The
STANDARD BEARER
A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Sovereign, elective grace!

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MEDITATION

Reckoned Among the Transgressors

Rev. M. Schipper

"And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left."

Luke 23:33

That Jesus was to be numbered among the transgressors had been clearly predicted of Him.

The prophet Isaiah, in describing His suffering, death, and burial, declared, "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). Not only would He make His grave with the wicked and with the rich in His death, but on the cross He would be numbered with the transgressors.

And Jesus Himself made the prediction. He, Who

in His passion and death followed the prophetic Word to the letter, declared to His disciples, "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, 'And He was reckoned among the transgressors,' for the things concerning Me have an end" (Luke 22:37). The last part of this utterance clearly indicated that the first part, namely, that He must be reckoned among the transgressors, was to be fulfilled in Him.

This prediction is now literally fulfilled at Calvary. Not only was Jesus formally tried and condemned as a criminal, first by the Sanhedrin and then before Pontius Pilate, the Roman judge, but also the form of death imposed upon Him, stressed the fact—He was reckoned an evil-doer. John says (19:18), "Jesus in the midst," i.e., Jesus in the center of the malefactors, while our text puts it this way: "malefactors, one on the right, the other on the left" of Jesus. All this accentuated the fact that Christ was reckoned the lowest of criminals, and was numbered among them.

When we consider Christ reckoned among the transgressors, it is well to note first of all the extremity of His rejection.

And we observe, first of all, His utter rejection by man.

Always He is contradicted of sinners (Hebrews 12:3). When He came to His own, He was not received (John 1:11). Always He is hated without cause (John 15:25). And this becomes evident to us now when we look at Him on the cross as He hangs there between the malefactors.

It must become evident that when God becomes manifest in the flesh, all the hatred of sinful man will be railed against Him. There is no hatred that is deeper and more radical than the hatred of the flesh against Christ. For Christ is the revelation of the living God, Who is light, and there is no darkness in Him. He represents the righteousness of God over against a world that lies in darkness. In that world He uncompromisingly condemns its evils, demanding repentance—not in part, but completely; not outwardly, but from the heart; not of certain sins, but of sin itself. He is radical! He exposes the very intents of the heart. He opens the whitewashed sepulchers, and exposes the dead-men's bones within. He saves, but from sin. He promises life and glory, but only in the way of the righteousness of God. He offers no hope to the sinner who does not repent. He has no program of salvation for a world that loves darkness rather than light. He condemns the very goodness and religiousness of man. He was the most radical, uncompromising, intolerant Preacher that ever spoke to man.

That Christ of God evokes the wrath of man, who censors Him to the realm of transgressors. That flesh that loves darkness is moved to hatred that could never be quenched. Always the rejection of Christ must end in seeking to destroy Him.

And, mind you, sinful flesh always seeks at the same time to justify itself—at least in the eyes of men. The very day after they crucify Christ they will be still pious and religious. See them in the temple, performing religious rites connected to the Passover. They try to make it appear as if it is in the name of man's goodness and religiousness that Christ must be killed. They will not admit that they kill Him because they are evil and He is good. On the contrary, He must be the transgressor. Such is the deep hypocrisy of the flesh.

So men, all men by nature, reckoned Him among the transgressors—because He is light, and they are darkness; because He is the revelation of the living God, and they are the enemies of God.

But an utter mistake it would be to conclude that man's rejection is the final word of the cross. Though it be true that the utter rejection by the world plays a great part in the drama of redemption; and though it be true also that the coming of the Son of God in the flesh is intended to evoke this universal antipathy, yet, behind all this rejection, and using it with sovereign determination, is God.

God also reckons Him among the transgressors! Not, you understand, because of any evil within Him or done by Him. For He is the holy Child Jesus, holy and without blame. He is the Servant of Jehovah, par excellence, Who always did the will of the Father perfectly, Who could say to God as He did to man, "Who convicteth Me of sin?"

But it was because He must be the representative sinner, Who will save His people from their sin. Accordingly He must not only be condemned by men, but also by God. God reckoned Him among the transgressors. This is one of the awful antinomies of the cross. He Who knew no sin, is made sin; and He Who was superbly righteous, is made the sinner.

Thus, while the world utterly rejects Him, God fulfills His good pleasure. God had ordained Him to be the Head of the church, which by nature and in time belongs to the race of transgressors. In order to redeem them whom the Father had given to Him, He must take their place in judgment, the righteous judgment of God. All their iniquities He must bear. In God's own judgment He must be numbered among the transgressors, and treated as the chief of them all. Such is the good pleasure of God. Thus He is forsaken of God. This is the extremity of rejection!

Observe however that, while Jesus is numbered among the transgressors, He also clearly makes division between them.

Always throughout His earthly ministry Christ appears as the divider. And no more emphatically is this revealed than when He hangs on the cross. He is hanged between the malefactors, with one on His right hand, and the other on the left. When the apostle John in his gospel reflects on this fact (John 19:18), he says: "Where they crucified Him and two others with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." These last words, "And Jesus in the midst," were evidently not intended only to accentuate the fact that on either side of Jesus was a malefactor, but that Jesus made division between them. When the Holy Spirit moved him to write these words, the Spirit points to the fact that, according to God's intention, Christ is the divider.

When we survey the cross according to the Scriptures and ask the question, "Who was responsible for the arrangement of the crosses and for the particular setting of the cross of Christ between those of the malefactors?" it becomes quite apparent that the immediate cause for this arrangement rested with the soldiers who crucified them, and with Pilate who gave the order, and with the leaders of the Jews who cried for Christ's death. And their intention evidently was to demonstrate how they conceived of Christ as numbered with the transgressors. Christ then, as we have seen, was, in the intention of men, a common criminal, and He was reckoned as chief among them. But if this were all that could be said, we would fail to see all the Word of God in the particular arrangement. The truth is that God arranges the crosses, and in such a way that Christ evokes the division between the malefactors.

Both of the malefactors were in the same condemnation with Christ, and as one of them also declared, "we indeed justly." But it soon becomes apparent that there was a marked difference between them. Luke tells us of this difference (Luke 23:39-43). One of them mocked and railed on Christ, saying, "If thou be Christ, save Thyself and us." It was a prayer of unbelief. He would be saved, but not from his sin and guilt. The other assumes an entirely different attitude with respect to Christ. Not only does he rebuke his fellow in crime, but he declares Christ's innocence and his own guilt. And he prays that Christ will remember him when He comes into His kingdom.

How can you explain this difference? You cannot explain it from the viewpoint of the malefactors. Would you say that while both had the same opportunity, the one by an act of his free will accepted Christ, and the other rejected Him? But how could this be, in the light of all the circumstances? Also the penitent thief had everything against him. Even the Christ Whom he addresses as Lord, if He were a King, was in the power of His enemies. And remember, there was no preaching here, no altar call, and Christ had not addressed one word to this malefactor. He did not beg him to repent. He did not offer him a place in His kingdom if he would only believe. All that the malefactor saw and heard was the crucified Christ and the mocking of those who milled about the cross.

There is but one answer.

Sovereign, elective grace!

Indeed, Christ is the divider, and evidently here it is between election and reprobation. In the midst of the transgressors He is making separation between them. And He is giving grace to the one in distinction from the other, according to the eternal purpose of God.

Consider what this means. The dying thief had a vision of the kingdom of Christ in a moment when the cause of His kingdom to all appearances was lost. It means that he had light, which even the apostles to this point in time apparently did not have. And what is more, he connected the kingdom of Christ to His cross.

O, yes, God also reckoned Christ among the transgressors, only to make division between them—only to bring out in the death of the Saviour the hope of salvation.

A hope was expressed by the dying thief: "When Thou comest into Thy kingdom." He had assurance that Christ had a kingdom—while all the mockers scoffed at the whole idea of it; while Pilate mocks with His kingship in setting the motto above His head, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." The thief is assured in his heart that the Lord has a kingdom. Also he was assured that Christ would enter His kingdom. Amazing hope of the penitent thief! And amazing also is his longing to enter it with Christ.

"Remember me, Lord!" Not, remember how I defended Thee this day when all reproached Thee, but remember me, a dying sinner, who is in need of salvation. Thou art my Lord, and I am Thy unworthy servant. And all this with the assurance that his Lord would comply.

The basis of that hope?

The revelation of the Spirit. Was Pilate's epithet perhaps his Bible? Whatever was revealed to him was made known by the Spirit of Christ to him. Christ, he saw, was entering through death into His kingdom, and he would enter with Him.

It was all of the grace of God Who will be merciful to whom He will be merciful. It is the grace of election subjectively perceived in hope. Through the way of atonement, he had a place in Christ's kingdom.

Certified by the Word of God in the dying Saviour!

Indeed, the cross and the kingdom belong together. The Lord intimates that the thief had seen correctly. Christ's crown is attained only through the way of His suffering and death.

"Today thou shalt be with Me in Paradise!"

Blessed answer to the hoping penitent! Not realized in some future time, but this very day.

And so Christ sees His seed. Isaiah made sure to include also this in his prophecy: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him: He hath put Him to grief, when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed." So, while He is rejected by all, He is comforted in beholding the first fruits of a veritable harvest. The Lord of God's everlasting kingdom marches triumphantly to His glorious throne. And His seed follows in His train.

EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The GKN on the Nature of the Authority of Scripture (4)

Thus far we have seen, first, that the very method and approach of the Report/Decision of the GKN concerning the nature of the authority of Scripture is radically wrong. This method and approach are philosophical. The Report apparently assumes that as philosophy's conception of "truth" changes, the church's understanding of the inspiration and authority of Scripture also changes. At any rate, in the first section of the Report, after noting a shift in the conception of truth from the objective to the subjective to the so-called relational view, the Report proceeds to develop an alleged "relational" view of revelation and inspiration. However, this very philosophical approach is incorrect; the Report should have proceeded from Scripture and the Confessions. Secondly, however, the Report simply assumes that the "relational" conception of the truth is also correct, and that therefore one's understanding of revelation and inspiration must also shift. This will have the result, of course, that one's view of the *authority* of Scripture will also necessarily change. There seems to be implicit in this chapter of the Report, therefore, the twofold assumption: 1) That the so-called "relational" view of the truth is correct and must be chosen over either the objective or the subjective conception. 2) That as philosophy's conception of the truth changes, there must also be a shift in the church's conception of the truth, and thus in the church's conception of various truths, and in particular the conception of the truth of revelation and inspiration. I suppose that if twenty-five years from now philosophy would decide upon a different conception of the truth—let us call it "non-relational"—then the church would have to adopt a different conception again of revelation and inspiration.

