not because God's law is trampled under foot. It is not because God has been sinned against, but rather that they have been humiliated, they have been sinned against, and their pride has been hurt. All such reaction to sin is a sinful reaction that is as evil as the sin which they decry. It roots in love of self. It comes from family pride, not love of God and of His law.

Then there are those who do not react so violently but do say to their children (sons as well), "How could you do this to us?" Here too the question is not, "How could you do such a deed of hatred toward the living God?" And because they see it only as a sin against themselves, a breaking of their trust, a blow to the pride of the family name, they are in no position to handle the matter spiritually and to give good counsel to their children. Truly this business of being a covenant parent is an extremely difficult one. And blessed are those parents who when this sin enters their family are able to counsel their children and point them to the law of God first, and then to the cross of Christ which blots out also this sin, yea also these sins of

fornication and murder.

But to return to the narrative, Simeon and Levi quite plainly consider fornication worse than lying and murder. And there is such a tendency in us to put sins in classes of bigger and smaller sins. And we, who lie and steal and murder in our hearts, take God's name in vain and desecrate His Sabbath, in pride look down upon the fornicator as though we are above such things, while we fail to understand that every sin is an act of hatred against God, and fail to remember that the whole curse and death came into the world, not by a multitude of "big" sins, but by an apparently harmless deed of eating a piece of forbidden fruit. But it was hatred of God! And that is why the wages of *every* sin is death.

Let it be noted that Dinah is now living with Shechem, adding to the evil. For we read in Genesis 34:26, "And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword and took Dinah out of Shechem's house and went out." Dinah was living in fornication and plainly loved Shechem the unbeliever. And the brothers accuse Shechem of dealing with Dinah as an harlot. How easy it is to see sins of others and of other families and be blind to your own and those of your family. They see no sin in Dinah. They see no sin in cruel, cold-blooded murder and deceit. They do not even stop at the death of Shechem but "slew all the males" of the city! Perhaps you say, "These men were now circumcised. The condition had been fulfilled and Dinah could now be the wife of Shechem. It is not fornication for her to live with Shechem." But understand well that the brothers themselves had made the arrangements for this unholy marriage. And they are guilty of the sin of Dinah. They must see their own sin before they cast the first stone. They must weep over the sin, not the loss of family pride. They must teach the Shechemites the truth, sound *doctrine*, and not a little outward practice of circumcision.

And Jacob? We would rather look away, for he makes such a pathetic picture in this whole incident. He who held his peace, and did not reprove Dinah, and he who approved of the marriage if only the external rite of circumcision was followed, now after that murder complains that his sons have troubled *him* and made *him* stink among the inhabitants of the land. But Jacob, Does not the whole thing stink in the nostrils of God? That should concern you first of all. And Jacob, Does not your whole stay in that land and failure to heed God's command and go to your kindred stink in the nostrils of the holy God?

Would to God that church fathers, leaders of the congregations, elders, ministers, professors of the-

ology seeing the evils in their churches would smell the stink that God smells. And then not try to cover it all up—it will smell under the rug just as fiercely, and breed more putrifying foul matter—and find ways to keep it in the church, but remove it by

radical surgery, if need be, so that the congregation is a delight to God. The seven letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 demand that. Let us not react to sin in a sinful way. That stinks in God's nostrils, and it should stink also in ours.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Matthew—The Gospel of the Promised Messiah (2)

Rev. J. Kortering

The hope of the coming Messiah lived in the soul of every faithful son of Abraham. Already in the Garden of Eden, God had promised, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). The Jews came to know the Promised One as the Messiah, a Hebrew name for the Anointed One. According to the law and the prophets, Christ was coming as Mediator of the covenant. He was going to overcome the seed of the serpent and establish Himself upon David's throne forever. That throne was to be one of perfect righteousness, for the law of God would be the norm for rule. To attain that rule, He was to make atonement upon the cross and liberate His people from the bondage of the lie. In this Mediator, the offices of prophet, priest, and king blend perfectly in His one mediatorial work. Matthew speaks of this Messiah, Christ the Promised One.

OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL

Let us now consider how the inspired apostle brings forth this theme in his gospel account.