Now this in itself would be sufficient, in my opinion, to condemn the Report/Decision out of hand and to be done with it. For it guarantees from the outset that the position taken by the Report will be wrong.

Nevertheless, let us see where this wrong approach takes us with regard to the crucial truth concerning Holy Scripture; and let us see how the GKN have completely abandoned the historic Reformed position with respect to the inspiration and authority of Scripture. The first step in this abandonment takes place already in Chapter I when the "relational" conception is applied to the truths of revelation and inspiration.

The Report approaches the subject of revelation as follows (translation mine):

> The Christian confesses that the truth is from God. In Scripture he comes into contact with this truth. In Scripture he hears the speech of God; the Bible is inspired, that is: breathed through by the Spirit of God.

Right here we must stop already and call attention to a very serious error. At first glance, perhaps, the sentences just quoted may appear to be very innocent; possibly some might consider them soundly Reformed. But they are not. There is a reference here, of course, to the language of II Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The expression "given by inspiration of God" in our English version is literally "theopneust" or "God-breathed." The meaning is that all Scripture

is the product of the breath of God. God breathed, and Scripture came into being. The Report, however, speaks of Scripture being "breathed through by the Spirit of God." The difference should be obvious: the Report does not say that Scripture is the product of the breath of God, but that the breath of the Spirit of God is *in* Scripture, as it were blows through Scripture. For those who understand the Dutch, the difference is between the verbs *geademd* and *doorademd*. The Report says: "...de bijbel is geinspireerd, dat is: doorademd door de Geest van God." It should say: "...de bijbel is geinspireerd, dat is: geademd door God (theopneust)."

This is a key error. If at this point the Report had taken the correct position, the entire relational position with regard to revelation and inspiration would have been impossible. The Report would have been shut up to the position that the Bible is objectively and in its entirety and without any admixture the Word of God—period. And this is without any question the testimony of Scripture itself, not only in an isolated passage such as II Timothy 3:16 but also in many other passages.

But the Report continues in the same paragraph:

> Does this not concern an entirely objective revelation-truth outside of man? Must not man be passive here, opening himself to receive the truth from without? No, not in the manner of a revelation-truth which slams into the world of men like a meteorite. Otherwise than with the Koran, Scripture is not directly dictated from heaven.

Notice how, after first eliminating the possibility of "an entirely objective revelation-truth," as we have seen above, the Report now raises the possibility of such an objective view, only in order to reject it. Notice, too, how it is tacitly assumed in these lines that the only way in which Scripture can be an entirely objective Word of God is by being dictated from heaven, like the Koran. This is a favorite ploy of those who want to deny the inspiration and authority of Scripture. Dr. Kuitert used the same tactics, I recall, when he spoke in Grand Rapids during the 1960s. These men refuse to recognize the validity of the truth of organic inspiration. This Report also criticizes this truth in a later chapter, parting ways with both Kuyper and Bavinck on this score. But while we will deal with this subject later, I want to emphasize already here that it is not at all necessary to hold to mechanical inspiration or to a dictation-theory in order to maintain that the Bible is objectively and in its entirety the Word of God written.

Now let us turn again to the Report:

> Even old, classic Reformed theology spoke of an objective and subjective aspect together: the Holy Spirit works as well in the inspiration of Scripture as in the hearts of men, and the revelation of truth is not there if one of these aspects is lacking. The shift in the truth-concept toward a more relational view (the objective is present in the subjective, and vice versa) can furnish a richer view of the truth of Scripture precisely here. The divine power, which is mentioned as Holy Spirit, is a happening, not a tangible matter; the Spirit is as the blowing of the wind. The Holy Spirit is the manifestation of a strange Superior Power, together with the recognition, the naming thereof by man. 'Receiving the Holy Spirit' is not a passive event (happening), but the active inclusion of men in the revelation-history of God. The attitude of humility, of receiving, of putting one's hand on his mouth is in the deepest degree the active discovery of grace, the all moving confession that it is God who speaks. And such a confession takes place precisely by men. What we call 'inspiration of Scripture' is really an entire history of coming to revelation, to truth, of this 'servant form.'
>
> Distant events, words of patriarchs and prophets, tradition, manifold sources, recording, fixing of what does and what does not belong to the Canon, work of scribes, editors, church groups, all of that continuing and proceeding through the constantly renewed confessions and expositions (exegesis) of the Christian churches even until today. The working of the Holy Spirit is that happening in which human histories and words and inscripturation at the same time point above and beyond themselves. In the measure that men speak more, they must testify more powerfully: 'this does not simply come from us.' Precisely by attending to this 'subjective' history does the 'objective' come more convincingly to light. This truth of God does not exist without the devotion of men. This devotion of men is without meaning if it does not point above and beyond itself and recognize its own devotion, highest activity, as divine grace, deepest dependence. It is constantly: both together.

Now any Reformed man who reads the above should have no difficulty in recognizing the fact that there we have something far different from the Reformed doctrine of Holy Scripture. Even the very vagueness of this language testifies against it and should make us suspicious of its orthodoxy. Compare the language above with the clear language, for example, of Articles 3 and 5 of our Netherlands Confession of Faith or with Chapter I of the Westminster Confession of Faith. There is simply no comparison!

In the second place, there is confusion in these lines. About what is the Report speaking here? Is it speaking about revelation and inspiration? Or is it speaking about how God's people come to believe that the Bible is the Word of God? The reference to classic Reformed theology's speaking of an objective and subjective aspect together would lead one to think that the latter is the meaning. Indeed, Reformed theology from Calvin forward has taught that Scripture is self-authenticating (objective

aspect) and at the same time that faith that the Scriptures are the Word of God is produced by the testimony of the Spirit in our hearts (subjective aspect). But the Report is supposed to be speaking about *revelation* and *inspiration.* One wonders whether this confusion is deliberate or whether the Report purposes to teach that revelation takes place only at the moment when anyone believes the Bible. Without going into detail on this point, let me suggest that there are strong overtones in this section of existentialist and Barthian views.

In the third place, the language of the Report here creates grave doubts—to put it very mildly—as to the orthodoxy of the Report's doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Do the authors of the Report believe the doctrine of the personality and the deity of the Holy Spirit? Or is the Holy Spirit some vague, impersonal power which is merely denominated the Holy Spirit by men?

In the fourth place, it ought to be abundantly plain that as surely as the subjective element (human element) in the "both together" of this segment of the Report is indispensable, so that there is no revelation without it, so surely the Report's view of revelation and inspiration is purely subjectivistic. The Report can call it "relational." It can counter the charge of subjectivism with the claim that also the objective element is necessary and that it is a matter of "both together." The fact remains that without this subjective element there is no Word of God, no truth.

Impressions of Singapore (1)

With this article we resume our account of some of our experiences of last summer. And although there has been considerable—and most welcome—information coming to us from our missionary and others in Singapore, we will add a bit to this information, but from the viewpoint of an interested visitor.

We had left Chinchilla, in midwest Queensland, by car early in the morning of July 21. At that time it was chilly, in fact, frosty. Departing Brisbane airport around 1:00 P.M. (Australian time), we had a rather long and boring trip via British Airways to Singapore, where we arrived around nine o'clock in the evening (Singapore time, which involves a 2½ hour difference from Australia). That day's trip also involved a considerable change in climate—from frost in the morning to a hot, muggy evening of around 80° and rain showers.

But the welcome was even warmer than the weather. In spite of the fact that the airline had confused things by giving the incorrect arrival time, there was a large contingent of GLTS members, led by Rev. den Hartog, to welcome us at the Singapore airport, where we paused not only for greetings but also for Scripture reading and prayer before the long ride from the airport to the city center. The thrill of being greeted by friendly faces and by brothers and sisters in the Lord at a far away airport is something that never grows old. I mentioned "friendly" faces, not familiar faces. For in the entire group who met us at the airport there were only three faces that we knew: Rev. den Hartog, Johnson See Choon Hock, whom we had met at home and with whom we had correspondence, and our dear friend Cecilia (now Mrs. Ong Keng Ho), whom we had met in New Zealand five years earlier. The others, though we had met some of them very briefly five years ago, were friendly but unfamiliar to us. It was not long, however, before we began to attach personalities and names (even though unfamiliar Chinese names) to the faces of these youthful brothers and sisters in Christ. And, by the way, the catholicity of the church is experienced in a very real way in a situation such as Singapore; very soon and quite spontaneously one begins to think of the saints in terms of spiritual unity rather than in terms of racial differences.

Our eight-day stay at Singapore was in the nature of a working vacation. I had agreed before our departure to do a bit of preaching and speaking for Pastor den Hartog in return for a bit of hospitality. To our delight, we were invited to stay with the den Hartogs while in Singapore; and while we hesitated somewhat because we did not want to impose on their busy household and on Missionary den Hartog's extremely busy life, we nevertheless accepted their invitation without too much urging on their part. It was a very good opportunity to become acquainted with the people and the labors in Singapore, because the Rev. den Hartog's apartment is in a very real sense the nerve-center of our mission there. As things turned out, we did not spend as much time together as we would have liked. For one thing, the pastor's work went on in spite of our presence. And if you have not already gained that impression from his reports, let me

assure you that he is extremely busy—too busy, in my opinion. About this later. For another, several plans were made to see to it that my vacation there was indeed a *working* vacation. Before our departure from Grand Rapids the GLTS had asked me to deliver a series of three evening lectures on the general subject, "The Reformation and the Five Points of Calvinism." Then there was a Saturday afternoon Question Hour, which was closer to two hours; there was preaching on Sunday; there were several less formal meetings and countless personal conversations. Mingled in these activities were also various sight-seeing ventures in which we had several willing and helpful GLTS guides. Meanwhile, before the busyness of the day started and after it ended late at night we had ample opportunity for many conversations with the den Hartogs.