1. Prophecy realized in the coming of the Messiah (1:1-4:11). Christ's genealogy is given in three parts, from Abraham, from David, and from the return from captivity, ending in Joseph, Jesus' legal father (1:1-17). It is interesting that this list includes four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba, all of whom were disqualified by nature. This account provides indisputable proof that Joseph was not the earthly father of Christ (1:18-25). The Messiah is not only for believing Jews, but also for Gentiles. The visit of the wisemen proves this (2:1-12). His presence, however, arouses the hatred of earthly kings, as seen in Herod and his attempt to kill the Messiah, Who instead was taken to Egypt and ultimately grew up

in Nazareth (2:13-23). He is officially inducted into His office of Mediator through baptism by John. This shows that the righteousness of His kingdom is not in the works of the law, but through His atoning blood at the cross (3:1-17). Subsequently, Satan challenges Him and offers Him the kingdom of man by suggesting that Jesus bow down to him and forsake the dreaded way of the cross. Jesus refuses this and obeys His Father's will (4:1-11). In this section there are five references to fulfillment of prophecy.

2. The Messiah sets forth the principles of His kingdom (4:12-7:29). He began His ministry in Galilee by preaching to and healing the "lowly." He called His disciples, and began to preach and do miracles (4:12-25). The theme of His ministry was the kingdom. Matthew refers to "kingdom of heaven" thirty-three times and "kingdom of God" five times. The Sermon on the Mount sets forth the spiritual principles of the kingdom, a description of the citizens (beatitudes—5:1-16), the place of the law in the kingdom, not as an external code (legalism) but as an internal spiritual response, "be ye perfect as your Father is perfect" (5:17-6:18). The kingdom is of such value that it must be before all things in the minds of the citizens (6:19-34); the citizens must live in love with one another, follow the straight way, and be hearers and doers of the word as the wise man who built his house on the rock (7:1-29).

3. The miracles of the Messiah show that He has the power to realize His kingdom (8:1-11:1). One marvels at the extent of Christ's miraculous power: over *diseases* such as leprosy (8:1-4), palsy (8:5-13), fever (8:14-17), paralysis (9:2-8), issue of blood (9:20-22), blindness (9:27-31); over *demons* (8:28-34, 9:32-34); over powers of *nature* (8:23-27); and over *death* (9:18, 23-26). By these miracles, He did more

than show off power. These acts verified the words He spoke and directed men to the life of the kingdom which in the future would be free from all suffering and spiritual opposition. He Himself was the greatest miracle, being virgin-born and able thus to realize the kingdom in righteousness through His own death. Miracle-working power was also given to the twelve disciples, to demonstrate that Christ works through His office bearers. They must expect opposition from the kingdom of this world, the anti-christ. In all this they must fear not, for by their good confession Christ will confess them before His Father in heaven (10:1-11:1).

4. The nature of the kingdom of heaven (11:2-13:53). This begins with a challenge from John the Baptist (Art thou He that should come?), and Jesus' answer that the kingdom is here in principle (11:2-19). The people of Galilee reject Jesus and He pronounces woe upon them, teaching that those who hear the gospel and reject it will have greater judgment than Sodom. He calls the weary and heavy laden who are burdened with the guilt of sin to come for rest (11:20-30). Jesus sets forth His authority over the Sabbath day by teaching that it is not kept by meeting legal demands, but in the spirit of godliness (12:1-14). Christ adds that His kingdom will not come by outward show, but in the way of meekness (12:14-21). The healing of the man possessed by a devil gave occasion for Jesus to teach concerning the kingdom of God over against the kingdom of the devil. Jesus insists that He does not act by satanic power, but that He has overcome Satan and that all who are in the kingdom do likewise. Hence there is no sign for that generation but the prophet Jonah, calling to repentance (12:22-50). The parables set forth the true nature of the kingdom more clearly, the purpose being that the citizens of the kingdom may believe, and those outside, left without excuse. Eight parables are taught here: the soil, the wheat and tares, mustard seed, leaven, treasure, pearl, net, and the householder. Each one adds certain truths concerning the kingdom: that it is realized by the gospel and received by hearing the word; there is an antithesis between the kingdom of Christ and anti-christ; it grows from a small source to beautiful manifestation like a mustard seed, and does that under great power like leaven; it is of great value as a pearl, and ends in the separation of all mankind (13:1-52).

5. Christ's purpose re the kingdom (13:53-16:12). Opposition now increases. Jesus comes to Nazareth and is rejected, for a prophet is not honored in his own country (13:53-58). John is beheaded (14:1-12). The disciples struggle with Jesus' severe denunciation of the Pharisees (15:1-20 and 16:5-12). This led Jesus to say bluntly that He must die on the cross (16:21-28). Interspersed

among these events is the blessed teaching of Jesus that He is the Bread of Life, as He fed 5000 (14:15-21) and 4000 (15:32-39). Power flows from Jesus into His disciples as Peter walked on the water to Jesus (14:22-36). The Jews reject him, so Jesus turns to the daughter of the Canaanitish woman and heals her (15:21-28). This tells us that Jesus' purpose was not to establish an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem; rather He came to establish a heavenly kingdom upon the basis of righteousness. The cross was the only way.

6. The establishing of the kingdom (16:13-27:66). The disciples needed to be prepared for the cross. They too had an earthly idea of the kingdom, so Jesus asked them concerning His identity. He confirms that He is the Christ (Messiah) and that He and they must suffer in order to enter into the kingdom (16:13-28). By the transfiguration, Jesus showed them that His kingdom is heavenly and that He must go the way of the cross to obtain it (17:1-8). The Father's hour will determine when, so they must now tell no man. At the proper time He will be betrayed (17:9-27).

As Jesus looks to the cross, He renews with them the importance of life within the kingdom. They must be humble and forgiving (Matt. 18:1-35). Their whole life must be brought into the service of the King: their marriage (19:1-15), their life and possessions (19:16-29). Our place in the kingdom is not of works, but of grace, as the laborers in the vineyard learned (19:30-20:16). So also we are to serve and not rule, as Christ taught the mother of James and John (20:17-28).

The royal entrance into Jerusalem demonstrated to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem that the way into Jesus' kingdom was not by outward victory over the Jews or over Rome, but the lowly way of suffering on the cross. The donkey testified to that (20:29-21:11). In addition to this, Christ established His authority to cleanse the temple of God by His blood (21:12-27). The parables He told at this time made it plain that Israel was ready to reject Him: the two sons (21:28-32), unjust husbandman (21:33-41), marriage of the King's son (22:1-14).

In return, the leaders of the Jews try to trick Jesus in a series of debates. First, they try to see if Jesus was set against the Roman government, but Jesus declares willingness to pay tax (22:15-22). Then the Sadducees argue with Him about the resurrection, and He explains that life after death is much different from the present (22:23-33). The Pharisees come to ask concerning the first and great commandment, and Jesus speaks about the one principle of love (22:34-40). Jesus takes the offensive and asks them concerning the Messiah (Christ), Who is He, and they are confounded (22:41-46).

The gospel now reaches its exalted climax in the crucifixion of Jesus. The chief priests plotted against Him (26:1-5); He was anointed for burial by loving hands (26:6-13); Judas agreed to betray Him (26:14-16); He ate the last passover and instituted the Lord's Supper (26:17-29); He wrestled in the Garden of Gethsemane, willing to go to the cross (26:36-46); Judas betrayed him and, overcome in guilt, took his own life (26:47-56, 27:1-10). Jesus is taken to Caiaphas for trial, and, while there during the night, Peter denied Him as Jesus had said (26:30-35, 57-75). Christ is tried before Pilate, who attempts to rid himself of the responsibility, but fails since he would rather be Caesar's friend than Christ's (27:11-26). The soldiers mock the Messiah by poking fun of His kingship (27:27-30). Jesus is crucified (27:31-36). The superscription testifies of His true identity (27:37). The whole world rejects

God's Messiah (27:39-44). Christ, however, finished His work, which was to establish righteousness as the basis for His heavenly kingdom. His heavenly Father confirmed His finished work (27:45-56). He is buried with the rich in His death (27:57-61).

7. The Messiah accomplished His work (27:62-28:30). The enemies try to prevent the resurrection by setting a guard (27:62-66), and later, by circulating a story that the disciples stole the body, they try to undo the reality of the resurrection (28:11-15). The Messiah, the Lord of Heaven, however, cannot be confined by guards, stony graves, or gossip. He arose in majesty (28:1-8). He verified it by appearing to the women (28:9, 10). Finally, He gave His majestic commission to go to all the world and preach the gospel of the kingdom (28:16-20).

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Gas Warfare in Christendom: The Antichrist's Drive to Annihilate an Elect People

Rev. R. Flikkema

The place is not a pretty sight. I.V.'s drip fluid into skinny arms. Doctors and nurses scurry from one wooden-slab bed to another, responding to pleas for help. I am at Ban Vinai, a refugee camp along the Mekong River just inside northern Thailand. It is populated by some 35,000 H'mong (pronounced Mong) tribal refugees from the mountains of Laos. They suffer from severe malnutrition, malaria, amoebic dysentery, tuberculosis, pneumonia and a host of parasites. For many there is a tragic complication: they have been gassed.