All in all, we had a delightful stay and a most educational one, too. And while I would certainly not classify myself as an expert on the Singapore mission field, I gained some very definite impressions which I would like to share with you. These impressions, of course, will not be those of one deeply involved in the work; but they will be those of an "outsider" looking in. Perhaps there is an advantage in that kind of viewpoint, too.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

April 15, 1981

Dear Timothy,

Perhaps at this point a brief review is in order concerning what we have discussed so far about the emotions. You will recall that we defined all emotions in terms of feelings of like and dislike. We also said that all the emotions could be roughly divided into two main classes: desires and emotions proper. In our last letter we finished our discussion of desires, and the time has come to turn to emotions—what they are and how they work within us.

While desires are the lower activities of the will, emotions are of a higher sort. They are a higher sort because, while they include in them and presuppose the presence of desires, they go beyond desires also. They are more than mere desires. We can, I think, divide them into three classes: feelings, emotions proper, and passions. The distinction is not absolute, and the one class tends somewhat to run over into other classes; but the distinction will serve, it seems to me, to help us understand what they are about.

The first question then is: what are feelings?

In general, feelings are reactions to particular sensations which we have. We are, as we have had occasion to notice in other connections, created by God in such a way that we stand in contact with the world about us by means of our senses. Every single part of the creation is available to us by means of our senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. And, through the creation about us with all that it contains, we also stand in contact with God Himself Who makes Himself known through the creation.

Now, as this creation impinges upon us and enters, via our senses and nervous system, into our souls, we are affected by all these things. When we are affected by them, it is also because we have an impression of like or dislike, because, as we said a moment ago, feelings of like and dislike are at the bottom of all our emotions.

Some of these feelings are rather general, vague, and indefinite. We cannot give a clear account of them. They are there, and we vaguely sense that they are there; but they are too indefinite really to explain them fully or describe them clearly. There are several examples of this which we can mention and which will, perhaps, help to clarify the matter. There are times when we get out of bed in the morning and already we do not feel very happy or contented. We talk about getting out of bed on "the wrong side." We feel out of sorts and dissatisfied, but if anyone would ask us what the trouble is, we would be hard pressed to explain. We do not know exactly how we feel and we cannot give account for our feelings. All is too indefinite. The same thing can happen during the course of the day. We have feelings of unease, of tension, of discontent; we have feelings that something not very pleasing is going to happen, that trouble is lurking around the corner, that things are not going to go well. Uneasy

and even somewhat frightened and disturbed, we cannot lay our fingers on precisely what is the problem.

It also happens, although less often, that we have a deep sense of ease, of happiness, of well-being and contentment so that we face life relaxed and confident, happy and composed, and we are satisfied with a deep satisfaction that all is well. But if we were asked to explain how this came about and why it is that we feel as we do, we would find it very difficult to explain why we feel as we do.

Now the reason why all this is true is that we are much more affected by the creation about us than we often recognize. When God created man, He created man as an organic part of the creation, one with the whole creation, a part of it, dependent upon it, related to it, united together with it in inescapable bonds. And so, as a part of the creation, we are affected by it. We are affected by almost everything in it. We are affected by colors, sounds, weather, temperature, seasons, changes in the seasons, changes in the weather, wind, rain, sunshine, cloudy days, the singing of the birds, the honking of the geese, the barking of dogs, etc. Most of the time, we are almost totally unaware of all these things which affect us; but the fact of the matter is that they do. Doctors tell us (and we have no reason to doubt the truth of this) that little babies are affected by the colors of the walls in their bedrooms, by the sounds of the home, whether they be sounds of happiness or quarrelling, by the music which is being played, whether it be sweet and soft or raucous and discordant. We all know how cloudy days can make us blue, how changes in the weather can make us restless, how the change of seasons is the time when a lot of people who have problems see their problems multiply and their mental and spiritual equilibrium go out of balance. We have only a small conception of how we are, every moment, affected by all these things.

In addition to all this, we are affected by those people with whom we come into contact during the course of the day. We are sensitive to moods and feelings of other people. We not only hear what they are saying, but we detect behind their words, feelings and emotions, attitudes and dispositions—all of which affect us and to which we react. The more intimate the relationships of life, the more this is true. If, once again, I may use but one illustration to make this clear: it has struck me forcibly that God gives to parents a great responsibility to set (if I may use the expression) the general mood and atmosphere in the home. And perhaps it is even true that the father, since he is the head of the house, is more responsible for this even than the mother. There are times, and I speak of myself because I know myself best, when I get up in the morning feeling rather out of sorts and not too happy with things—for reasons which are not very clear. If I come to the breakfast table feeling this way, it is not very long and the whole family, gathered about the table, is also feeling out of sorts. The children are quarrelling and bickering with each other, and every one is soon unhappy. But the opposite can also be true. If I make up my mind that, regardless of how I feel, I will be happy at the table, this happiness soon pervades everyone. In all our life it is this way; we are affected greatly by those with whom we have contact and fellowship. And the closer that fellowship, the more we are affected by these people.

Yet, while all this is rather vague and general, there are more definite feelings also which we have. When we are unconsciously affected by our surroundings, the feelings which are the result are ill-defined. But when the sensations which enter our soul are definite, conscious, clearly defined and easily identified, then too the resulting feelings are much more definite.

These well-defined feelings we can also divide into two classes: the sensuous and the spiritual. The sensuous feelings are feelings of hunger, thirst, cold, warmth, comfort, and such like things. They are feelings which are predominantly the result of sensations of the body. They are brought about by physical well-being or discomfort primarily. But there are also the spiritual feelings. Among these (and there are literally dozens of them) we can count the feelings of shame, aversion, revulsion, abhorence, hatred, fright, and such like things on the one hand; and thankfulness, honor, awe, love, pity, joy, and such like things on the other hand. They too are brought about by sensations; but we can easily define them. We know why we feel the way we do. We can give an account of these feelings and explain their origin. We can clearly connect them with experiences which we have had and with the objects which come to our attention.

Secondly, there are also emotions. The basic difference between feelings and emotions is that emotions are much stronger than feelings. They are, generally speaking, stronger because, on the one hand, they violently shake the soul, and, on the other hand, they are of such a kind that they affect the body. They are the feelings which make us blush, which make our hearts beat faster, which make our fists clench, which make a tightness come to our throats, which make our stomachs begin to churn inside us. It is not difficult to see that they are also basically rooted in the fundamental feelings of like and dislike; but our liking and disliking are so much stronger and so much more powerful that the effect of certain things on us moves us so deeply that we are visibly and notice-

ably shaken and moved by what has happened.

And, finally, there are passions. Passions too are feelings. But they are even stronger feelings than emotions. They are, in fact, so strong that they make of a man a slave who is blind to reason and understanding and who reacts without any control at all over what he is doing. He acts in a blind rage, so we say. He acts with thoughtless passion so that he is so overcome by his emotions that he cannot control what he is doing. He is simply a slave to the emotions which he is experiencing, and he acts without thought or reason behind what he does. We all know what this is like. We speak of it sometimes, rather mildly, as "losing one's temper," when it is anger that lies behind it.

So these then are the emotions.

We ought briefly to comment on them, although much of what has to be said we have said already in earlier articles. But there are especially three points which we ought to make.

In the first place, because God has created us as rational and moral creatures, our emotions ought always to be under the control of our minds and wills. This is contrary to all prevailing theory because current thinking is that we must let our emotions rule in our lives and simply be led in all that we do by them. But this is not only very wicked, but also leads to all kinds of trouble. It is worth our note in passing that, nevertheless, such is the life of many also within the Church.

In the second place, if the emotions are to be under the control of the mind and will, it follows that passions, as we defined them, are always wrong. There are indeed people who are more inclined to let their passions get the best of them than others. There are those who easily "lose their tempers." But, no matter what may be the case, it is always very sinful to be so overcome with emotion, whether it be anger or lust, that we act unthinkingly and without knowing what we are doing.

In the third place, because all emotions are basically like and dislike, we must so learn to live in our emotional life that our likes and dislikes are ruled and directed by the Word of God. This is the person who, also in his emotional life, lives according to the will of His God. And great blessing comes upon him.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

All This in a Covenant Home

Rev. John A. Heys

In the last part of Genesis 37 we have depicted the deep and unnecessary sorrow of Jacob due to his belief that Joseph had been devoured by lions, and due to the treachery and deception of his sons. So deep was his grief that he refused to be comforted, and he expected to carry his sorrow into his grave.

His sons, together with his daughters, did seek to comfort him. But what miserable comforters those sons were! The one word Jacob needed, and they could supply to stop his tears, they in their wickedness would not speak to him. Whatever they did say to try to comfort him was the lie, because it was withholding from him the truth. And the lie can never comfort. We can only guess what they did say to try to make him forget his sorrows. What wicked words their evil hearts presented, to try to get his mind off that which troubled him as nothing ever had before, is not told us. What could they say in such circumstances? All they had to do was confess that they were lying, and that Joseph was alive somewhere in Egypt. Physically it was such a little thing that had to be done to get their father out of this deep grief. But spiritually this was an insurmountable task. They undoubtedly were moved by their father's tears which flowed so freely and had their effect on his physical well-being. But they were moved more deeply by their own pride and desire to defend themselves in their lie, and to make sure that Joseph's dreams would not be realized so that they would have to be his servants. And so they could not comfort him, not because there was no word that could dry those tears, but because there was no love for God operating in their souls to speak the truth, and to bow before His word which Joseph gave them in his dreams. Hypo-

critical they were, therefore, in their words which they did speak to their grieving father. In their attempt to comfort they added to their sins. But God has a way of bringing His people to repentance; and subsequent history recorded in this book of Genesis will reveal that their lie is exposed, and that Jacob's grief is removed by God Himself.