One of them is a friend of mine; yet I don't recognize him, although I have passed his pallet at least 20 times. Finally, through his pain, he recognized me and sends a relative to bring me to him.

Nhia Yang Vang, about 40, had once been vigorous, energetic. Now he is a skeleton with sunken, haunted eyes. In a weak voice he tells me he had returned to Laos after I saw him in January. Concerned about relatives, he had gone back there with a party of 19 men for three months. During that time, he says, his team had been in areas sprayed by poisonous chemicals nine times.

Every few minutes his talk is broken by a racking cough that nearly strangles him. He spits bloody sputum into a tin can. A H'mong nurse tells me that he has chest pains, finds breathing difficult, cannot eat.

Nhia continues: "They hit us at the end of May at Nam Khing with the yellow chemicals. It was a white plane like a Soviet helicopter—low enough so that I could see the figures of two pilots. Immediately when they dropped the gas I fell to the ground vomiting blood. My eyes burned; I could not see. I have the 'red' diarrhea.

"It was a powder. When it touched my skin it became sticky, like an ointment, and when water is put on it, it becomes liquid." He stops for another bout of coughing. "You know, after a rain the chemicals will get into the water and poison it. Now that it is the rainy season it will be so easy to poison us all."

What you have just read are the opening paragraphs of an article in the October issue of the *Reader's Digest*, entitled "Gas Warfare In Laos:

Communism's Drive To Annihilate A People." Immediately following that title, and preceding those paragraphs that I have just quoted, you will find this sentence: "The article that follows is about genocide—the extermination of thousands of people whose only 'crime' is that they were friends of America."

Perhaps you receive the *Reader's Digest* in your homes. If you do, perhaps also you have read this article. I very strongly encourage you to do so. And I very strongly encourage you to do so thoughtfully! What I mean is, read the article. Then having done so, put the article aside and think. Ponder in your minds that which you have just read. If you do, maybe your thoughts will be the same as mine were after I read the article.

What were my thoughts? They were these. Having read the article, I thought to myself: if these things be true, what a horrible, horrible thing is happening to people these days. Literally thousands of people are being exterminated, killed, in communist countries because they did something which those communist countries did not like. And too, so my thoughts were, what horribly sophisticated means are being used to exterminate those people. They were exterminated by dropping poisonous gas out of a helicopter! They were not exterminated by swords and spears. They were not exterminated by communist gladiators or by wild beasts in a communist amphitheater. No, not even by rifle or machine gun fire were those people exterminated. Very simply and easily, literally thousands were exterminated by gas warfare. Those were the thoughts that ran through my mind.

But then a different thought ran through my mind. I picked up the article once more. I read once more the title of this article, that sentence underneath the title, and that last sentence of the portion of the article which I quoted. And this horrible thought came to my mind. What if the title of this article was changed somewhat? What if a word here and a word there were taken out and a new word here and a new word there were supplied? Let me see, so I thought, what if I would omit the word "Laos" in that title and change it to "Christendom." What if I would omit the word "Communism's" and change it to "The Antichrist's." What if I omit the word "People" and change it to an "Elect People." And, with respect to that sentence underneath the title, what if I omit the phrase "that they were friends of America," and in its place substitute the words "that they were the friends of Jehovah God." What then would I read? I would read this, "Gas Warfare In Christendom: The Antichrist's Drive To Annihilate An Elect People. The article that follows is about genocide—

the extermination of thousands of people whose only 'crime' is that they were friends of Jehovah God." That is what I would read. And when those thoughts came into my mind, I tell you, I have never been so startled in all my life! I thought to myself: could that be? Is such a thing possible? In future years, as the evil day approaches, could the Antichrist in his drive to annihilate the Church actually use such sophisticated means as gas warfare? And my answer to all those questions was an awesome, yes! Yes, he could do that! And why not, so I thought? If that dying man could say at the end of the portion of the article which I quoted above, "it will be so easy to poison us all," so also can the child of God say that. "It will be so easy to poison us all."