However, after reading in the last part of Genesis 37 of Jacob's grief, four chapters come and go without one word of mention about Jacob. We do not read of him again until in chapter 41, where we find him sending his sons to Egypt for food. Yet it must be borne in mind that we are still dealing with Jacob's family. Chapter 38 deals with the evils of Judah who was the fourth son to be born to Jacob through his wife Leah. It is Jacob's family, his seed, that commits these shameful deeds of sin. It is one who came out of Jacob's loins and is carrying Jacob's name into the coming generation. It is, in fact, that branch of Jacob's family from which the Christ will be born of which we read such debasing deeds and wicked works. Judah, the son of Jacob, took to himself a Canaanite for a wife; and he gets a wife for the son of this Canaanite from among the Canaanites. This son is slain by God because of his wickedness. The second son is also slain by God because he will not raise up seed for his dead brother. In pure selfishness, as well as lack of covenant concern, Onan satisfies his flesh but will not satisfy God's covenant obligations. Judah, after this Canaanitish wife dies, turns unto one whom he considers to be an harlot, for the satisfaction of his flesh. And Judah, this son of Jacob, becomes an illegitimate father. For, after all, there are no illegitimate children, but only illegitimate parents. The children born out of wedlock do not commit an illegitimate deed. It is the parents who break God's law.

But the point we want to make here is that all this sad history reveals the truth that, "God works in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." For it is in the line of this branch of Jacob's family, and through this series of wicked deeds, that God ultimately brings forth the Christ out of David's seed, which is Judah's seed, which is Jacob's seed. God brings an outsider inside the covenant sphere. This outsider brought forth a son who also received an outsider as his wife. She walks outside God's law and plays the part of an harlot and begets a son whose descendants bring forth David and, in the fulness of time, the Christ Himself; and through Him we are all brought into the blessings of that covenant of grace. Indeed, here is evidence that it is all a covenant of grace. Our works, beginning with Adam's, deny us any place in that kingdom and covenant. Man has not performed one single deed that deserves and merits for him a right in God's covenant. Instead he always, in all that he does, shows not only no interest in that kingdom and covenant, until God brings Him in by a rebirth and the power of the Spirit of Christ, but also no power to live as a covenant child. It is grace and grace alone that explains that there is a covenant established by God and with man. Claim that there is one work of man that gives him even the right to remain in that covenant, and you manifest that you are not living the life of that covenant. The life of the covenant sings,

> All that I am I owe to Thee,
> Thy wisdom Lord hath fashioned me:
> I give my Maker thankful praise,
> Whose wondrous works my soul amaze.
> Psalm 139:14

A question arises, however, in this connection. Why does God reveal this chapter in the life of Jacob and his family? Why did the account of Joseph have to be interrupted to have this squalid story related?

One answer, to be sure, is that here is established the covenant line of the fathers that runs from Adam, through Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Pharez, David, and Christ. There is one unbroken line; and God reveals it also to His Church in the Scripture. There is also one perfect unity between Old and New Testaments. When you write fiction, you had better be general; and if you try to be specific, you will be contradicted and accused of falsifying. God speaks the truth. Those whom He used to write the Scriptures speak the truth, and, not being silent about immoral conduct in the forebears of David and Christ, they are very specific as to deeds and also to names.

But chiefly this chapter is placed here in the midst of the narrative that deals with Joseph and his experiences to warn us, and point out to us, what we can expect when we fail to take our covenant calling in regard to our children seriously. We have pointed out how weak Jacob was in this respect. And the tragedy with us is that the result of our laxity comes when there is no time or possibility of reversing the damage CAUSED by our behaviour. Our children are out of our houses and letting their children follow the flesh in ways that make us shudder, carrying sin to new heights in our families and generations. The family tree no longer brings forth the wholesome, bright, and luscious fruit; but we become ashamed and find the desire to apologize for what our grand-children do.

We should be concerned about whom our children get for a husband or wife. We cannot go and get one for them, as Abraham did, and as Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob to get. But we certainly may not do as Judah did here when he went and got a

Canaanite for his son. And Judah was only walking in the way his father allowed him to walk. Judah took a Canaanite for himself; but there is not one word here of objection on Jacob's part. He had looked the other way so often about the idolatry of his children, and of his beloved wife, Rachel. He had displayed so much weakness of faith all along the line before his family that it does not resemble very closely Abraham's family and Abraham's and Sarah's faith.

No, we cannot go out and get wives and husbands for our children. But are we helping them find mates for life that are spiritually compatible? Do we place so much emphasis on physical and psychical compatibility that spiritual compatibility comes only as an afterthought, when we see that things are not going well spiritually in their married lives? And then do we blame that unspiritual partner for what our own children do? Have we warned? Have we shown them concern for their spiritual well-being? Or have we left them drift; and have we shown them silent approval of their ways? Have we protected them, or have we exposed them to the world? Have we introduced them by the boob tube to the love of Hollywood, of Sodom and Gomorrah, of the cheap paperback novel, that really is no love because it does not have in it the love of God?

Let it be understood, I do not at all believe that believing parents can give faith to their children, or that to get the son or daughter of a believer for a marriage partner is going to guarantee spiritual compatibility. But I am aware of the fact, and emphatically declare it, that God does gather His children out of our children, because He has established His covenant with us and with our seed after us, gathering His elect children in the line of continued generations. And therefore we ought to encourage our children to seek their mates for life in the sphere of the church, in the realm where there are believing parents. And we ought to warn constantly against dating out of the world, even for one night. That is playing with spiritual dynamite!

The chapter also clearly indicates the need for a firm hand while the children are under our roofs. Jacob was loose in his handling of the children; and he failed to speak up when he should have done so. In that measure he failed as a covenant father, and saw failure in the lives of his children. One example of this is in Genesis 37:11. After Joseph told his second dream we read that, "His brothers envied him; but his father observed the saying." Here is where Jacob should have spoken to his children and at least warned them that this could be the word of God against which they should not fight. Two dreams so similar, with the same basic truth in them, made Jacob stop and think. Even though his flesh spoke and caused him to rebuke Joseph and ask, "Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" Jacob began to realize that this was no ordinary, nor childish dream. Even the envy of these brothers of Joseph speaks here. They, too, had a fear that this might very well be the case. They did not ridicule him. They envied him. And it was not simply because his father showed such favoritism towards him, as was evident in that coat of many colors. Deep inside they sensed that such an exaltation of Joseph could take place. That was also behind their plot to kill him, and then later on to sell him into Egypt. They wanted to make it impossible for him to become their ruler. These unspiritual brothers sensed that there could be something to Joseph's dreams. And Jacob should have made known to them his own awareness of the possibility of it being a dream from God. He had experienced such a dream himself, so that dreams with meaning were not something foreign to him.

And, after all, Jacob treated this firstborn of Rachel as though he were the firstborn in the family. That princely coat—rather than "coat of many colors"—proves this. Why should such a dream of Joseph then be only a dream? After his outburst which moved him to rebuke Joseph, he came to his spiritual senses because of all these things; and it behoved him to speak in the wisdom of Gamaliel, "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it" (Acts 5:38, 39).

But Jacob said nothing to his sons. And when we are silent before our children concerning the evils in the world, or, worse, if we give them the impression that there is good in the world, we must not be surprised to see our grandchildren living in the world and seeking the things of the world with the unbelievers. The church is becoming too much like the world; and the churches are becoming more and more alike. Let us take note and train our children in the way in which they should go, and not in the way our flesh likes to go—lest all this be in our covenant families.

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*Read **The Standard Bearer.***

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Rise of Cults: A Cause for Government Control of Religion?

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

It has been over two years ago since the time of the mass murder/suicide claimed the lives of 913 people. In 1978 the world was stunned when the cult leader, Jim Jones, of the People's Temple persuaded his faithful followers to drink the poisoned grape Kool-Aid which caused their deaths. Over 250 children were found among the corpses of their parents and relatives. Men, women, and children were led to their doom because they worshipped and trusted in this man-devil, their cult leader.

Despite such an incident, cults still rapidly increase in membership. Thousands of people flock to the cults every year. For the wicked who "are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isaiah 57:20 and 21), the cults seem to offer some kind of false stability in their confused and miserable lives. For the confused and dissatisfied church-goer who has lost sight of the objective standard of Scripture, the cults seem to fill a lack in life. For these reasons the cults are attracting thousands yearly. And that is true not only of the major cults but also of many smaller, perhaps more sinister cults.

In connection with this rise of the cults the child of God, who in all things looks for the return of Christ, asks himself this question: Is this perhaps one of the causes of eventual government control of religion? As we learn from Revelation 13, the Antichrist will possess not only a supreme political power for a time but also an extraordinary power of persuasion in the realm of religion. In verses 13 and 14 of that chapter in Revelation we read, "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast." From this it becomes evident that the power and rule of Antichrist will not be limited strictly to the realm of the political. He will also control religion—*all* religion. When he has gained such control then God's children will become the objects of persecution, for his "religion" will be anti-Christ. All the means which he uses to attain this end we certainly are unable to ascertain. Yet we watch for certain developments in the realm of religion which perhaps finally could lead to such a control of religion. That is why we raise the question: Could the rise of cults in any way lead to the government's eventual control and regulation of what we believe?

The answer: perhaps. Here is how.

Because of the continued "special revelations" which the leaders of the various cults claim to have, they are able to act contrary to the law of God as well as the law of the land without so much as a question raised in the minds of their followers. The cults, therefore, promote lawlessness. That this is true is well substantiated. This is evident from the mass suicide/murder of the members of the People's Temple of which Jim Jones was the leader. Certainly, here was an act of lawlessness in the grossest proportion! Just recently I clipped an article from the newspaper which spoke of this same kind of lawlessness. It was reported that a woman watched as members of a devil-worshipping cult killed a woman and her two children in their home. The killings were acts of vengeance by the cult members who were angry with this woman's husband for his attitude toward the cultist's drug use. Perhaps it is argued that this is true only of exceptional and particularly malicious cults. But we note in the first place that these are *cults* nonetheless. We note in the second place, that this disregard for the laws of the land can also be found in the established and more popular cults. In 1968 a cultic movement began in Grand Rapids, Michigan under the leadership of a Donald De Graff. This particular cult has attracted several hundred followers as it is constantly on the move "from Florida to New Mexico." Although not as yet charged with any criminal offence, DeGraaf is under investigation for using religion to collect thousands of tax-free dollars that he spent himself. Similarly, the Church of the Latter Day Saints is on government record as a cult guilty of fraudulent monetary acts, as well as counterfeiting. Add to this the fact that Mormons advocate polygamy and it cannot be denied that the cults are guilty of viola-

ting the laws of the civil government (not to mention the law of God).

How does this lead to government control of religion? The cults use their "religion" as a palisade behind which they can hide and feel safe from punishment for the wrongs they commit. They openly defy the laws of the government because the "special revelation" of their corrupted leaders say they must. Notice from the Mormon's *Doctrine and Covenants,* "Behold, and lo, I am the Lord thy God, and will answer thee as touching this matter. Therefore, prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you: for all those who have this law revealed unto them *must obey* the same. . . . Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, . . . David also received many wives and concubines and also Solomon and Moses my servants, . . . and in nothing did they sin save in those things which they received not of me." I repeat, members of the cults are *required* to defy the good laws of government which are, in fact, in harmony with God's law.

This frustrates the government; and in these instances rightfully so. The government has given laws which allow for the freedom of religion and the cults abuse them. There is little that can be done by police officers and government officials as long as the Constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Their hands are tied. In the words of an FBI agent who was investigating the DeGraaf cult, "Only in America could something like this happen—good or bad—but that is the way it is."

The only recourse that government has in situations such as these is to amend the first amendment of the Constitution which grants freedom of religion, and to make it say, "freedom of religion—as long as the government has determined that one's religion stands in harmony with the laws of the land." This, of course, would mean government control and regulation of religion. The government could outlaw any religion with which it has any basic disagreement. The result: *according to the government's determination* all religion must stand in harmony with its laws with very little, if any variation.

At this point this solution to the government's problem with the cults appears to be a good one. Even we are tempted to say that if this is the only way to stop such abuses of religion then so let it be. That way we who right now stand in harmony with the law of the land will be protected from those who seek to pervert the truth in such a terrible way! Surely the *motive* of the government in regulating religion is pure! That is true. But have you thought for a moment concerning the implications now that government has in its hands the control of our faith? Oh, at present it may seem to go pretty well for us, maybe even to our advantage. But then again, maybe not! Antichrist is developing right now, at this very moment! Imagine if the government were sitting in the driver's seat as far as what you and I may or may not believe. Do you think that they would allow us to maintain our "strict" views on such things as divorce and remarriage, abortion, union membership, or women in office? Not likely!

Then again, look into the near future. With the population explosion the government may attempt to regulate the size of a family. Do you think they would accept us as a legitimate religion if we, according to God's Word, continued having children beyond their limitations? Even now the mystery of iniquity is working in this way. And then comes the final development of Antichrist. Paul explains in II Thessalonians 2:8-10, "And then shall that Wicked One be revealed,. . . even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." This "Wicked One," the Antichrist, will persuade all religions to unite in order to worship the image of the beast. He will cause all men to receive the mark of the beast in their right hand or on their forehead. That will be law! Will we bow down to the image or take the mark of the beast in our foreheads? Not at all. Then the government will not only take away our right as churches but he will persecute us for not standing in harmony with the laws he has made.

The cults are not harmless. They not only deceive many but in a very real way they prepare the way for Antichrist. Be aware of them and their development. The signs of Christ's return surround us on every side. As we watch them we prepare ourselves for His swift return. And we stand assured—if God is for us then nothing can be against us, for *all* things work toward our salvation.

The Standard Bearer makes a thoughtful gift for a shut-in.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Luke—The Gospel of the Son of Man (concluded)

Rev. J. Kortering

Luke, the beloved physician, wrote this gospel for Theophilus, a Greek, who had come to the Christian faith. While doing this, he was led by the Holy Spirit to write a Gospel in some ways distinct from the others.

THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

1. Luke was a historian and God used him to give us an accurate historical account of the ministry of Jesus (recorded in the Gospel of Luke) and of the establishment of the early Christian church (recorded in the book of Acts). Included in his Gospel is the reference to the decree of Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed and, "this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria" (2:2). The Jewish historian Josephus in his *Antiquities* seems to contradict this by mentioning that this taxing was done in A.D. 6, too late to coincide with the birth of Jesus which was approximately 3 B.C. Upon further investigation, however, this seeming contradiction can be resolved when we consider the fact that in those days taxation was a long drawn-out process. First the people had to register their persons and possessions; and this registration was followed at a later date by the actual assessment and payment of the tax. In all likelihood, Cyrenius (Quirinius) supervised the registration around 3 B.C. while the actual payment was made later, around A.D. 6. Two sources confirm that Quirinius was a legate of Syria during the time Jesus was born; there was an inscription found in Rome by the Tiber, and another in Antioch of Pisidia that referred to Quirinius as being ruler of Syria at this time.

Being interested in history, Luke connected the events of the New Testament with the political situation of his day. For example, Zacharias was priest when Herod was King of Judea (1:5), Mary and Joseph came to Bethlehem upon the decree of Caesar Augustus (2:1), and we read in chapter three verses 1 and 2, "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the Word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness."

Luke also gives us biographical detail of the life of Christ. The Gospel was not written for this purpose, but, of all the Gospel accounts, Luke's has the most detail. We get some insight into his family, his ancestors, parents, and brethren. We learn something of Jesus' infancy, boyhood, and growing up. If we look in the other direction of His life, its end, we observe the same thing. Luke gives us interesting detail about the trial, the charges made against Him (23:2), Pilate's attempt to avoid having to sentence Jesus, even by sending Him to Herod (23:7ff.).

2. This historical emphasis, however, does not discredit the theology of salvation which underlies the ministry of Jesus. Luke traveled with Paul and learned to love the gospel of justification by faith without the works of the law. In the gospel narrative Luke sets forth the Gospel truth: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (19:10). Jesus said of the publican, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (18:14).

In addition to this, we should note the emphasis upon the Holy Spirit and His role in salvation. Again, remember that Luke had already researched his material for the Book of Acts, even before he wrote the Gospel of Luke. This made him Spirit-conscious. He points out in the Gospel that the Holy Spirit was in John (1:15), Elizabeth (1:41), Zacharias (1:67), Simeon (2:25, 26); that He was instrumental in the conception of Christ (1:35) and present at His baptism (3:22); that He strengthened Jesus for the temptation (4:1, 14) and blessed Him in His ministry (4:18, 10:21). The same Spirit filled His disciples (24:49).

3. As the Son of Man, Jesus came to apply salvation to all classes of people. Luke, a physician, could well appreciate the power of the miracles.

Among them he records the following: raising the widow's son at Nain (7:11-18), healing the man who had dropsy (14:1-6) and the ten lepers (17:11-19), restoring the ear of Malchus (29:50, 51). Luke refers to women often (43 times, compared to Matthew and Mark who refer to them 49 times between the two accounts). He gives us a good picture of Mary His mother by referring to her throughout the Gospel. He writes about Elizabeth (1:5, 6, 39-54, 57), Anna the prophetess (2:36-38), the women who followed Jesus (8:2,3), the weeping women who walked behind the cross as Jesus carried it (23:27, 28), the women at the cross and tomb (23:55, 56, 24:1-11). Luke also refers to children. The infancy of Jesus covers some three chapters; and he refers to miracles upon an only child in three different places (7:12, 8:42, 9:38). Of His many parables, Luke refers to Jesus' care for the poor and oppressed. Those not recorded in any other gospel include ones mentioned in 7:41, 43; 11:5-8; 12:13-21; 15:8-10, 16:1-13, 16:19-31, 18:1-8.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL

1. The preparation for Jesus' ministry: the births of John the Baptist and Jesus are announced, John is born (1:5-80), Jesus is born, circumcised, presented in the temple, visited Jerusalem, grew in wisdom and stature (2:1-52).

2. Inauguration into His ministry: ministry of John, baptism of Jesus (3:1-22), Jesus' geneology (3:23-38), the temptation (4:1-13).

3. His Galilean ministry: He returns to Galilee (4:14, 15); at Nazareth He declares His purpose and is rejected (4:16-30); He performs many miracles, such as the healing of the demoniac and other sick, the draught of fishes, the cleansing of the leper, the healing of the man sick of palsy (4:30-5:26); He ate with publicans and sinners (5:27-39); He confronts the Pharisees over the Sabbath, His disciples pluck corn, He heals the man with a withered hand (6:1-11); He chose His twelve disciples (6:12-16), preached the sermon on the mount (6:17-49), healed the Centurion's servant (7:1-10), raised the son of the widow of Nain (7:11-17), answered John's inquiry (7:18-35); the woman anoints Jesus' feet (7:36-50); Jesus tells the parable of the sower (8:1-18), answers His mother and brothers who desire Him to show His power (8:19-21), performs miracles, such as the stilling of the storm, the casting out of devils out of Legion, the healing of the daughter of Jairus and of the woman with the issue of blood (8:22-56); He sends forth the twelve and feeds the five thousand (9:1-17).

4. The retirement ministry: announcement of His suffering and death to His disciples (9:18-27), the transfiguration (9:28-36), the healing of the demoniac son (9:37-45), the use of a child as an example of humility (9:46-50).

5. Later Judean ministry: He is rejected by Samaritans (9:51-56), He deals with the three would-be disciples (9:57-62), sends out the seventy (10:1-24), tells the parable of good Samaritan (10:25-37), visits with Mary and Martha (10:38-42), teaches His disciples to pray (11:1-13), is accused of casting out devils in the name of Beelzebub (11:14-29), gives the sign of Jonas and pronounces woes on the Scribes and Pharisees (11:30-54), tells more parables (12:1-13:10), heals a man on the Sabbath (13:11-17), tells the parable of the mustard seed (13:18-21).

6. Perean ministry: while journeying through Perea He speaks about the straight gate and narrow way and deals with the threat from Herod (13:22-35), heals the man with dropsy (14:1-6), relates a series of parables which includes the seating of guests at the wedding feast, the great supper, the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son, the unjust steward, the rich man and Lazarus, and the offenses and forgiveness (14:7-17:10); He heals 10 lepers (17:11-18), speaks of the coming of the kingdom of heaven (17:20-37), tells the parable of the widow who persisted and of the pharisee and publican (18:1-14); He deals with children and the rich young ruler (18:15-30), heads for Jerusalem and on the way heals a blind man (18:31-43), visits with Zacchaeus, and tells the parable of the pounds (19:1-27).