And it will! In the last days, when the Antichrist will bend all his efforts to exterminate the Church with all of the sophisticated means at his disposal, it will be so easy. You know as well as I that in the days of the early Church, the Roman Empire, that manifestation of the Antichristian Kingdom, tried to exterminate the Church. It did! It used all the means at its disposal to annihilate God's people. But it was a very difficult task. The means at its disposal were not sufficiently sophisticated to annihilate thousands upon thousands of God's people at one time. The Roman Empire used the means of crucifixion to exterminate God's people. The Roman Empire captured God's people and brought them into its amphitheaters to die at the hands of gladiators and wild beasts. And there were other means which the Roman Empire used to destroy God's people. But thousands upon thousands of God's people at one time, the Roman Empire could not destroy. But the point is, the Antichrist in the last days can! He does not have to use the means of crucifixion, gladiators, and wild beasts in his attempt to destroy thousands upon thousands of God's people. All he has to use is gas warfare and literally thousands upon thousands of God's people will be destroyed!

Well, you say, that is somewhat farfetched, isn't it? In order to destroy vast numbers of God's people the Antichrist will have to separate God's people from the rest of the ungodly wicked. Otherwise when he uses gas warfare to destroy God's people, he will also destroy the wicked right along with them. That he will not want to do. I submit to you, however, that that is not at all farfetched. It will not at all be difficult to separate God's people from the ungodly wicked. After all, the Bible tells us that in the last days the people of God will be separated from the ungodly wicked. In the last days the people of God, if they truly manifest themselves to be the people of God, the friends of Jehovah God, will not receive the mark of the beast. And by that

very fact they will be separated. They will be distinct. And if that be true, and it will, what will be so difficult for the Antichrist to gather together those distinct, separate people in an isolated area here and in an isolated area there and to exterminate them with his sophisticated means? That will not be difficult at all.

To that you say: yes, but why be so morbid? I would rather not think about such thoughts. I would rather think about the relative freedom from persecution that I experience today. Let us just think about today! I do not care to worry about what might or might not happen tomorrow. If perchance those be your thoughts, my response to those thoughts is this. In the first place, I am not morbid. I am simply realistic—as realistic as our Lord Jesus Christ was when He said in John 15:18-20, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you. The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." With respect to those words of the Lord Jesus, I need say no more. They speak for themselves, and they are and shall be far more realistic than we care to admit. That is right! Than we care to admit! None of us cares to admit that we shall be persecuted, and persecuted by the means of which this article speaks. I do not. When I read this article in the *Reader's Digest*, when I thought about this article along the lines that I have just written, I say once more, I was horrified.

But that exactly brings me to the second thing that I want to say. I was not so horrified that I was cast into despair. Yes, it may very well be the case that the Antichrist shall attempt to annihilate God's people by gas warfare and various other sophisticated means. Yes, it may very well be the case that sometime you and I may actually read an article in

some magazine entitled "Gas Warfare in Christendom: The Antichrist's Drive To Annihilate An Elect People. The article that follows is about genocide; the extermination of thousands of people whose only 'crime' is that they were the friends of Jehovah God." That may very well be the case. But even if it is, we the people of God, the friends of Jehovah God, whose only "crime" is that we are the friends of Jehovah God, shall be delivered. We shall be delivered by the Son of Man Who will not ever, ever permit the Antichrist to succeed in his drive to annihilate God's people. He will not! Never will the Son of Man permit His elect people to be annihilated. How do we know that? Listen to the words of none other than the Son of Man as they are recorded for us in Matthew 24:29-31: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light. And the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Those are the words of comfort and assurance spoken to us by our Savior. And we know that they are true, for He Who spoke those words, also spoke these words, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." They are true and they are sure. In the assurance of those words then, let us watch. Let us watch as the true friends of Jehovah God. To be a friend of Jehovah God may indeed be a "crime" in the eyes of the Antichrist, for which "crime" he may indeed attempt to annihilate us, but in the eyes of Jehovah God, that is no crime. On the contrary, it is the awesome calling which Jehovah God has given unto us, our calling even unto the end!

GUEST ARTICLE

The Necessity of Reformed Apologetics

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

I. Apologetics Considered as Merely Possible or Inevitable?

The term *apologetics*, according to Stormonth's dictionary, is "that branch of theology which

defends the Scriptures and sets forth the evidence of their divine authority." Usually this means the evidence produced by reasoned argument. Then the definition would be acceptable to the traditional