7. The passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus: the royal entrance into Jerusalem (19:28-40), weeping over Jerusalem (19:41-44), cleansing of the temple (19:45-48), answering the confrontation over His authority by telling the parable of the wicked husbandmen (20:1-18), instruction regarding the payment of tribute to Caesar, answering the problem of the resurrection and marriage after death, showing how He can be both David's Son and Lord (20:20-47), the parable of the widow's mite (21:1-4), instruction concerning the end of all things (21:5-28), announcement of the destruction of Jerusalem (21:29-38), Judas agrees to betray Jesus (22:16), the last passover and institution of Lord's Supper (22:7-38), prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is taken prisoner (22:39-53), Peter's denial and Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin (22:54-71), Jesus' trial before Pilate and Herod (23:1-26), Jesus led to Golgotha and the women weep (23:27-31), He is crucified (23:32-49), buried (23:50-56), He arose from the dead and appeared to many (24:1-43), instructs His disciples to preach in the power of the Holy Spirit Who will be given to them after He ascends into heaven (24:44-53).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Who was Luke and what do we know about him?

2. What five things can you mention that are

included in the idea of "organic inspiration."

3. How can we be sure that Luke was the author of this Gospel?

4. Who was Theophilus and how does the fact that he was a Greek influence the writing of this gospel?

5. What was Luke's purpose in writing this gospel and why is it important that Christ be set forth as the Son of Man?

6. Illustrate from the Gospel itself that Luke was informed of the political situation of the world of his day and that he saw it as having a bearing upon the work of Christ.

7. Why do we not have a biography of Jesus in any of the Gospels?

8. How can we explain the emphasis on Mary (see 1:28 and 42), over against the "Mariolotry" of the Roman Catholic?

9. How do we explain Luke 9:60?

10. Review the outline of events recorded of Luke's Gospel and compare it with that of Matthew and Mark in order to note differences.

GUEST ARTICLE

Alms

Rev. James Slopsema

"Alms" is a word seldom used in our everyday vocabulary. Perhaps some reading these pages do not know what alms are. This only goes to show that alms do not have much of a place in our life. This ought not to be. Alms are to be the concern of every one of us.

"Alms" is a Scriptural term to denote gifts to the poor. The basic meaning of the word is mercy. Mercy is the pity or compassion that we feel for those in need so that we seek to help them. From this basic idea of mercy the word "alms" came to mean mercy and compassion specifically for the poor. Finally this word came to mean gifts of mercy to help the poor in their need.

Understanding alms as gifts of mercy, we see that all true alms have their source in Jesus Christ. As the Mediator of God's people, Christ is very merciful. We read repeatedly of the compassion that Jesus had for the multitudes that followed Him during His earthly ministry. They were as sheep without a shepherd; and Christ had compassion on them. Moved by this compassion Christ offered Himself a sacrifice on the cross to obtain for His people all the blessings of God's salvation. This alone is sufficient to supply the true needs of God's people. And even now Christ sits at the right hand of God, bestowing upon us the blessings of His cross. we are assured in the Scriptures that Christ knows all our needs, is deeply touched by our needs, and in His mercy richly supplies all our needs.

This mercy of Christ also extends to His people in poverty. To be poor is to be in distress. When we no longer know what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed we are in distress. It is a terrible thing to be poor, not knowing how we will pay the rent and tuition and countless other bills. Agur in Proverbs 30:8 prays to God that he may never become poor. But God's people do become poor. Christ assured His disciples shortly before His death that the church would always have poor. Christ's mercy extends also to them in their need. Christ is filled with compassion, is deeply touched by the poverty of His own. And in His abounding mercy He will provide for them.

Christ will help the poor in such a way that they taste and experience *His* mercy and care. Hence, He has commanded the church to provide for the poor. Certainly the poor do not taste the mercies of Christ through the benevolence of the world. The world stands opposed to Christ. The world is the enemy of Christ. The world is essentially antichristian. Receive the help of the world and all you experience is the mercy of Christ's enemies. To taste the mercies of Christ the poor must receive help from those who stand with Christ, who represent Christ, who can bring the comforting Word of Christ. Hence, Christ has charged the church to provide for her own poor. She is to do this through her deacons who collect alms from the congregation and distribute them to the poor. In this way the poor taste the mercies of their fellow-saints and the mercies of Christ.

Obviously we all have a duty with respect to alms. That duty is first to give alms for the relief of the poor. Has God prospered you? Do you have more than is necessary to provide for your daily

needs? Then the calling of Christ is, "Sell what ye have, and give alms" (Luke 12:33).

This command of Christ has often been ignored. Repeatedly the poor in the church have found that there were no alms to be had from the church, or that the alms of the church were beggarly. Nor has the reason for this sad situation always been that the church herself was too poor to provide. Frequently the reason has been the carnal-mindedness of the church and her members. Often the situation prevails in the church that there are those who can provide for the poor but who will not. For the church to provide sufficiently for the poor, sacrifice and self-denial are often required on the part of those whom God has prospered. Some must lower their standard of living that others may have a living. And the saints of God are not always willing to do this. This is carnal-mindedness!

It is exactly this carnal-mindedness against which Christ warns in Luke 12 where we are charged to give alms. We are not to seek what we shall eat or what we shall drink. Nor are we to be like the rich fool who asked his soul what he would do with all his goods and finally decided to hoard them in new and bigger barns. Rather we are to seek first the kingdom of God. And in that spirit we are to sell what we have and give alms to the poor.

We are to be guided and motivated especially by two principles in our almsgiving. The first principle is that we are no more than stewards over God's goods. The material abundance we possess is not our own. It is God's. He has merely entrusted these things to us as stewards. Consequently we are not at liberty to use our riches according to our own whim or for our own personal gain. As with all things our earthly riches must be used strictly in the service of God and the kingdom. And that means that we must use our abundance to support the poor whom Christ will assist in His mercy. To refuse to support the poor when we have been prospered by the hand of the Lord is to be unfaithful servants!

The second principle that must motivate us in almsgiving is that we ourselves have received the mercies of Christ. In His great mercy Christ has sacrificed Himself on the cross to earn for us the salvation of God. In that same mercy He showers us with blessings too numerous to count. He provides us with all things in great abundance. This then places us before an obligation—to show mercy unto others even as Christ has shown mercy to us. One very important way we are to do this is to take pity on the poor and give alms liberally for their support. This is an obligation. It is more than an obligation. It is the inevitable fruit of the mercies of Christ. One who is not moved with compassion at the sight of the poor in the church, one who refuses to sacrifice for the sake of the poor, one who can not bring himself to give alms is one who has never tasted the riches of Christ's mercy!

How do we take care of the poor? Do we provide for them? Or do we through our neglect force them to turn to the world for help? Here we meet a true test of our spirituality.

Those whom God has prospered are not the only ones who have a responsibility with respect to alms. The poor also have a duty toward alms. Their duty is to receive the alms of the church in humility. If there is a hesitancy in the church today to give alms liberally, there is equally a hesitancy to receive alms. It seems as though the poor in the church are more inclined to go to the world for help in the form of government welfare than to the deacons of the church.

There are several reasons for this. One reason is that the world will provide more liberally than the church as far as financial assistance is concerned. It is simply a known fact that the government's "poverty line" is much higher than the church's. Financially the poor do much better with the world than with the church. But let's understand what the poor do when they go to the world for help for this reason. First, they shun the mercies of Christ. For it is through the alms of the church that Christ shows His mercy to the poor. And what is the motivation for turning away from the mercies of Christ? What motivates the poor in this situation is a few more dollars and cents, a little more of this earth's riches. This is nothing but carnal-mindedness. The poor have no excuse when they do this.

Another reason why the poor sometimes turn to the world rather than to the church is that the world is not too concerned about stewardship. Sometimes the poor are poor because of their own poor stewardship. Mismanagement, living beyond one's means, being a spendthrift frequently explain the poverty of the poor. And the state does not concern itself overly much about these kinds of things. The deacons of the church, however, do. What a temptation to go to the world and maintain one's high standard of living rather than go to the deacons and be admonished concerning stewardship. Here we see that the mercies of the world are cruel. When the world helps us it is usually to our own spiritual harm. This is a case in point. By paying little attention to the stewardship of those who receive its benevolence the world not only condones poor stewardship but actually encourages it. We can be poor stewards and still receive the help of the world. The more we mismanage, the more we receive. But let us not forget: we will one day be judged according to how we conducted ourselves as stewards over God's goods.

Let not the poor avoid the deacons in the time of need, for fear of being admonished for poor stewardship. Perhaps that form of Christ's mercy is their greatest need.

Let us all make alms an important part of our life. If God has prospered us, let us show mercy to the poor even as we have received mercy. Let us show that mercy by giving alms liberally. And if we are poor, let us seek the alms Christ has provided for us in His mercy. Doing this we will all be rich, rich in the salvation of God.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Missionary Methods (2)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

We have repeatedly made the point that the chief task of the church in its mission work is the preaching of the gospel. In other words, mission work consists mainly in the preaching of the Word of God. This is what the missionary must do both publicly and from house to house (cf. Acts 20:20). In our study of missionary methods we wish to examine the preaching of the apostles especially, and other aspects of their work as that is recorded in the Epistles, but especially the Book of Acts. There are several sermons recorded in Acts which we propose to study. These sermons are recorded for a reason, not merely for historical interest. We can and, indeed, we must learn from them. If we wish to know what the church must preach and how the church must preach on the mission fields we can do no better than to pay attention to apostolic preaching.

Since the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost marks the beginning of the work of the exalted Christ in gathering His church out of the nations we begin with that event. When the day of Pentecost was fully come the Spirit was poured out upon the one hundred and twenty. The signs of the Spirit's presence were the sound of a rushing mighty wind, the cloven tongues like as of fire, and the speaking in tongues. A large multitude gathered, to which the disciples preached. This multitude which was from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5) was amazed to hear the disciples speak in their various tongues the wonderful works of God (vs. 11). Some doubted as to the meaning of it all, while others mocked saying the disciples were drunk. At this point Peter rises and preaches his sermon. To this sermon, recorded in Acts 2:14-40, we direct our attention. From it we can learn much about proper preaching in the mission context.