or classical apologists, that is, to the Roman Catholic and the Arminian defenders of the faith. The Funk and Wagnalls dictionary defines it as "that department of dogmatics which deals with the defensive facts and proofs of Christianity; the science that purposes to vindicate, by defense or defensive assault, the truth and absoluteness of the Christian religion," and that, we may add, over against all the attacks and denials of the unbelieving world. Instead of "and proofs of" we would rather say, "and positive arguments for" Christianity. From these definitions it is apparent that there is at least a hint that apologetics is no apologizing for the truth. For Reformed theologians and believers do not make excuse for the Christian faith and life. Such an idea never enters into the subject among any school of apologetics. In apologetics we may not do what the Bible itself does not do. The Bible does not say something like this: Pardon me for living! The Bible does use the term, as when, for example, in Acts 22:1, Paul preaches, saying, "Hear ye my *defense* (*apologia*), which I make...." Again, according to 25:16, Roman law protected its citizenry in that he who is accused must have the accusers face to face, and must have license to *answer* for himself (make his apology or defense) concerning the crime laid against him. So Paul says (I Cor. 9:3), "Mine *answer* to them that do examine me is this...." In 2 Corinthians 7:11 it is translated, "Yea, (what) *clearing* of yourselves!" Paul preached, "in *defense* and confirmation of the gospel" saying, "I am set for the *defense* of the gospel" (Phil. 1:7, 17). Later he wrote, "At my first *answer* no man stood with me" (2 Tim. 4:16); and finally Peter counsels, "Be ready always to give an *answer* to every man that asketh" (1 Pet. 3:15). An *apologia*, then, is a verbal defense, a speech in defense.

From these texts it may not be concluded that apologetics means taking a mere defensive position against the attacks of unbelief. For this may not be charged against the apostles and the believers. Their battle for the faith was not so passive, so weak. They did not go retreating from one entrenchment, or one bastion to another. The Church has always had mighty apologists, such as Paul, Augustine, and Calvin, and retreat or passivity in the conflict of the ages was not their way. Calvin used not only the defensive shield of faith, but also the offensive Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. A good, Reformed apologetic must be in the line of Paul, whose classical masterpiece of apologetical method appears in his sermon on the Areopagus (Acts 17); in the line of Augustine, whose main method was to "think God's thoughts after Him"; and in the line of Calvin, who began, continued, and ended his position on the Being,

knowledge, and doctrine of God as found in scripture. Also, whatever apologetics we have are in the line of Kuyper, Bavinck, and Hoeksema, since our theology is in that line.

But did not Kuyper practically reject apologetics? He believed that no argumentation between the regenerated and the natural man "can ever serve any purpose," and that "apologetics has always failed to reach results, and has weakened rather than strengthened the reasoner."¹ Apologetics he regarded as "a broad field of detail-study (as over against the study of principles, RCH) in which laurels can be won, without penetrating to the deep antithesis of the two world-views (Reformed and unbelieving, RCH) whose position over against each other becomes ever more and more clearly defined" (ibid., 166). Whatever the full meaning of this statement, this much is clear, namely, apologetics does not penetrate as deeply as the principle of regeneration allows, nor does it go deeply enough into the antithesis, and it does not occupy itself sufficiently with the study of principles. This is said to be especially true of the apologetics of "Conservatism," which lacked a spiritual root, conceded too much to naturalism, and consequently in spiritual aerial combat was shot down in disgrace (167). With this criticism we may agree since it is criticism of what is called traditional apologetics. Under this head comes what sometimes has been called the Princeton apologetic. Kuyper criticizes this apologetic in Charles Hodge, champion of American scientific orthodoxy. Hodge's position was to take the facts of the Bible as the objects of his theology. These facts and truths of scripture by the theologian must be collected, arranged, systematized, and authenticated. By his combination of "facts and truths" on the one hand and their authentication by the positive science of theology on the other, Hodge overthrew his own system. For these "truths" were no truths, but became such when authenticated. Hodge thought he was doing better than those who presupposed Christianity to begin with, "who took the 'Christian religion' as the *given object*." He thought that by sanctified reason he could arrive at and authenticate Christian truth, the biblical position, and in that way "save theology as a *positive science*" (ibid., 318). Hodge did believe that scripture is the principle of theology, but he did not consistently stand on this principle, or he would not have made it the conclusion of other grounds, but the ground from which all other ground is viewed and interpreted. With this criticism of this apologetic we agree.

Kuyper also adheres to the biblical distinction between two kinds of people in the world, the regenerate and the natural man, the wheat and the tares, or the *Wilding* (weed) and the *Edelreis* (noble

plant). The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, as they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. He that is spiritual, the regenerated, judges all things. But the natural man is incapable of judging of the legitimacy, reality, or meaning of any point of the truth. Nor may he be given the right to judge of one or of all of them. Hence, Kuyper concluded from this that there is no use in Christian apologetics. Since the natural man in his understanding is darkness, and the darkness never apprehends the light, there is no point, no sufficient reason for reasoning with the natural man whatever.