If the reader will consult his Bible he will notice that Peter comes with no gimmicks, no sophisticated sales pitch, and no slick Madison Avenue prepackaged gospel appeal. There is a good deal of writing and talk in Missiology these days about the proper approach on the mission field. How ought the missionary to approach people? How can he best approach them and present the gospel in order to win them for Christ? The whole assumption is that with the proper approach one will be successful in winning souls, and with an improper approach he will not. Let us learn from this example of Peter. What did he do? He was faced with a tremendous opportunity. He stood before a multitude of people who numbered in excess of three thousand. And they wanted to know what was going on. How was it possible for these unlearned men to speak in all these languages? What did Peter do? He did what every missionary and minister of the Gospel must do. He simply expounded the Scriptures! Peter told them that what they witnessed was spoken of by the prophet Joel. Then the Apostle quoted Joel 2:28-32, where the prophet speaks of the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh. Then Peter showed them from Psalm 16:8-11 that David spoke of the resurrection of Christ. And from verse ten of that Psalm the Apostle showed that David spoke of the ascension of Christ to the right hand of God. Peter expounded the Word of God. He simply preached Christ crucified and raised and exalted at the right hand of God from the Holy Scriptures.

This was the content of that sermon: Christ crucified. Jesus of Nazareth, Whom they knew from the miracles, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, was crucified by their wicked hands. This Christ was raised up and He has shed forth the Holy Spirit, "this which ye see and hear" (vs. 33). The conclusion is this: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assured-

ly, that God hath made that same Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (vs. 36). Note well that in preaching Christ crucified the Apostle preached sin. In fact, in rather blunt language Peter told them that they had taken the Lord's Christ with their wicked hands and crucified Him. That simply meant that, apart from the Christ whom they wickedly crucified, they stood condemned. If, therefore, the church will be faithful in its preaching to the nations, it must preach the great theme of sin and grace. It must mince no words. The church must declare to all who hear that they are depraved, wicked sinners. The church must preach that their only hope is in Christ crucified. The church must not be afraid to do this. Peter was not. We must follow his example in our mission preaching.

Because the sermon is Christocentric it is Theocentric. Peter preached God in all His sovereignty and glory. God did the miracles and wonders and signs by Jesus so that Jesus was approved of God among the Jews. Christ was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Note that! The Apostle did not hesitate to preach the counsel of God. That is profound and deep doctrine! God raised up Jesus from the dead. God did not suffer His Holy One to see corruption but He raised Him up and exalted Him at His own right hand. Christ received the promise of the Holy Spirit from God the Father. In sum, God made Jesus both Lord and Christ through the terrible way of the crucifixion. That was the message the Apostle preached that day. The very heart of it was God in all His sovereignty and great glory as revealed in the crucified, raised, exalted Lord Christ. It was, as Herman Hoeksema was fond of saying, no "gospel on a thumbnail," it was no simple Sunday School lesson. Peter did not come with some easy steps to finding happiness in Jesus. That sermon of the Apostle was full of sound doctrine and based on an exegesis of the Old Testament Scriptures. It is precisely that kind of preaching which is needed on the mission fields in our day. Altogether too much mission preaching is far too superficial and, worse than that, a corruption of the gospel. Certainly it is true that the truth must be explained carefully and in language that people who have had no contact with the gospel can grasp. It is also true that the whole counsel of God must be preached. That is what Peter did and, as we hope to see, that is what Paul did. That, therefore, is what we must do.

Exactly because, in faithfulness to the infallible Scriptures, Peter preached God in Christ, there was no well-meant offer in the Apostle's sermon. Peter did not offer salvation in Christ to that multitude. He did not tell them they had the will to choose Christ nor did the Apostle urge them to do so with some kind of "altar call." Some among the multitude were pricked in their hearts as a result of Peter's sermon (vs. 37) and they said, "...Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's response was, "repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (vs. 38). The Apostle did not beg or cajole or offer. He commanded them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Those verbs are in the imperative! Peter continued by giving the ground for this double command: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (vs. 39). The Apostle preached the command of the gospel and the particular promise of the gospel. That promise is unconditional and particular. It is to you and your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. For that reason they must repent and be baptized. In addition we are told that Peter testified and exhorted with many other words saying, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (vs. 40). In the hearing of that vast multitude the Apostle preached the particular Gospel of Scripture together with its particular promise. He simply commanded those who had been pricked by the Holy Spirit in their hearts through the sermon to repent and be baptized. In the light of this evidence the charge that the Reformed churches which preach a particular gospel and promise have no gospel to preach, especially on the mission fields, is sheer nonsense. Peter preached the only gospel and promise that Scripture knows. He preached the gospel of sovereign grace in Christ, in Whom alone the multitude then, and we now, find remission of sins.

By anyone's standards the Apostle was "successful." Approximately three thousand souls gladly received the Word and were baptized. These continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship (vss. 41, 42). That was the fruit of Peter's preaching that first Pentecost. Let the missionaries of God's Church go forth into the nations of the world, preaching and teaching that same precious Gospel of sovereign grace in Christ which gives the glory to God. That preaching will bear rich fruits. Perhaps there will be no multitudes of three thousand. There will, however, be fruit. The elect will be pricked in their hearts and they will gladly receive the Word and be baptized. Unbelievers will scoff and oppose and even persecute. They shall perish. In both we triumph in Christ, and in both we are a sweet savor of Christ unto God (II Corinthians 2:14-17).

Study the Standard Bearer

Book Review

PHILOSOPHY AND SCRIPTURE, a study in Old Princeton and Westminster theology, by John C. Vander Stelt; Mack Publishing Company, 1978; 354 pp., $12.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This book was written by a professor in Dordt College as his doctoral dissertation. Without any direct reference to the A.A.C.S., it has as its main purpose a defense of the teachings of the A.A.C.S., especially as these teachings apply to the doctrine of Scripture. It is indicative of the fact that A.A.C.S. views are being held in Dordt College and taught openly. I write this because this has sometimes been denied; this book is proof of the truth of this assertion.

The approach which Vander Stelt takes is a lengthy discussion of the views of Scripture as maintained by leading Princeton and Westminster theologians as these views were taught in Princeton College, Princeton Theological Seminary, and Westminster Theological Seminary. An analysis of these views makes up the major part of the book. It is from an analysis of these views that Vander Stelt proceeds to a critique of these views and, by this critique, paves the way for a discussion of the views of the A.A.C.S. on the doctrine of Scripture.

This book was not sent to the Editorial Office of the *Standard Bearer* for review; it was sent to me by an individual who asked me to write a review with a view to the threat which the teachings of this book constitute in the teachings of Dordt College and in the propagation of A.A.C.S. doctrine in general. I agree that the point is sufficiently worthwhile to discuss the matter in our paper.

In his analysis of the views of Scripture as held by the Princeton theologians (John Witherspoon, Samuel Smith, Ashbel Green, James McCosh, Archibald Alexander, Samuel Miller, Charles Hodge, Archibald Alexander Hodge, Benjamin B. Warfield, Francis Patton, Caspar Wistar Hodge, Jr., J. Gresham Machen, and Cornelius Van Til), Vander Stelt's chief criticism is that they were influenced in their thinking by Scottish Common Sense Philosophy. Their commitment to Common Sense Philosophy made them basically dualistic on their views of the relation between the natural and the supernatural, body and soul. All the Princeton theologians adopted the presuppositions of this philosophy to a greater or lesser degree. Tension over this issue brought about disagreement between those who emphasized God's transcendence and its corollary, God's revelation to man, and those who emphasized man and his role in Scripture. Or, to put it another way, the tension was between those who emphasized that Scripture was God's work with the result that Scripture was infallibly inspired, and those who emphasized the human factor in Scripture. The former stressed the objective character of revelation and put the stress on infallible inspiration.

The issues were, in Vander Stelt's judgment, more complicated than that and involved the relation between Scripture and the Word of God in creation, faith and reason, science and theology, etc.; but this is the central issue as it is developed in the book.

We are not of a mind to enter into the detailed and involved argumentation of the book in this review. That would serve no good purpose. We may comment, however, that Vander Stelt's charge that the Princeton theologians were sometimes rationalistic in their theology, in the sense that they appealed to natural reason in support of certain truths, is a correct one. However, Vander Stelt's assertion that their rationalism was a dominating motif in their theology is wrong. Furthermore, the Princeton theologians also taught, as Vander Stelt maintains, that truth is reasonable. Vander Stelt faults them for this as evidence of rationalism. I suppose that one can argue concerning the meaning of the "reasonable," but the fact is that the truth of God's revelation is indeed reasonable, for if it is not, true knowledge would be impossible.

In how far Common Sense Philosophy indeed influenced Princeton I leave an open question. There is some evidence that Vander Stelt is correct in this, and others have pointed out the same thing. But into this we do not intend to go. We are, for purposes of this review, interested in the whole question as it relates to the inspiration of the Scriptures.

That the Princeton theologians believed firmly in the infallible interpretation of Scripture is known to all. That a convincing case can be made for the assertion that this view of the Princeton theologians derived from their basic commitment to Common Sense Philosophy is not so clear. Vander Stelt never says as much, but the implication is clear that any one who holds to such a view of Scripture is also guilty of rationalism and philosophical formulation of this doctrine.

> We have seen in the previous chapters how it was indigenous to the genius of the Old Princeton theology to be a historical embodiment and manifestation of

> the culturally highly formative movement known as Scoto-American CSP (Common Sense Philosophy). As an inherently dualistic philosophy, this movement was predicated on the ontological distinction between an unmoved First Cause and (a number of) moved secondary causes, and on the anthropological dualism of a physical and a psychical world.
>
> In the measure that its confessional intentions and stance were scriptural, Presbyterian theology could not wholly accept this dualistic way of thinking. It faced, therefore, the formidable task of having to harmonize two fundamentally contrasting ways of thinking. In connection with this attempt, it must be said that inasmuch as Presbyterianism was not fully scriptural, particularly in its philosophical understanding of reality and man, it jeopardized its own otherwise confessionally orthodox aims and position, and it thereby created a number of misleading and deeply troublesome theoretical problems. p. 272.