But with this conclusion, Kuyper himself was not consistent. He certainly believed in preaching and witnessing to the unbeliever, which cannot be done without reasoning. Also the reasoning process all along the line presupposes the criterion of the self-attesting true and triune God and His self-authenticating scriptures. This preaching and reasoning he also believed was to be made to all ethnic groups in the heathen world. Then in such activity, as the great Apostle Paul was, we become deeply involved in apologetics. So with our Lord in His contention with the devil and the temptation in the wilderness. There was no attempt to meet the devil either on his ground or on some neutral ground, but the Lord met him head on with the assumed Being of God, the doctrine of God and with unerring scripture (Matt. 4:4). Also this the devil "knows," and is said to "believe" it, for he has a natural knowledge of spiritual things. In his "faith" he has more orthodoxy than the neo-modernists of our day, who have no orthodoxy at all. Just so, the devil knows and believes the whole scheme of doctrine. As Jonathan Edwards said, Satan is no atheist, no deist, Socinian, Arian, Pelagian, or Antinomian. We add, that he is no Arminian or devotee of Barthian neology, either. He knows better. Yet he gets men entangled in all these tentacles of heresy. He is the father of the lie, but he himself does not believe it. He knows better. But he can convince any number of fools to swallow his lies. What he tempted the Lord with was the idea and lie of an "open universe" in which man moves anarchistically and thinks autonomous-

ly. Therefore one may do as one chooses with any particular in the universe. Stones are stones, entirely apart from God. Miracle is possible because anything is possible, anything with the exception of living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. To him, that is absolutely impossible. But the Lord does not argue with the devil, nor negotiate with him, nor even give him a hearing (all very dangerous things to do); nor does the Lord deal with the devil on the supposition that His and the devil's knowledge of God and of the world are basically identical or on the same level. The devil tempts him to authenticate the Word of God with a miracle. The Lord immediately answers with the already divinely authenticated Word as sufficient. Bow to that! Conform to that! is the implication of "It is written" (period). The counterfeit miracles of today are performed right and left entirely apart from the Word, apart from any preaching or any instituted church. This is to far outdo the devil, to super-satanize Satan!

We see, then, that a Christian apologetic is Christ-centered, therefore God-centered. It is Christ Who speaks in the scriptures. Christ teaches us what to believe, what to think and how to live. Therefore what we must have and hold is what Christ taught. In our witness to all men, which surely includes the natural man, we say, Throw your wisdom and philosophy to the moles and to the bats, or some day you will when wrath shall come on you to the uttermost! Bow to the inscripturated wisdom of God. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him! This is our apologetic, our argument for the gospel. Unbelieving thought has no truth, but must empirically reason on to the truth. But then it is impossible there to arrive.

So Christian preaching, controversy, and witnessing, along with *doing* "these sayings of Mine," are all inseparably connected with and involved in (Reformed) apologetics. It is inevitable!

(Concluded later, D.V.)

¹*Principles of Sacred Theology*, 160, Eerdmans, 1954.

Book Review

COMMENTARY ON HEBREWS, Exegetical and Expository, by William Gouge; Kregel Publications, 1980; 1148 pp., \$24.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

From the rather lengthy biographical sketch at

the beginning of this volume we learn that William Gouge lived from 1575 to 1653, was a graduate from King's College, Cambridge, served for 45 years as minister of Blackfriars, London, was made a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines

by an act of Parliament, and was noted and respected for his exceptional godliness and piety.

This is a massive work. It not only numbers well over one thousand pages, but the book measures about 10" x 8", has two columns on every page, and is printed in small type. It is, therefore, an exhaustive treatment of the epistle to the Hebrews. It is written in the Puritan style with the exposition of each chapter divided into sections, with many careful analyses of words and thoughts, with objections and questions raised periodically and answered at length, with lists of important doctrines taught in a given passage, and with much personal application to the life of the child of God.

I have found the commentary to be excellent throughout. For the size and importance of the book, the price is by no means excessive. Although there is a bit of Latin and Greek (as well as Hebrew) in the text, there is not an overabundance of these foreign words, and the commentary can very well be used by anyone who is interested in an extensive treatment of Hebrews. I highly recommend it to our ministers and students. It will not only be of considerable help in understanding what is, at best, a difficult book, but it will give a great deal of insight into Puritan thinking and theology.

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News From Our Churches

Rev. Engelsma declined the call extended to him from our Redlands congregation.

A glance through the bulletins leaves no doubt that this is an especially busy season for our ministers. In addition to the catechism classes and society meetings that are back in full swing, there seem to be numerous special public addresses that require their services as speakers. Following is a list in brief of some of these engagements: On October 1 Rev. DeVries spoke to the Men's and Women's League of the Grand Rapids area on the topic, "The Implications of our Personal Confession 'I

Believe.'". Rev. C. Hanko spoke on October 10 to the Hope School P.T.A. of Walker, Michigan on the topic, "Teaching our Children to Pray." "Religious Fervor: Why is it Waning?" was the title of Prof. Hanko's address to the Mr. & Mrs. League on October 21. Reverends Van Overloop and Van Baren spoke at a Calvinistic Conference sponsored by our mission in Birmingham, Alabama on the evenings of October 20 and 21. Both ministers were scheduled to speak at both evening's activities. A conference there with a similar format was

reported some time ago by our former news editor. At that time he expressed concern for the audience since neither of the speakers at that conference, i.e. Rev. Van Overloop and Rev. Engelsma, "are noted for their brevity." We will not speculate as to the need for a similar concern in this case.

At the time of this writing (October 27) numerous speeches in keeping with the Reformation are planned, possibly prepared, but not yet delivered. Prof. Hoeksema and his wife have a busy weekend in store for them in Houston. On Friday, October 31, he will lecture on the topic "Wittenberg, Geneva and Dordt." Their Saturday morning schedule includes a speech by Mrs. Hoeksema on the subject, "The Godly Discipline of Our Children," and another lecture by Prof. Hoeksema, this one about the history of the Synod of Dordt. Their weekend is to be capped with the professor preaching for both services at our Trinity Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. R. Hanko will speak on October 31 at the United Methodist Church of Franklin Lakes in New Jersey on the topic "Remembering the Reformation." "Reformed Yet Always Reforming" is Prof. Hanko's topic for October 30 at Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church. The Lansing, Michigan mission is sponsoring the lecture, "The Foolishness of Preaching," on October 29 by Prof. Decker. Also on October 29, Rev. Kamps is scheduled to speak in Sioux Falls and Rev. Kortering at our Loveland Church. Rev. Van Overloop has *another* double dose: on October 27 at Illiana Chr. High School and on October 31 at Chicago Chr. High School, he plans to speak on the theme, "The Comfort of the Gospel of Grace." Incidentally, a South Holland bulletin reports that, after preaching for their Nov. 2 services, Rev. Van Overloop will speak and answer questions from the audience concerning the work in Birmingham.

Recently the Council of our South Holland Church decided to have their congregation confess the Apostles' Creed aloud. Reasons given for the change were, "that confession with the mouth is part of Christian's worship (Rom. 10:9 & 10), and the confession of the Creed properly belongs to all the saints."

A bulletin from our church in New Jersey included the following announcement: "Our pastor will be going to Rutland, Vermont this week Tuesday to meet with a group of approximately seven families there who have expressed interest in the Reformed Faith as we teach it. They are of a Calvinistic Baptist background, but are not at present affiliated with any denomination." Did the word Vermont, jump out at you the way it did me? If it didn't, you were not careful enough in your reading of the news column of our last *Standard Bearer*. At that time we wrote about some people in the Plymouth, Vermont area who were looking for *Standard Bearer* subscribers in their area. A quick check in my Rand McNally Road Atlas places Plymouth only about 15 miles southeast of Rutland as a crow would fly over the Green Mountains. Circumstantial evidence suggests that Rev. R. Hanko went to contact none other than those of whom we wrote last time. Hopefully we will be able to confirm that at a later date.

Although this news column does not usually concern itself with baptisms, a recent baptism on our Lansing mission field is worthy of note, I believe. The October 12 bulletin of our Hope Church in Walker, Michigan explained it this way: "Eric Douglas, son of Mr. and Mrs. Roger Hoeksema will receive the administration of baptism at the morning service in our Lansing, Mission, D.V. Elders Knott and Kooienga will be attending their services. The L. Garvelink family will also attend there where Mrs. Garvelink will play the organ for their morning service." Though the Hoeksemas attend services at our Lansing Mission, they are communicant members of Hope. Clearly there are some advantages to having a calling church in close proximity to its mission field. While on the subject of the Lansing mission field we should mention that the Hope Congregation has a standing invitation to attend the 7:30 Wednesday evening meetings at the Lansing Mission located at The University Seventh Day Adventist Church, 149 Highland, East Lansing. I'm sure they will not object to my extending that invitation to all the readers of our S.B.