What is Vander Stelt's position on these matters? It is clear from this book that his basic presuppositions are the views of the Word of God as developed by the Amsterdam philosophers (Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven) and carried over into this country by the A.A.C.S. His views come out in several passages in the conclusion of the book, all of which we cannot quote. But a few references will be of help. In criticism of Princeton he writes:

> In the Princeton conception of God's revelation, revelation came increasingly to be thought of as the Scriptures. This narrowing of focus to the Bible jeopardized the full scriptural meaning of all revelation, including creational revelation. What was lost sight of in this way of thinking about revelation was not only the integral unity of reality . . . and the radical oneness of man . . . but also the true unity of all revelation.
>
> The reason for such a growing preoccupation with a reduced meaning of revelation is that the Word of God was thought of almost exclusively in terms of its incarnation and inscripturation. However, the Word of God as the One through whom God created the world was either relegated to the wings or thought of in terms of a mild form of Logos speculation.
>
> This reductionistic understanding of the Word of God resulted in the growing tendency of Princeton theologians to find the truth character, that is, the certainty, of all reality in a Bible conceived of primarily as a system of truth. p. 309.

Vander Stelt's distinctions between various aspects of the Word are evident from the following quotes:

> Scripture itself is not to be equated with this Word. This Word is in a sense presupposed in the Scriptures. p. 316.
>
> From the recognition of the distinction (not a disjunction or a separation) between the written Word and the mediating Word proceeds the possibility of knowing that the God of the Scriptures is also the God of creation and that, therefore, there must somehow be a confluence of scriptural truth with the truth of creational revelation. p. 317.

The emphasis on the creational Word in A.A.C.S. thinking comes out clearly in his teaching that the creational Word is also normative:

> Without proper recognition of the existence and *normativity* (our emphasis) of the creation Word, reality is deprived of a necessary ordering principle. p. 317.

The point of this distinction is that the creation Word has a certain normativity apart from the Scriptures and becomes, as such, the basis for the development of Christian thought in other spheres of life than the Church. Into this area Vander Stelt does not enter, and we shall not touch upon this aspect of A.A.C.S. thinking in this review. It is his view as it affects his doctrine of Scripture that is of interest. On the basis of this distinction Vander Stelt rejects the historical doctrine of inspiration and its corollaries, Scripture's infallibility and inerrancy.

> The real problem that lies at the source of this way of thinking about inspiration and the original writings of Scripture is the element of supernaturalism that is basic to the philosophy of theism.
>
> This emphasis on the supranatural origin of Scripture presupposes an erroneous way of thinking about the relationship between God and man's activities. It tends to minimize what is human or natural. p. 326.

What is Vander Stelt's own view on Scripture? This is not clearly set forth in the book, but he suggests in various places that the Scriptures are man's response to the Word of God. He writes:

> In this Mediator lies man's security. To point out this Mediator to the sinner is Scripture's unique and indispensable function. Knowing this clear and sufficient message of redemption, the believer is challenged to confess the infallibility or trustworthiness of what God has done and is doing in Jesus Christ and through His Spirit. The inspiration of Scripture has been determined by the content of this unique revelation, and that content calls for man's confession of (not speculation about) that to which *theopneustic* Scripture refers.
>
> *This confession character of Scripture* (emphasis is ours) and of man's response to it in no way limits (in any neo-Kantian sense) the nature, content, and knowability of Scripture.
>
> The theopneustic nature of Scripture indicates that God has taken man into His service, worked in and through him, maintained his full creatureliness or humanity, and has thus authorized him to make known in a human-apostolic way His love.

There are various other elements included in Vander Stelt's attack on Scripture, but these come to the heart of the matter.

Nor can we include in this review a detailed analysis of these views. Much has been written on them already and it would not be worth our while to reproduce what has already been said. The following remarks will have to suffice.

In the first place, the view of the A.A.C.S. and of Vander Stelt on the Word of God is erroneous. It is ironic to say the least that Vander Stelt accuses the Princeton theologians of rationalism, while his basic position, his view of the Word of God, is thoroughly philosophical and rationalistic. And let it be clearly stated and understood that one's conception of the Word of God must come from Scripture (Cf. e.g., Proverbs 8, John 1:1-14, Hebrews 1:1-3, Col. 1:15-19, etc.) and not from the philosophizing of the A.A.C.S. If only those philosophers will receive the teaching of Scripture, they will find the true and proper distinctions and unity between the various aspects of the Word of God.

In the second place, Vander Stelt gives to the Word of God in creation a normativity alongside of and equal to (superior to?) that of Scripture. He writes, e.g.:

> Although Scripture is the only (written) Norm for the redemption of reality, it is not the only source of all forms of truth. The reduction of God's Word to Scripture has fostered the theory that only in Scripture, not in creation, the source of truth is to be found. With the creational foundation for scientific truth removed, however, all ultimately reliable truth is thought of biblicistically, as having its empirical anchor in the Bible. p. 320

Again, we cannot go into detail on this question, but it is a rejection of Calvin's correct description of the relation between the Word of God in Scripture and in creation. Calvin describes the Scriptures as the eyeglasses through which alone we are able to see the Word of God in creation. Vander Stelt wants none of this.

In the third place, and in connection with this, the A.A.C.S. refuses to reckon with the seriousness of sin. Not only did the entrance of sin in the world bring about the curse upon this creation so that the Word of God there cannot be heard any more because it is drowned in the word of the curse, but man himself became so depraved that he is blind to that Word of God. The Scriptures are indispensable.

In the fourth place, in his interest in preserving the human element in Scripture, Vander Stelt loses the Scriptures altogether. He may inveigh ever so strongly against the Princeton theologians and against the historical view of Scripture's infallibility, but he will never succeed in destroying the fundamental truth that Scripture is *God's* Word and God's Word alone. It is given by God by divine inspiration so that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"; it is God's infallible and inerrant record of His own revelation in Jesus Christ His Son; it is the Scripture before which we must bow in total and humble submission with the prayer of Samuel upon our lips: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." It is the abiding hope and comfort of the child of God in all this life. If Vander Stelt, *c.s.*, would understand and believe that Scripture is part of the wonder of grace, the miracle of salvation in Christ, then he would not trouble the Church with all these erroneous ideas.

Finally, if Dordt College has committed itself to this position it has lost the Scriptures and the foundation for a truly Christian college.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 25, 1981, the Lord willing, our parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. RAYMOND BRUINSMA will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren thank our Heavenly Father for the years of love and Christian education they have given us. It is our prayer that our Covenant God will continue to bless them and keep them in His care.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children: To such as keep His covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them." (Psalm 103:17, 18).

James and Kathy Bruinsma
Kristen, Ryan

James and Lois Rau
Carol, Cheryl, Kimberly, Rodney

Jerrold and Martha Bruinsma

Karen Bruinsma

NOTICE OF LECTURE!!!

On Wednesday, April 22, 1981, at 8 P.M., Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Pastor of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church will speak on the subject: "SALVATION: GOSPEL OR OFFER?"

This meeting will be held in the Hull Protestant Reformed Church, 1204 Third St., Hull, Iowa.

We invite all residents in this area to attend this meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Seminary Faculty has licensed Seminarian Jon Smith to speak a "word of edification" in our churches under faculty supervision.

H.C. Hoeksema, Rector

NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on May 13, 1981 at the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk three weeks prior to the convening of the meeting.

Jon Huisken
Stated Clerk

THE STANDARD BEARER
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

SECOND CLASS
POSTAGE PAID AT
GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.

Report of Classis West

March 13, 1981

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in Loveland, Colorado on March 4. After devotions centering around a brief exposition of I Timothy 4:13, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine," Rev. M. Kamps presided over the Classis. Elders B. Haak, M. Straayer, and C. VanDonselaar were delegated to Classis for the first time and signed the Formula of Subscription. Classis bade farewell to Rev. Flikkema and Rev. Miersma, who had accepted calls to churches in Classis East.

Classis received reports from several committees. The report of the Board of Trustees informed Classis that Classis had received an "Accounting" of the estate willed to Classis some time ago. Copies of this "Accounting" were sent to all of the Consistories of Classis.

Classis adopted the following schedule of classical appointments.

Redlands: May 24, 31, June 7 - Cammenga; June 14, 21, 28 - Bekkering; July 12, 19, 26 - Kuiper; August 9, 16, 23 - Koole.

Isabel: March 22, 29 - Lanting; April 5, 12 - Moore; April 26, May 3 - Kamps; May 17, 24 - Kortering.

This schedule is conditioned by the churches getting supply from retired ministers or from the Seminary.

Requests for subsidy from Edgerton, Edmonton, Houston, Isabel, and Pella in the amount of $54,400 were approved and sent on to Synod.

Classis granted the request of Redlands for permission to "contact the churches in Classis West to schedule collections for our new church building program and to forward to Synod our request to contact the churches in Classis East for the same purpose."

A protest of a brother against the decision of Synod 1980 to adopt the 1976 study committee report on baptism on the mission field was sent to Synod without recommendation by the Classis.

In executive session, Classis responded to a specific request of a Consistory for help for the proper government of their Church in connection with the Questions of Article 41 of the Church Order.

Classis conducted the necessary voting, with these results:

- Stated Clerk: Rev. Engelsma
- Assistant Stated Clerk: Rev. Bekkering
- Classical Committee: Rev. Kamps
- Delegates **ad examina: Primi** - Rev. Lanting (3 year term) and Rev. Slopsema (1 year term); **Secundi** - Rev. Cammenga (3 year term) and Rev. Bekkering (1 year term)
- Church Visitors: Rev. Kortering and Rev. Lanting.
- Delegates to Synod:

Ministers

Primi	**Secundi**
Engelsma	Bekkering
Kamps	Lanting
Kortering	Moore
Kuiper	Slopsema

Elders

Primi	**Secundi**
A. De Jong (So. Holland)	E. Bruinsma (Loveland)
G. Griess (Loveland)	P. Brummel (Edgerton)
E. Gritters (Redlands)	B. Haak (So. Holland)
M. Straayer (Edmonton)	C. Van Meeteren (Redlands)

The Fall meeting of Classis West will be held in Hull, Iowa on September 2, 1981, the Lord willing.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk