

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

...What is astonishing is that not only do men defy all authority as they break the law, but society asserts that this new lawlessness is law.....*That* has never occurred before. Never before has society made an effort to establish that immorality is moral, or declared lawlessness lawful (e.g., legalized abortion and labor strikes).....What is this world coming to? It is clear: the End.

See "The Spirit of This Age" page 424

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MEDITATION

Moses' Decisive Choice

Rev. H. Veldman

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter...."
Hebrews 11:24-26

That we must choose is Scriptural. We read of it in this text. Then, too, we are all more or less familiar with the blessings and cursings of Deuteronomy 28, and the subsequent word of Moses to Israel in Deuteronomy 30:19: "Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." And we are all very familiar with the history of Ruth, and

with the word of Joshua to all Israel: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Indeed, to choose is for us inevitable. Choose we must and choose we shall, whether it be good or bad. Man is a moral-rational creature. His responsi-

bility is his ability to respond to God's revelation of Himself, although the natural man can give only one answer: I hate Thee. And our choice is surely inevitable. Moses, when he was come to years, when he was grown (Ex. 2:11), made his choice. He chose the people of God. We, too, must and will make our choice. Only, to choose the people of God and reject the treasures of Egypt is possible only by faith, as seeing the recompense of reward.

THE CHOICE

We read, "When he was come to years." In Exodus 2:11, referring to the same time, we read, "When Moses was grown." And in the light of history, we know that this choice occurred when Moses was approximately forty years of age.

Why did he make this choice at this time, and how must we interpret this? Was this not rather late for him to make a choice? After all, Moses was already forty years old. Is the age of forty to be recommended as the time, for example, when we should make confession of faith? Of course, this would involve us in difficulties. If we make confession of faith at the age of forty, when, then, would the baptism of our infants occur? Besides, would it be wise to instruct our young people that they may very well wait, take their time about making confession of faith?

How must we explain this, first of all, as far as Moses is concerned? First, we must consider Moses' life span. He lived to be one hundred and twenty years old. So, at the age of forty he had finished one third of his life. Hence, according to our age, he made his choice at the age of twenty-five. Secondly, we must consider the circumstances of Moses' life. He was, after being found by Pharaoh's daughter, brought up in his own home, that of Amram and Jochebed. We may safely say that Moses remained in his home sufficiently long to be instructed in all the ways and promises of the Lord. How otherwise can we explain his choice to be with the people of God? Later he was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Now it cannot be true that the learning of the Egyptians was very meager. Moses' instruction in Egypt, therefore, was very extensive. Thirdly, we must bear in mind that his choice was deliberate. There was nothing hasty about it. Fact is, he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater than all the riches of Egypt. Hence, he did some accounting, some figuring. He weighed and considered the reproach of Christ and the glories of Egypt. He was, therefore, very deliberate.

The same applies to us. To be sure, we must not delay. We may imagine that we can wait, confess the Lord whenever we choose, and in the meantime enjoy the pleasures and treasures of sin. This is wrong, and, of course, miserably arminian, as if

we determine the how and when of our confession of faith. Yet, we must also be deliberate, know exactly what we are doing.

What was this choice, essentially and fundamentally?

Moses' choice, fundamentally, was between being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and being with the people of God. On the one hand, he could be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, be viewed and treated as a royal prince in the house of Pharaoh. Imagine all the treasures and riches which would be at his disposal. On the other hand, he could cast his lot with the Israelites. He could say, I am not Pharaoh's grandson and I refuse to be called such. He could insist on being an Israelite, be known as such, and be treated as such, sharing their affliction.

Understand, Moses could make this choice. Of course, not every Israelite could make this choice. Only Moses could. On the one hand, he was born an Israelite. He, therefore, could say, I am an Israelite, and this is exactly what I want to be. On the other hand, he was now a member of Pharaoh's house. He could be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. This was indeed possible.

For us, our choice is exactly reversed. Moses was born an Israelite, but was in the house of Pharaoh when he made his choice. We are born and continue in the midst of God's covenant. Moses was in the world and Israel beckoned to him; we are in the church and the world beckons to us. Yet, our choice is fundamentally the same. We must choose to be called an Israelite, to be one with the party of the living God. And this implies that we choose to be treated as such. On the other hand, we can cast our lot with the world. I, then, care not for the people of God; I do not share their life; I care not to have anything to do with them. I am a child of the world and this is exactly what I want to be. And remember, it is either-or. Perhaps some may think that, although they may not desire to walk as children of God, they do not desire to be called the children of the devil either. However, it is either-or; we must choose between God and Mammon. We cannot love both, cannot hate both. It is either-or.

ITS CONTENT

Moses rejected the treasures of Egypt.

What these treasures are we readily understand: the wealth of Egypt which would be his as one of Egypt's princes, and also the glory and honour which would be his as of the royal family. Only, these treasures could be had only as the enjoyment of sin for a season. The "enjoyments of sin" are the enjoyments that come to us from sin. As such we interpret this expression. Riches and honour are

not sinful in themselves. But they become sinful when used in the service of sin and against the Lord. Now this does not necessarily mean that Moses served sin in the lowest, filthiest sense of the word. Moses could also choose for sin, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, in the sense that he chose Egypt's idolatry. All this he rejected.

The same also applies to us. We can have the treasures of this present time. We can have access to the riches of this world. The devil is only too eager to give them to us. However, all this we can have as the enjoyment of sin for a season. We can certainly have them if we choose them as the enjoyment of sin. Remember, however, they are only for a season.

What did Moses choose?

He chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. We need not doubt the meaning of this. Affliction and the people of God are inseparably connected. They suffer because they are the people of God. Moses, choosing to be called an Israelite, would also share their persecution and revilement. And it must not escape our attention that for Moses it was either-or. There was no neutrality here. He could not possibly have the one without the other. As the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he would stand over against the people of God; if he chose the latter, he would, of course, forfeit the former.

Besides, he also chose the reproach of Christ. This expression, "reproach of Christ," is a wonderful expression. The reproach of Christ is the reproach upon Christ. Reproach is contempt and scorn and ridicule, it is hatred in one of its worst forms. In a certain sense, this reproach of Christ is Christ's reproach because, after all, what we are we are because of Christ; that we are reproached is because Christ is in us. But this reproach of Christ is also His reproach because He is its Object. As the people of God are treated with contempt and scorn, Christ takes it to heart, views it as being heaped upon Him (which is surely true); and He will surely avenge Himself.

Thus it is throughout the ages. We, too, must choose to suffer affliction with the people of God. And this affliction is inseparably connected with us because we are the people of God. A servant is never greater than his master. As Christ said, "They hated Me, they will also hate you." And we must account the reproach of Christ greater than all the riches of Egypt. Indeed, Christ's reproach is reproach upon Christ. There is something wonderful about this. It not only seals the truth that we are Christ's, that we belong to Him, but it is wonderful to serve Christ's vindication of Himself, to suffer in order that we may be used for the purpose of His glory, that Christ may be glorified through us. And

when presently He will reveal Himself in all His love and faithfulness, in that day when all shall be made new, we shall share in His glory and Christ will be revealed as having saved His own, also and even then when our cause appeared to be utterly hopeless.

ITS POSSIBILITY

How was this possible for Moses?

Was Moses not apparently a fool? On the one hand, think of what he refused. And, on the other hand, notice what he chose. He chose affliction. Is there any hope in that? We read that he expected to be rewarded. But, upon what can he possibly base his expectation? Are not all things against him as he leaves Pharaoh's house and casts his lot in with miserable Israel? Is it not folly for him to descend from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the status of a powerful prince to the degradation of a slave?

However, he had his eye fixed upon the recompense of the reward. This reward means literally, the payment of wages due. The word means that God rewards our works, rewards the good and punishes the evil. However, how is this possible? He did this, first of all, by faith. Faith, also here, is the evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for. Looking forward to this recompense, his faith was surely the evidence of things *unseen*, the substance of things hoped for. Secondly, how was it possible for Moses to exercise this faith? Faith is, to be sure, a gift of God. But, faith also takes hold of the mind. Moses was not a fool. His faith was not contrary to reason. We must bear in mind that he had been instructed by his parents in all the ways of the Lord and in all His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob which pointed to the City that has foundations. We now understand what happened. Moses considered these things, compared the glories of Egypt with the promises of Israel, and he knew and believed that all the riches of Egypt could never be compared with the everlasting glories of Israel.

How truly this applies to us! Christ has come. God indeed rewards the good and He punishes the evil. However, Christ's work is our reward; He merited it for us, the glory of life everlasting and heavenly immortality. And we believe. This faith is a gift of God, given unto me in sovereign grace and mercy. And, believing, we take hold of Jesus, see Him at the right hand of God, love God and look forward to His everlasting tabernacle. And, seeing our present affliction, we know that it is working for us an eternal and exceeding weight of glory. And well may we say to the world: you can have all your riches and treasures, which are only for a season; give me Jesus, now and forevermore. This is our calling. This choice is wonderful and it is sure.

EDITORIAL

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches 1981

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

At the time of this writing, Saturday, June 13, our synod has not yet completed its labors, and there are still a few important items to be dealt with. Hence, my report cannot be complete. The fact that synod has not yet finished its work is not due to a large amount of disagreement and wrangling, however, but due to the fact that synod had a very large agenda, filled with important matters, and due to the fact that synod labored very thoroughly and carefully in dealing with the business of the churches.

For the first time in our history Holland was the site of synod's meetings, and the calling church was the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan. Rev. John A. Heys, president of last year's synod and minister emeritus of our Holland church, led the pre-synodical service. The text of his sermon was Hebrews 2:1, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip." A transcript of this sermon will appear, as usual, in the printed Acts of Synod for your later perusal. By the way, there is nothing official about this report, it must be remembered; it is written partly from notes and partly from memory. If you want the official decisions in their literal form, you must consult the printed Acts when they appear in a couple of months.

The Rev. G. Van Baren functioned capably and longsufferingly as synod's president, allowing ample opportunity for discussion but reminding the delegates of the need of making a decision when the time was ripe. The other functionaries were: Vice President, Rev. D. Engelsma; First Clerk, Rev. M. Joostens; Second Clerk, Rev. M. Kamps. As usual, after the various matters on the Agenda were apportioned among the four advisory committees, synod recessed on Wednesday, June 3, to allow the committees time to prepare their advice. The actual deliberations of synod began on Thursday, June 4. I have one comment in this connection. Synod could have been a bit more equitable in dividing the material among the advisory committees. As it turned out, Advisory Committee

I had an unduly large share of the work and also some of the most difficult items. Committee III finally volunteered to help Committee I by taking over some of the items assigned to the latter. I mention this not only from the point of view of equitable division of labor, but also from the point of view of the fact that if synod expects good work from its advisory committees, they should not be overburdened with work.

On Thursday, June 4, the synod began its deliberations.

One of the most important items on which synod had to decide was the spate of items related to the subject of baptism on the mission field, a subject with which our churches have been busy—and to an extent, troubled—ever since 1975, when the matter was first brought up. Last year's synod had taken several decisions in this area with which considerable dissatisfaction was expressed, and several individual protests had been filed, some of which came to synod with the approval and support of consistories and of Classis East. Not only so, but this whole question was intimately connected with our mission work. Also from a practical point of view, therefore, it was important that this question be dealt with definitively. With regard to the protests, synod decided to sustain them as far as their church political aspect was concerned. This meant that Synod of 1980 erred in renewing the motion of Article III of Synod of 1977 (the original (negative) decision concerning baptism); and it also meant that Synod of 1980 erred in not giving preferential treatment to the Study Report of the committee appointed in 1979. In a way, however, that also meant that this year's synod was back to "square one" as far as the baptism question was concerned.

When synod turned back to the Report of 1979's committee, it became apparent in the process of the discussion and debate that harmony was not to be found along these lines. However, the discussion centering about that report also helped to focus synod's attention on certain areas of agreement as well as areas of misunderstanding. And it also served to focus the attention on the question of

what constituted the main problem area in which a decision had to be reached. The result of a rather long and sometimes tense discussion was that synod referred the matter back to Advisory Committee I for new advice. This committee returned with new advice somewhat later, and this advice was adopted by unanimous or near-unanimous votes. Needless to say, everyone at synod was glad and thankful when finally this agreement was achieved. Because of the importance of the decision, I shall quote it in full.

Introduction:

Our committee felt that after many years of discussion and debate the Synod of 1981 has come to a significant state of agreement. We therefore present our advice based on this agreement as a succinct statement on Baptism on the Mission Field.

OUR ADVICE:

A. We advise Synod to declare that Scripture and our Confessions (major and minor) charge the missionary with the task of preaching and baptizing.

Grounds: Matt. 28:19 and 20, Mark 16:15 and 16.

Apostolic practice: Acts 2:38 and 44, 8:12, 13, 16 and 38, 9:18, 10:47 and 48, 16:14, 15 and 33, 18:8, 19:5.

B. We advise Synod to declare that the command of the Lord to baptize is clearly expressed in the 2nd duty of the Form for the Ordination of Missionaries, "...thou art holden if it pleases God to make thy work fruitful unto the gathering of a church (gemeente) (= congregation, HCH), to administer the Sacrament of Holy Baptism according to the institution of the Lord and the requirement of the covenant."

1. The question remains what is the meaning of this limiting "if" clause, viz. when may the missionary baptize?

2. Re this question we advise Synod to declare that this means:

a. When the preaching and teaching of the missionary is fruitful and there are proper candidates (and their households) who are Reformed in doctrine and walk. Acts 16:14, 15, 30-34.

b. This must be determined by the calling church upon solid evidence furnished by the missionary, in conjunction with the Mission Committee (Foreign or Domestic).

C. Synod declares that it is clear from the Scripture cited above and from the second duty of the missionary that this baptism must be done unto the gathering of a church (gemeente). Therefore it is crucial that a church be instituted as soon as feasible.

1. With respect to a specific field this can only be determined by the calling consistory upon the advice of the missionary, in conjunction with the mission committee.

2. The precise moment of readiness for institution cannot be legislated by Synod.

Once this important matter was out of the way, synod could turn its attention to other matters re-

lated to our foreign mission work. One of the main questions was that concerning the institution of the church in Singapore. At this writing only a partial decision has been reached on this matter, and I do not deem it wise to publish only a partial decision on a matter which was discussed long and carefully. In this matter, by the way, brother Lau Chin Kwee was given the privilege of the floor to speak in behalf of the GLTS.

From the above account, it will be clear that synod did not remain with the report of Committee I all the time, and my report is not chronological. When a committee is sent out for new advice or there are other reasons to depart from the order of the day, synod frequently turns to reports of other Advisory Committees which may have part or all of their reports ready.

Advisory Committee II had as its chief assignment matters of domestic missions. I cannot enter into all the details of routine mission matters in this connection. Let me briefly mention a few more important matters. 1) The work in Lansing, Michigan (Rev. Steven Houck) and the work in Birmingham, Alabama (Rev. Ronald Van Overloop) is to be continued. Synod passed a motion of commendation and encouragement to these two missionaries who, by the way, were present at synod and addressed us concerning their work. 2) The efforts to call a missionary for the Lynden, Washington area are to be renewed. 3) Synod decided to give partial financial support to the work in Bradenton, Florida. 4) Much attention was given to the work in Jamaica. There were many housekeeping details to be attended to. Synod decided that a policy to guide a missionary must be adopted before any missionary is sent to that field. Authorization to send emissaries on a longer term basis was given. 5) The Mission Committee was instructed to investigate whether there is a viable field in Wellington, New Zealand.

Committee II was also charged to advise Synod concerning an appeal of the decision of a consistory and of Classis East in a censure case. I cannot and need not report on this, because it was dealt with in closed session. Without violating any rule, however, I may report that this matter was given full and careful attention, that the appellant was given a full hearing, that it struck me that synod dealt pastorally with this matter and that especially the elder delegates spoke out very clearly in this regard, and that the decision unanimously upheld the decision of Classis East.

The main task of Committee III was to deal with Theological School matters. Much of this material was routine. The one matter which was not routine is the fact that synod approved the granting of a

partial sabbatical to this writer the coming school year. The purpose of the sabbatical is to give me time to do research and to write, especially in connection with the history of our churches. This proposal was initiated by my colleagues, to whom I am grateful both for the proposal and for their willingness to take over some of my school work in the coming term.

This brief report has touched only on the highlights. There were many other things before this busy synod. And there are still, at the time of this writing, a good many things to be treated. May the Lord bless the decisions reached unto the welfare of our churches and of His cause.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Mission Methods (4)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

As we continue our study of the missionary preaching of the Apostles we wish to concentrate on the preaching of the Apostle Peter to Cornelius and his household. The familiar narrative is found in the tenth chapter of the Book of Acts. Cornelius, a devout man who "prayed to God alway," was an officer in the Roman army who resided in Caesarea. One afternoon an angel of God came to him in a vision telling him that his prayers and alms were answered, and instructing him to send men to Joppa to call for Simon Peter (verses 1 - 5). Peter, the angel said, "shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (verse 6). This Cornelius did. On the next day, as the men of Cornelius were approaching Joppa, Peter went to the housetop to pray. In a vision from God, the Apostle saw heaven opened and a great sheet let down in which were all kinds of wild animals. A voice said to him, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat" (verse 13). Peter's characteristic response was, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean" (verse 14). This happened three times. While Peter doubted concerning the meaning of the vision the men of Cornelius came to the house calling for him. At the same time the Holy Spirit instructed Peter to go with these three men, "doubting nothing; for I have sent them" (verse 20). Peter accompanied the men back to Caesarea where he met Cornelius and a good number of his relatives and close friends. Peter explained to Cornelius that "God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?" Cornelius responded by relating his vision to Peter, concluding, "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (verse 33). Peter then

preached to them exclaiming, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; But in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (verses 34, 35).

Concerning this incident and the sermon of Peter (verses 36 - 43) there are several points which we ought to note. This is the first time the Word went strictly to the Gentiles. It is true that Philip had preached to the Samaritans, many of whom believed and received the Holy Spirit when Peter and John had come; but there was some Jewish blood in them (Acts 8). Cornelius and those "many" who were with him were Gentiles. Hence this is the beginning of the spread of the Gospel beyond the borders of Israel to the nations of the world. Centuries earlier the prophets had spoken of the "Day of the Lord" when all nations would "flow into Jerusalem." The beginning of the fulfillment of that prophecy takes place with Peter's being sent to and preaching to Cornelius and his relatives and friends. This is a highly significant step in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ. Evidence of this significance may be found also in Acts fifteen, where the Apostles and Church leaders gathered in Jerusalem to discuss the question of the circumcision of the Gentile converts. There Peter related the entire incident and that became one of the deciding factors in the final determination of the "Gentile-circumcision question" by the conference. There too the Church finally realized that "God is no respecter of persons."

It is to be noted as well that Cornelius was not a pagan Gentile. He was not an idolater who had no knowledge of God. In fact the passage describes him as "A devout man, and one that feared God

with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (verse 2). But it is also true that Cornelius knew nothing of Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. One receives the impression that he had never even heard of Jesus of Nazareth. It is precisely for this reason that God brings the Apostle Peter to him and prepares Cornelius to receive Peter and the Gospel which he preaches. Thus the incident serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, Cornelius and his relatives and friends must be brought to the consciousness of faith in Jesus Christ and gathered into the Church through baptism and the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, Peter and the Church must understand that the time has come when Christ will gather His Church out of the nations in obedience to the will of God Who is no respecter of persons (cf. verses 34, 35).

Concerning the content of the message Peter preached, it follows exactly the pattern we observed in Peter's Pentecost sermon and the sermon he preached in Jerusalem upon the occasion of the healing of the lame man at the gate Beautiful. The sermon is completely *Theocentric*. All of the emphasis is upon God, the Sovereign God Who is revealed in Jesus Christ Who is "Lord of all" (verse 36). The Apostle begins by affirming, "God is no respecter of persons." Those who fear God and work righteousness in every nation are accepted with God (verses 34, 35). God is the One Who sent the Word by Jesus Christ. "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all:) That word I say ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached" (verses 36, 37). It was God Who annointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit unto His ministry and saving work. "God annointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; Whom they slew and hanged on a tree" (verses 38, 39). This Jesus, Peter proclaimed, "God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly" (verse 40). The risen Christ was not shown to all the people, "but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead" (verse 41). It was God Who commanded the apostles to preach to the people. In that preaching they were to testify that it was Christ Who was ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead (verse 42). To this Christ all the prophets gave witness, "that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (verse 43).

It is perfectly obvious from Peter's preaching that God is absolutely sovereign in the whole program of redemption. Man neither conceives of it nor does he execute that program of redemption. What does Peter preach concerning man? Nothing except that it was man who crucified Jesus and man is a sinner who can be saved only through faith in the name of Jesus. It's all God. At the risk of being redundant it must be emphasized again, this theme, God, must be dominant in all mission preaching. This theme must dominate all preaching in the pulpit of the established church as well. Only this Gospel which is strictly according to the Holy Scriptures is the Good News. The missionary must not hesitate to proclaim the absolutely sovereign God in all his preaching and in all his teaching. To the degree that he fails to do this he robs the Gospel of its power, its efficacy. Indeed, to that extent he preaches a false gospel, the very antithesis to the true Gospel.

Because the Apostle proclaimed God he preached Christ, for God is revealed in Christ and Christ is of God. Peter proclaimed the good that Christ did, especially as that was revealed in Jesus' healing ministry in Galilee and Judea. The Apostle preached the cross of Christ. The heart of the message was that God Who ordained Jesus to be the Judge of the living and the dead raised Christ from the dead. Peter preached forgiveness of sins through faith in the name of Jesus. These elements must characterize the church's preaching both at home and to the nations. Notice how everything the Apostle preached fits together. Take away any one element and the gospel is lost! There can be no gospel without God, without Christ, without the cross, or without the resurrection. Without sin the cross is meaningless. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). This unlearned former fisherman preached the blessed Gospel of God in all its harmony and beauty and power. There was no undue emphasis on one element or point to the neglect of the others. Peter proclaimed the entire gospel. It was not a watered down, simplified gospel which becomes no gospel at all which Peter preached. It was doctrinal! It was meaty! It was the truth of God in Jesus Christ. Because it was all of that it was eminently practical. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, the Jew first, but also the Greek (Romans 1:16). What could be more practical than that?

While Peter was still preaching (verse 44) the fruit came a hundredfold. The Holy Spirit fell upon them and they began to speak in tongues. Through that sign God showed the Jewish Christians that indeed He "also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). Seeing this, Peter said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be bap-

tized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord..." (verses 47, 48). What a

wonder! What the church must understand is that God still performs those wonders through the proper preaching of His inspired, infallible Word.

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

"Join and Receive" Plan for Presbyterians

Three of the smaller Presbyterian denominations will be, and are, talking merger—but in a manner rather unique. Attention has been called in the *Standard Bearer* to this proposal during the past year. Details concerning various Assembly meetings are presented in the April 29 issue of the *Presbyterian Journal*:

Never before in American Presbyterian history has there been anything quite like it.

Presbyterian denominations have divided often and merged on rare occasions. But the proposal before the major assemblies of three conservative Presbyterian bodies during the next two months suggests a new course: that the largest (and newest) of the three churches simply receive the two other denominations.

Well, almost simply. Since the procedure is not a merger and not a union in the historic sense, years of negotiation and discussion have been bypassed.

But there still have been practical matters to be worked out. There are presbytery boundaries to redraw, parallel ministries to bring together, employees to take care of, and traditions on all three sides to be sensitive to.

Center stage in this ecclesiastical drama for the last few months have been the inner-church committees of the three denominations, which have met repeatedly (and often with observers from the churches looking on and listening to the process) to hammer out details.

The work of those committees is now largely done, and that part of the cast will withdraw to the wings while delegates to the assemblies themselves walk out to play their important role in the process.

The scenes will be played first at Lookout Mountain, Tenn., where the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, gathers May 22-28 for its 159th General Synod.

Then the scene shifts to Beaver Falls, Pa., where the 48th General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is scheduled to meet May 28-June 4.

And finally, the focus will be on Fort Lauderdale, Fla., during the week of June 15-19, when the Presbyterian Church in America convenes its Ninth General Assembly.

The actual documents and recommendations to come before the three assemblies, already distributed to teaching and ruling elders of the churches, (are reproduced in the *Presbyterian Journal* for study of its readers).

The proposed division of the new church into presbyteries is presented. The editor of the magazine comments:

Whether the churches will be joined we do not now dare predict. But one request we earnestly would make of the debating parties: Do not—please, do *not*—employ that standard stalling tactic so familiar in the devious ways of man-centered ecclesiastical politics, "We need to postpone action on this proposal because we have not had time enough to study it."

That one is unworthy of men who profess a high regard for perfect candor.

Let every man vote his conscience, for or against the proposal. But let it be done this year—not put off and put off and put off.

By the time this article appears in print, these assemblies will probably have made their decisions. The results will be interesting indeed. The difficulties of this kind of merger have been pointed out many times. These three denominations have similar creeds, yet they differ in important respects. The question will be how these differences will be resolved—or whether the church can live with this "diversity." These churches might decide on uniting, but unresolved differences have a way of surfacing again later—and often result in divisions once again.

*Take time to study
The Standard Bearer*

A Plea for the Psalms

In *Calvinist Contact*, January 23, 1981, Rev. J. Tuininga addresses a letter to the editor concerning the singing of the psalms:

On the matter of music, I agree with Mr. Tensen that the New Testament church should not sing *only* the 150 Psalms. At the same time, in picking songs for worship services, I find myself going back again and again to these Psalms. These Psalms are so God-centered in comparison to many of the hymns, even in the Psalter Hymnal. The latter are too often man-centered, and are too sweet and sentimental, not to say unbiblical.... I hope some of these will be eliminated in a new edition of the Psalter (Hymnal). There are indeed some very excellent hymns.... But apart from some of these, I still prefer the psalter section to the hymnal section.

I would also like to make a plea for our Christian schools to teach our children more of those versified psalms. Many of our parents and grandparents could sing many of the psalms without cracking a book. They learned them in school. Why can't we do the same? Let's use the treasure we have in the Psalter rather than concentrating on cheap gospel ditties and other frothy songs. Our children will be the richer for it.

And I would add: "Amen." We have used the psalms for song exclusively in our church services, and largely also in our schools. Sometimes we grow tired, it seems, of the old songs. One hears at times of complaints because of the extensive use of the psalms in our circles. Yet one can also be heartened in hearing pleas for a greater emphasis of the psalms in song. These are indeed theologically rich. They are not of a sickly sentimental nature—though some are indeed sentimental in a proper way. There's "meat" in the psalms and in their versification. Recently there has been a bit of revival of

interest too in these songs. Dordt College choir, with Dale Grotenhuis as its director, has prepared a number of records on the psalms—beautiful arrangements made by the director and sung by the choir. Mr. Grotenhuis, a few months ago, led also our Covenant High School Choir at First Church in Grand Rapids, in the singing of these psalms. The interest and deep appreciation of our people were seen in the large audience which gathered to listen. It was a soul-stirring presentation which brought tears to some eyes. The music was not complicated or difficult. The words were well-known and oft sung in our own churches during their services. Yet the program appeared to be appreciated above even some where more difficult music would be used, and greater effort and ability of a choir and its director would be required.

One can hope and pray that this interest and appreciation of the versified psalms develops and grows in our own midst, and that others also see increasingly the beauty and richness of the versified psalms. With shame, one must confess that it appears easier to appreciate the rich heritage which is ours—when others outside of our own churches indicate their own interest and appreciation of these same psalms.

May I add: those of us who were privileged to attend the 2000th broadcast of the Reformed Witness Hour at First Church, Grand Rapids, were again also deeply moved by the singing of the audience and choir under the direction of Mr. Roland Petersen. Several psalms were sung—the arrangements of which proved most interesting and uplifting. Cassette recordings, I understand, of this singing too are available by writing to the Reformed Witness Hour.

Remarks on Pentecostalism

The *Christian News*, March, 1981, contains an article of interest concerning Pentecostalism. It states:

...The charismatic phenomenon, though labelled as a fresh manifestation of the Spirit in the latter days has all the earmarks of a cult. If numbers is to be taken as a sign of the fact that the movement is crossing denominational lines, then what of the Moonies,

the Hare Krishna cult and numerous others isms that are sweeping the world? What of the Muslim religion itself? The fact is this should give leaders a pause as to what might actually be taking place when orthodox churchmen are taken in by its influences.

That the whole movement is based on some very faulty interpretations of the Scriptures is very evident to anyone having any workable knowledge of the

New Testament. In the first place, the term "charismatic" is a misnomer and very misleading. One might just as well speak of the "energematic" or the "diakonic" movement, since these words are also used in I Corinthians 12 to describe the workings of the Spirit. Or better yet, why not speak of the "karposaic" movement since fruit-bearing is after all the ultimate aim of the Christian life, not boasting of the gifts we have in watering and planting or whatever.

Being baptized *in* the Spirit seems to be another emphasis—not "with" or "by," when actually the New Testament Greek allows for no such subtle distinction. Always we are told in the Scriptures that the Spirit was poured out upon them—the new Christians were not immersed in the Spirit. Is there perhaps a subtle twist to reinforce immersion as the proper mode of baptism?

And then there are the "tongues." It is unfortunate indeed that this old English word, once commonly used for *languages*, was not translated *languages*. The word "tongues" carries with it a kind of esoteric meaning, a certain mystique, as if here we have some very special manifestations where people prattle in some unknown Spirit language. In fact "unknown" does not occur in the original Greek as you will note in the use of italics in the English Bible where this word occurs in I Corinthians 14. The "tongues" used on the day of Pentecost were only unknown to those who were from a different country....

The author continues, pointing out that this is nothing else than another form of ecumenism where doctrinal soundness is not a determinative factor in union. Let us too be warned against this "sect" where the individual is highly magnified and God is not truly and properly honored.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

An Answer of Peace

Rev. John A. Heys

Two more years went by, and Joseph was still in the king's prison. He had committed no crime; but one whose dream he had interpreted had forgotten his promise to report to the king Joseph's unjust imprisonment. So often God teaches us patience by bringing us into situations where we have to wait for Him to give relief. The same thoughts that went through the mind of the psalmist in Psalm 46:10 must have gone through Joseph's mind during those two long years: "Be still, and know that I am God." We deny that He is God, you know, when we are impatient and dissatisfied with His ways with us. We want, and often expect, God to jump the moment we cry. But let us understand well that, when that is the case, we assume the position of being God, and we look upon Him as our servant. All too often that is the sinfulness even in those good works which we call prayer.

All through those long years before and after the butler had promised Joseph that he would bring his case to the attention of Pharaoh, Joseph had prayed to be set free and to be able to go to his father's house once again. And although God answered his prayer, He did so in His own time, and in His own way. Seven more years will come and go, and Joseph will still be kept from seeing his father. He is set free and brought up out of prison. But seven years of prosperity come and go, and he is still in

the service of the king of Egypt. More years must come and go before he meets his brothers; and then after a while he will see his father again. It took patience, and it took faith in God. Well may we learn the truth of the song, "Be still my soul, the Lord is on our side." Repeatedly we must rebuke ourselves for behaving as though we are God and that the world revolves around us. Daily we must learn that we exist for God's glory, and not He for ours; that He is not our servant, but that we are His.

God chose to bring Joseph and his father together again in the way of three sets of dreams. Joseph was given two dreams that told him that he would be exalted above his brethren, and even above his father. Two fellow prisoners were each given a dream, the interpretation of which laid the groundwork for Joseph's deliverance out of prison. And it took yet another set of dreams given to Pharaoh that finally brought him to a position where his father would come to see him in Egypt. God is at work. He never forgets His people. And all things do work together for good to those that fear Him. We must, however, leave the working of all these things in His hands, and walk by faith in the midst of our adversities.

Note as well that two of these three sets of dreams are given to unbelievers, while the interpre-

tation is every time given to a child of God. This is so because what God does is always for the good of His church. The wicked may have to prosper for the good of God's people; and you can be sure then that they will have things going well for them. They may need reverses and troubles; and these will most assuredly come upon them. We ought to read often and carefully Psalm 73, lest we, like Asaph, envy the wicked and cry out that clean hands are worthless, and a pure heart vain. Likewise we ought to be sure in our minds that when God gives dreams—and they in their fulfillment bring to unbelievers what they call good—to those outside His church, it is a matter that is going to serve the good of His church, and not at any time the harm and destruction of His church.

This is clearly evident in this incident in Genesis 41. And it is so interpreted by God Himself when Moses is led to pen the words of Joseph in Genesis 50:20, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." The dreams of Pharaoh serve the realization of that purpose of God which consisted in saving much people alive. Certainly included in that "much people" are Egyptians who are unbelievers. That will always be the case here below. Ungodly parents must live and be healthy to bring forth children whom God will in time give a new birth with life from above. Without those wicked, unbelieving parents these children would never be conceived or born the first time with life from below. The chaff serves the wheat; and the scaffold serves the building. But God has His eye on the wheat and on the building. No man erects a building for the scaffold, or raises wheat for the chaff. And the all-wise God has wisdom far above the wisest of mortals.

And so at the right time, divinely appointed from eternity, the butler remembers Joseph and confesses his sins before Pharaoh. We read in our English translation that the butler remembered his "faults this day." The word here translated faults is better translated as sins. Used 34 times in Scripture this Hebrew word is translated 30 times as sin, once as offences, once as punishment (implying sin), and once as grievously, which literally translated would be, "Jerusalem hath sinned sin" (Lamentations 1:8). And it was sin that the butler forgot Joseph. It was that in that he broke his promise to Joseph. And we must not take that lightly. We often shrug our shoulders, pass it off as nothing of consequence to break a promise—and the divorces multiplying also in the church are instances of this—but God calls all breaking of promises sin. What is more, He presents making a promise and keeping it, even when it hurts, as a mark and distinguishing characteristic of the citizens of His kingdom. After asking

the question in Psalm 15:1, "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?" (Note: His *holy* hill), the answer in part in verse 4 is, "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." Do not argue that the psalmist speaks only of promises with an oath. That certainly is true—and marriages are performed before God's face and made in His name—but to promise and not keep the promise, even when no oath is taken, is to lie; and lying is always sin!

The butler's inability to remember his promise God used to bring to the king's attention Joseph's ability to interpret dreams. And Pharaoh's agitation and fear—note that Joseph speaks to him of an answer of peace, indicating Pharaoh's agitated state—God used to bring Joseph out of his imprisonment and to his exaltation in the kingdom.

Joseph is brought out of shame and degradation to the highest place below the king that anyone could occupy in that day. He was raised above Potiphar who had cast him without a hearing into the dungeon. Yea, because Joseph had been given authority so that all Pharaoh's people would be ruled by Joseph, he could give orders to Potiphar, and Potiphar would have to obey. Should someone refuse to bring the extra grain to be stored away, Joseph could call Potiphar to enforce the law. Quite a change has come in the life of Joseph, but also in the life of Potiphar who had dishonoured Joseph so deeply.

All this took place not simply because Pharaoh was above Potiphar, but because God is above Pharaoh and the whole creation which He made. Pharaoh asked no questions. He did not inquire into the reason for Joseph's imprisonment, did not call in Potiphar to verify what the butler told him. He believed what the butler said, because "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will" (Proverbs 21:1). It certainly is true that because of his fear and agitation Pharaoh was desperate, and he was intent on getting an answer to his dreams. Joseph was his last resort. But all this, too, was in the hand of God as He arranged all this and controlled every moment and every part of the circumstances. It is God Who is even now fulfilling the dreams that He gave to Joseph some years before this. All this is not coincidence but God working all things together for those that fear Him. And we may be sure that Joseph, when he advised the king to appoint a man "discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt," was not campaigning for the job. God moved the king to see the wisdom of having one in whom he believed the spirit of God could be found. Joseph had no way of knowing that in this way his dreams would be fulfilled; and he was not trying to help God fulfill those dreams.

There is, however, more in that peace of which Joseph speaks than what Pharaoh saw in it. In a state in which his mind was agitated and his heart was full of fear, it would be peaceful to learn that the dreams did not mean that something terrible was going to happen to him and his kingdom, that his kingdom was not those withered, thin, and east-wind blasted ears, or those ill-favoured and lean kine, so that after seven years his kingdom would begin to deteriorate. But even as the dreams were given for the sake of the church, and spoke of good for the church, so the answer of peace which Pharaoh would receive was of a peace that is solely for the church.

This does not mean at all that the wicked, those outside of the church, do not receive what *they* call good and what fills man's flesh with delight. It does not mean that God is not good to all His creatures. And that surely includes man, the highest of His earthly creatures. Countless thousands of unbelieving Egyptians ate well during the famine, and had all the food they needed during all those seven years when nothing grew in the fields. And it was good nourishing food that God provided for them through Joseph. Even so today it is good sunshine and good rain that God sends down on the world as well as on the church.

But let it be remembered that all peace comes from God through the One Whom God Himself in Isaiah 9:6 calls "the Prince of Peace." God will give no peace apart from Him and His cross. Man brought evil upon himself when in Adam he fell; but God brings peace only to some whom He saves in Christ. You can argue all you will, you can philosophize as much as you want to, but God says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all

things which are written in the book of the law to do them." And this is found in the New Testament, after the cross of Christ, and in Galatians 2:10! God does not speak out of two sides of His mouth. His right hand does know what His left hand does. And He does not bless with His right hand His church, and with His left the world.

Peace comes to us through the Prince of Peace. We do well to read that beautiful second chapter of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians where he declares that now in Christ Jesus, we who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ, "for He is our peace," and then place this next to John 17:9 where this Prince of Peace declares that He prays not for the world but for those whom the Father gave Him out of the world. It is then a very particular peace.

What is more, one error leads to two, if you do not come back to the truth. If we ignore the whole Word of God, choosing select passages to speak of a mercy and grace on all mankind that nullifies the truth that everyone is cursed who does not keep the things written in the law, either by doing so himself or having it done for him by Christ because he is in His church, we are going to corrupt the truth about God Himself. Then we will have to maintain a god who changes. Gracious and merciful he is now in this life; and he loves every man in the world. Yet he lets some of them perish! And the moment they die he has no grace, mercy, or love for them anymore. Our God's, the only true God's name, is Jehovah, I Am That I Am. He tell us Himself, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). And that can only mean that those for whom He has no grace, mercy, and love in the life to come, He did not have these for them either in this life.

FROM HOLY WRIT

The So-Called Post-Millennial Proof-texts

Rev. G. Lubbers

ONE KINGDOM — ONE CHURCH

Chapter 6

It is a rather startling fact that the proponents of Postmillennialism write volumes about the Kingdom in terms of the "golden age," but are silent in every language about the Church, the Body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in

all! Equally silent they are concerning the Church as the *elect* people of God, gathered out of every tongue, tribe, people, and nation of the earth; yes, concerning the Church as she is "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people" (people for God's own possession), a Church "which is to shew forth the praises of Him who has called them efficaciously out of darkness into God's marvelous

light" (I Peter 2:9), about all this not a word is said.

That is, however, really as telling as it is startling!

I repeat: we do not read about the Kingdom of God as they are the *citizens* of the heavenly kingdom, fellow-heirs with the saints and of the household of God, the dwelling-place of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:13-22). I can understand such silence about the Church by the Dispensational Premillennialists, who deny that the prophets saw the New Testament Church in the searchlight of their prophecy, but not on the part of the Postmillennialist, who confesses that Church and the Kingdom are the same people of God. I repeat: Dispensationalists deny that what they denominate "the Church-Age," was foretold in the promises of old; but Postmillennialists confess that the prophets foresaw the New Testament church as the fulfillment of prophecy, the promise to Abraham and to his seed.

We must at this juncture bear in mind what we have learned from I Corinthians 15:24-28, namely, that the Kingship of Christ does not end at the Parousia in the last day, when Christ officially presents the Kingdom to God the Father, and when God in that act becomes all in all. Really, God is, even now in the Dispensation of the fulness of times, very much all in all, but not so manifestly as He will be in the ages to come in the eternal state. Then we will see *fully manifested* God's glory in Christ, the Lord of lords, the King of kings. This implies, among other things, that the citizens of that kingdom will be the entire Church, the body of Christ, as kings and priests unto God! (Rev. 1:6; Ex. 19:6; Is. 61:6; Rev. 5:10; I Pet. 2:5, 9). For the kingdom and the Church are one and the same people in identity and in number; they are the same people called out of darkness into God's marvelous light. The latter is denied by Premillennialists, but this is really the doctrinal position of the Postmillennialists.

Nevertheless, we read so very little about the Church of God in relationship to the Kingdom of God in all the writings of the proponents of the "golden age" of the Kingdom before the return of Christ upon the clouds of heaven!

Now this is rather startling, to say the least. But it seems to this writer, that it is also rather revealing of a one-sidedness in presenting the truth, which leads to grave and serious errors, not only in the field of Eschatology, the doctrine of the Last Things, but also in that of Theology and Ecclesiology. It is a theory which disrupts the structural truths of the Reformed Faith, and of the sound words of doctrine contained in the Scriptures. It is rather ominous not to hear the clarion sound concerning the Holy Catholic Church: "that the Son of

God gathers, defends and preserves to Himself a church, *out* of the whole human race, elect unto everlasting life, in the unity of faith, and that I am and shall forever remain a living member of the same." Yet, the proponents of Postmillennialism claim to be Reformed, even boasting a little that they are representing the true Reformed tradition. Fact is, they do not sound the Reformed keynote of Question 54 of the Heid. Cat., Art. 14 of the Belgic Confession, Art. 7-12 of Head of Doctrine I of the Canons of Dort, or Chapter XXV, 2 of the Westminster Confession.

It is the Reformed Confessional position that the visible church in the world, which consists of the whole number of the elect, is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:23) and that the church is the Kingdom of Christ (Matt. 13:47) outside of which there is no salvation. Incidentally, if we may anticipate our articles, the "out of every nation" may not be construed or misinterpreted as indicating all nations themselves. We hope to notice this more particularly in the future.

When one reads the Bible carefully it is quite clear and evident that Jesus speaks much about the Kingdom of God: it was the great central "theme" of His preaching (Matt. 4:23; Mk. 1:14, 15). This kingdom is not earthly but heavenly, which truth is emphasized in the entire Gospel of Matthew, where the term occurs some twenty times or more, but only three times do we read: kingdom of God. Besides, in the good confession before Pilate, Jesus says: My kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). In another place we read, "And when He was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation (with outward show). Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20, 21).

There is a very significant passage in Matt. 16:18, 19 which merits our attention at this point. There we read,

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."

These are very significant utterances from the mouth of the Son of Man, Who unfolds here the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in the world. Without going into detailed exegesis of this passage, we notice the chief elements in this teaching:

1. This is the first and only time that Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of heaven, joining it with the Church, which He calls "My church." This is His *ekkeesia*, the called-out ones, called out of darkness into God's marvelous light, and that too, in every tongue, tribe, kindred, and nation. This church is the body of Christ, the living branches in the true Vine, Christ. They are those who are born again, and who, therefore, can see the kingdom of God with spiritual eyes of faith (I Pet. 1:19-22; 2:1-10; John 15:1-8; 3:3).

2. The text clearly teaches that this church stands in need of protection against the "gates of hell which would prevail against her." In this church of Christ the life that is lived is a *kingdom-life*, the life of the Kingdom of *heaven* here on earth. This life is manifested in those of whom this Kingdom consists: the poor in spirit, those that mourn in Zion, the meek in the earth, those who long for the righteousness of the Cross by faith, those who are merciful, having received sovereign mercy, those who are pure in heart and who shall see God face to face in His Kingdom, and finally, those who are the peacemakers, and who shall be denominated sons of God! Here Christ connects *very integrally* the Church and the Kingdom. He speaks of them not only in one breath, but shows how the keys of the kingdom of heaven are for the well-being of the Church (Matt. 5:2-9).

3. Only Christ is the Builder of the Church. "I will build My Church" (Matt. 16:18). That is a Divine work which distinguishes Christ from Moses. The latter is only a faithful servant in all of God's house (Heb. 3:1-6). Christ really built the church in three days (Eph. 2:20, 22; I Pet. 2:5; Col. 2:7; John 2:19). He builds His church only with living spiritual stones, the living members of the Kingdom of heaven (I Pet. 2:5).

4. Christ also clearly reveals in this passage that all who deny the content of the great confession of Peter, revealed to him by the heavenly Father, must be barred from the Church and from the Kingdom of heaven. Such must be deemed as belonging to the very gates of hell which would prevail against the church. With this in view Christ will give to Peter and to all the apostles and to the whole church the "keys of the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23; Rev. 1:18b; 3:7). These keys are the public preaching, the official preaching of the gospel, and the exercise of Chris-

tian discipline in the Name of the Lord. These keys are the strong bulwarks, the impregnable palaces of the King in Zion as He dwells in the midst of His people, the church in the world. In this church He exercises the Key of David, and calls upon His church to do so in His Name (Rev. 2:2; 14-16; 20-23). From this it appears that the Kingdom of heaven is inseparably connected with the Church; the one is not without the other in the world, in this life or in the life to come. Thus the Son of God gathers, defends, and preserves the church, elect unto everlasting life; thus only the living members abide in the church as heirs of the Kingdom of heaven forever. Thus they are God's house when they remain in the faith, firm to the end (Heb. 3:6, 14).

5. This keynote of the holy Scriptures is sounded in the Reformed confessions, which keynote is *not* the basic note in the writings of Post-millennial advocates, even though they say loudly that they are Reformed. To say the wrong thing loudly does not make it true, neither if it is said often and repeatedly. That the Church and Kingdom of heaven are basically *one* and the *same people* is not taught clearly, and it is almost forgotten in silence, to the best of my knowledge. For the position of the Reformed Churches we refer to our references earlier in this essay.

6. It ought to be clear that severing the proper relationship of the church and the Kingdom of heaven can only work ill for the proper understanding of both the church and the Kingdom. The emphasis of either of these two must needs lead to a one-sidedness which leads to heresy and error. Whatever influence goes out from the Church and Kingdom of heaven in the world must always be such that it keeps the "gates of hell" at bay, and frustrates the attempt of the forces of Satan to triumph over the church. Only when the Kingdom of heaven is established more and more in the hearts of the elect people of God, the living members of Christ's church, are such living members also the *heirs* of the Kingdom of God (Rom. 4:13, 14; 8:17; Matt. 5:5; 19:29; 25:17; I Cor. 6:9, 10; Rev. 21:7).

The lines of demarcation between the church and the gates of hell must not silently be erased, nor denied in an attempt at a world-wide Kingdom of God in the world, which embraces all nations, *as nations!*

*Know the standard and follow it.
Read The Standard Bearer.*

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Spirit of This Age (II)

Rev. K. Koole

"...but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate." Titus 1:15, 16

We continue our discussion of the spirit of this age which we have designated as the absence of all shame. We have implied that there is an internal aspect to and an external evidence of this "spirit." The internal aspect involves the hardening of the conscience. Men grow callous to every prick of conscience. Men do not feel demeaned or debased in the performance of sin, not even when they know that others know them for what they are, slaves to various passions. Nor does man find at all repulsive the observation of gross sins as practiced by others. Rather he is attracted to and entertained by them. Confront such men with their own iniquities, and they are not touched; point out to them the immoral behavior of others, and they ask blandly, "But what is wrong with that?" The conscience is seared, callous.

The external evidence of this lack of shame is gross, public immorality, which we can label "lawlessness," or in the words of Christ Himself, "Abounding lawlessness" (Matt. 24:12). Lawlessness is, in a word, defiant, flagrant disobedience. *Abounding* lawlessness puts it on a large scale, dominating every segment of society. This lawlessness refers not merely to acts of civil disturbances, such as rioting and violent crime, but this lawlessness encompasses every form of immorality and disobedience to God's holy laws. Being without shame, men know no law. God's laws of morality and subservience to the authorities of home, the church, and of state are ignored and even flagrantly defied. This is not because men are ignorant of them, but it is because men brazenly hold the laws of God in open contempt. When such a point is reached it can be said that men are without shame. They become exhibitionists, looking for an audience to applaud their sin.

Our position is that there are signs that this

"spirit" now rules society. We live in a time which resembles the days of Lamech before the flood, and of Sodom and Gomorrah before the brimstone.

When we point to the immoral excesses which infect our society we are not suggesting that sins which are committed in our day were unheard of in days gone by. Hatred and perversion have always characterized and warped fallen man. And that has always revealed itself in man's actions. We are not romanticists who yearn for the so called "good-old-days." We have no desire to turn the clock back. Yesteryear led but to today. For every sin man commits today, its parallel can be found in days gone by—everything from gluttony to murder, from insurrection to sodomy. Fallen man has never been free from these impulses or practices.

Yet there is a difference between our age and yesteryear. Strikingly, the world itself recognizes that. Significantly, they speak of the "new morality." By this term unbelieving society indicates that the change of which we have been speaking has not gone unnoticed. Even the defiled and unbelieving recognize that the moral-ethical atmosphere has changed.

From a certain point of view there is no term so poorly adapted to indicate this change as "new morality." What society is referring to is not morality, but immorality, and essentially it is not new but old, as old as fallen man and spiritual death. But the term will serve. By it society means that old norms which governed what was acceptable behavior are outmoded. New standards are to be established by which right and wrong, good and evil are to be judged. An example would be the contemporary sexual permissiveness which makes public semi-nudity and common-law marriage lawful, and which declares that sexual perversion is normal.

Now what is new is not these types of fornication. Art shows that man has long been fascinated with nudity, and history tells us that much fornication has been winked at, especially by the nobility. What is new is not the fact that men can be found overturning God's laws and demonstrating a certain boldness while doing so (though never on

such a grand scale as in our day). What is astonishing is that not only do men defy all authority as they break the law, but society asserts that this new lawlessness is law—it is right, it is good, it is necessary if the old wrongs are to be righted. *That* has never occurred before. Never before has society made an effort to establish that immorality is moral, or declared lawlessness lawful (e.g., legalized abortion and labor strikes). Always mankind has recognized that lawless behavior was a deviation, and that it must not have official approval or legal sanction, or all of society would be sucked into a raging whirlpool and disintegrate. But contemporary society has taken the bold, self-destructive step to define unrighteousness as law and morality. What can be clearer than man's insistence that the worst criminals have rights! When has society ever guaranteed convicted criminals' rights? Never until today. Such is the spirit of this age; sin is legal, and law is used to justify man's absence of shame.

What is especially reprehensible is that this "spirit" dominates not only society in its life and laws, but, as well, it has infected the historical christian church down to its roots. Lawless, depraved behavior is sponsored by the nominal christian church. *That* has never before occurred either. The foremost voice in blessing the evildoer in the way of disobedience has become the church. That she is guilty of this can be shown. She supports dissatisfied workers who strike and who may even turn to violence. These lawless ones remain members in good standing. Spokesmen for christian churches encourage and justify civil disobedience by pointing the finger here, there, and everywhere but at the real culprits of the crimes.

The church ordains not only women into the special offices (thereby showing callous disregard for clear Scriptural injunctions), but also self-advertised homosexuals. Such, says the church, are worthy examples of Christ for His flock, and through such Christ is pleased to speak His gracious, saving word, supposedly. We are not to judge them, though they show no signs of repentance or shame. They are not guilty of sin, but only have a different life-style. The guilty ones, we are told by preachers, are the ones who make these people feel guilty. So the church seeks to ease the conscience of the guilty, and condemns the righteous. This is done, mind you, in the name of the Lord of righteousness and truth. Those who cry out against such abominations are labelled as narrow-minded bigots and as the modern pharisees. What is this world coming to? It is clear: the End.

That God loved sinners, and that Christ died for the ungodly is certainly true. But that He approves

of sin? That He says that good is evil and evil is good, that is the gospel? God forbid. What shall we then say? The words of Titus 1:16 apply. "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate."

The immoral depths into which western civilization has plunged herself in all of her institutions and practices astounds. Yet for the student of the Bible it ought not come as a complete surprise, as an unexpected turn of events. Scripture plainly foretells of this state of affairs. The "spirit" governing society of which we have been talking is but the coming to surface of another "spirit" which has long been working in this world, namely, the spirit of Anti-Christ.

Having warned the church against worldliness the Apostle John writes, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that anti-christ shall come, even now are there many anti-christs: whereby we know that it is the last time" (I John 2:18). And in this same epistle the Apostle speaks of "that spirit of anti-christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (I John 4:3).

Significant, too, are Paul's words of warning in II Thessalonians 2:7-9, "for the mystery of iniquity doth *already* work: only he who now letteth (preventeth - K.K.) will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked (lit. - Lawless One) be revealed...Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders."

Throughout history that sinister, monstrous spirit of Anti-Christ, which finds its source in hell, has been working in society. It has not been fully revealed as yet, but, though submerged, at times it has stirred up society to such frothings that its strivings can not be mistaken. Meanwhile, it lurks just beneath the surface, waiting for the right "atmosphere" into which it can emerge, show its hideous strength, and be universally acclaimed and adored.

It seems evident that it is this very absence of shame which is what the reprobate, anti-christian spirit has been striving for millennia to engender. Such a "spirit" (attitude) would be in complete harmony with a spirit spawned by Satan in the abyss of hell, namely, one which completely despises God's laws. Anti-Christ would be fully at home in a society dominated by this absence of shame. They would be of the same lawless spirit. Such a society would be ripe for his appearance.

It is the very absence of shame which works to the coming Anti-Christ's advantage. Such a spirit paves the way for him. Men, having no shame, sow

the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. It is inevitable that by such lawlessness as we see about us the fabric of society shall be ripped to shreds, or, to use a prior figure, that it shall disintegrate as in a raging whirlpool. For who will save society as it self-destructs? Who will throw it the lifeline? Who else but Anti-Christ! The Lawless One will impose *his* law upon society, calling it Divinely-ordained law. Society will gladly grant him absolute power,

exchanging her freedoms for security. And, horror of whores, the church will proclaim this one "Savior."

We too must be warned against being contaminated by the pernicious spirit of our age. It threatens the very life of our churches and families. We are those whose conscience must remain undefiled. We shall focus on how these matters directly concern us in the next article, D.V.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

John—the Gospel of the Son of God (concluded)

Rev. J. Kortering

We now take up the study of the Gospel itself and see how the Holy Spirit led John to develop the exalted theme of Jesus, the Son of God.

BRIEF OUTLINE

1. The Gospel of John opens with a reference to Jesus as the Word, the Logos (1:1-18). As the Word, Christ existed before He was born (1:1). He participated in creation (1:3,4). He is the Light of the World to fallen man (1:5-13); He came into our flesh (1:14); John the Baptist came to bear witness of Him (1:15-18).

2. Before the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus revealed Himself to more and more people (1:15-6:71). John the Baptist introduced Him as the Lamb of God (1:15-34); Jesus gathered His disciples (1:35-51); He performed His first miracle, changing water into wine (2:1-11); He made His first sojourn to Capernaum (2:12); He went to the Passover at Jerusalem to reveal His authority by cleansing the temple, and He taught the people (2:13-21); He visited with Nicodemus and instructed Him concerning the necessity of regeneration and the great love of God (3:1-21); John the Baptist testified concerning Jesus, that he, John, must decrease and Jesus must increase (3:22-36); Jesus went to Galilee and on the way He had conversation with the Samaritan woman (4:1-42). In Galilee Jesus went to Cana and healed the son of the Nobelman (4:43-54); He returned to Jerusalem for the second Feast of the Passover (5:1); there He healed the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath and taught concerning the Sabbath (5:2-47); He returned to Galilee and fed the five thousand, stilled the storm, and

resisted the attempt of the Jews to make Him their king (6:1-71).

Jesus visited Jerusalem a third time during the Feast of Tabernacles and Feast of Dedication (7:1-10:39). The brothers of Jesus suggested that He hasten to Jerusalem to show His power (7:1-9); Jesus resisted this haste and eventually went to Jerusalem; there was tension in the city for fear of the leaders of the people, but Jesus entered into controversy with the people; this resulted in their trying to take Him (7:10-31). The Pharisees and Chief Priests sent officers to take Jesus. They failed, for some of them testified, "Never man spake like this man." There was division among them (7:32-53). The woman taken in adultery was set before Jesus; He exposed their hypocrisy and pardoned her (8:1-11). Jesus discoursed on the light of the world and spiritual blindness; the Jews took up stones to kill Him, but He passed by (8:12-59). On the Sabbath Jesus healed the man born blind; the Jews excommunicated this man for his faith; Jesus, however, comforted him (9:1-41). Jesus taught the parable of the Good Shepherd (10:1-21). From Solomon's Porch, He declared His divinity. This was during the Feast of Dedication (10:22-39).

3. After the Feast of Dedication, Christ entered into public confrontation (10:40-12:50). He raised Lazarus from the dead and, "From that day, the Jews took counsel together to put Him to death," (11:1-57). Mary anointed Jesus for His burial (12:1-11); Jesus entered into Jerusalem riding on a young ass; the Greeks seek Him; the Jews reject him (12:12-50).

4. The private ministry of Christ to His disciples (13:1-17:26). Before the Passover Feast, He washed His disciples' feet (13:1-20); He informed the disciples that one of them would betray Him (13:21-27); Judas was dismissed (13:27-30); Jesus instructed His disciples regarding the new commandment to love one another; He also prophesied Peter's denial (13:31-38); Jesus gave His farewell to His disciples, promised the Holy Spirit, and said He would return (14:1-16:33). The sacerdotal prayer (17:1-26).

5. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus (18:1-20:31). Jesus went to Gethsemane and was arrested (18:1-15). He was taken to Annas and Caiphas. During this trial, Peter denied Him three times (18:16-27). He was subsequently taken to Pilate for trial (18:28-19:16). Jesus was crucified (19:17-37), He was buried (19:28-42), He arose from the dead. Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John visited the tomb (20:1-10); the Living Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene (20:11-18); He appeared to His disciples without Thomas being present (20:19-23); a week later, He reappeared to them when Thomas was also present (20:26-29); John added a reminder as to why he wrote the Gospel (20:30,31).

6. The conclusion of the Gospel (21:1-25). Christ appeared to seven disciples who caught no fish; He instructed them to cast the net on the other side and they caught many; He ate with them (21:1-14). Jesus spoke to Peter, instructing him three times to feed His sheep (21:15-19); Jesus spoke concerning the future of Peter and John (21:21-23); and finally John attested to his authorship of the Gospel (21:24,25).

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF JOHN'S GOSPEL

1. As we said, the special emphasis of the Gospel is upon the divinity of Christ. The Holy Spirit led John to make reference to this in such a way that the readers might know that Jesus is the Son of God. Consider, "the Word was God" (1:1); "Before Abraham was born, I am" (8:58); "I and the Father are one" (10:30); "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (14:9); and the confession of Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (20:28). As God, He existed before He was born of Mary (1:14; 8:58; 17:5). John calls Him the Word, the Logos (1:1,14).

John was careful, however, not to deny the reality of the human nature at the expense of the divine. Current in John's day was the heresy of Gnosticism and its by-product Docetism. This view emphasized that flesh was evil. Hence when Christ became man, He did not take on a real human nature, but simply appeared as a man. John carefully stressed, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14), "and the bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world" (6:51). When the soldier pierced the side of

Jesus while He hanged on the cross, "forthwith came there out blood and water" (19:34).

Jesus is God and man!

2. John included material that substantiates the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. This is true of the miracles recorded: water changed into wine (2:1-11); healing of the Nobelman's son (4:46-54); healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda (5:2-9); feeding of the five thousand (6:1-14); Jesus' walking on the water (6:16-21); healing of the blind man (9:1-17); raising of Lazarus (11:1-44); resurrection of Jesus (20:1-29). Reference to these miracles is made in the context of setting forth the divinity of Christ. Similarly, John includes the well-known seven "I am's." In these discourses Jesus also teaches the people concerning His divine ministry: I am the bread of life (6:35); I am the light of the world (8:12, 9:5); I am the door of the sheepfold (10:7); I am the good shepherd (10:11, 14); I am the resurrection and the life (11:25); I am the way, the truth, and the life (14:6); and I am the true vine (15:1).

3. Once again we see that the Holy Spirit chose the right man for this task. Such a profound truth as the deity of Christ defies human reasoning. One could easily get caught up in philosophical terms and heavy language. Yet, John writes with the simplest vocabulary and most concise sentences so that one can identify his writing very easily by this trait. This is not to say that John suffered from limited vocabulary. The words that he does use indicate that the church at that point in time had matured to understand many difficult concepts of truth. This is indicated in his use of terms such as light and darkness, world, flesh, believe, truth, hate and love, know, abide, glorify, and such like.

4. John sets forth the ministry of Jesus to individuals. Surely, Jesus preached to the multitudes, but here in John's Gospel, we learn more how Jesus brought the Word from "house to house." At the same time, almost incidentally, we get to learn something of some of these individuals that receive such personal care. Examples are: Nicodemus (3:1-15; 7:50-52; 19:39); the Samaritan woman (4:1-26); Philip (1:43-46; 6:5-7; 14:8-11); Thomas (11:16; 14:5,6; 20:24-29); Mary and Martha (11:1-40; 12:2-8); Mary the mother of Jesus (1:1-5; 19:26,27).

5. The Gospel of John makes more references to Christ's ministry in Jerusalem and Judea than do the Synoptics. This helps us understand something of the chronology of Jesus' ministry and at the same time gives us insight into the ceremonial life of the Jews. Three Passover Feasts are mentioned (2:23; 6:4; 13:1). There is reference to the Feast of Tabernacles (7:6), Feast of the Dedication of the Temple (10:32); and one unnamed feast (5:1). From the

Gospel of John, it becomes apparent that Jesus spent more time in Jerusalem and its environs than seems to be indicated in the Synoptics. This adds some dimension to the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not!" As the Son of God, He did not come to establish an earthly kingdom in the capital city of Jerusalem. Rather He directed His people to the eternal, heavenly kingdom (6:39,40; 14:3; 21:22).

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. What do we know about the author, and can we show how God wisely chose him to write?
2. What is the special message that the Holy Spirit led John to emphasize in this Gospel, and what is the importance of this message for the

church of all ages?

3. Does the fact that John was an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus add anything to the credibility of the Gospel?

4. Discuss why Jesus is called the Word, Logos (1:1).

5. Go through the seven "I am's" and show how each one tells us something of the divinity of Christ.

6. Take the miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead (11:1-54). Show that the miracle substantiates Christ's teaching, "I am the resurrection and the life" (11:25) and that from this also He sets forth His divinity.

7. From the point of view of inspiration, did John paraphrase the words of Jesus (he wrote them at least 40 years later) or do we have the actual words of Jesus. Explain.

GUEST ARTICLE

As Many As Were Ordained Believed

Rev. R.G. Moore

When was the last time you have contemplated the Word of God as it is recorded in Acts 13:48? It reads as follows, "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." This is really an amazing statement! For we read that the Gentiles were glad at the preaching of Paul, who brought the gospel of Christ. Not only this, but they glorified the word of the Lord! They that did this had previously been unbelievers—heathen. But the fruit of the preaching is belief and gladness!

On the other hand, many when they heard the preaching of the apostles were not glad, but despised the word of the Lord. So incensed were they that they would, if it were possible, kill the apostle who so preached Christ. The unbelieving Jews did this, often stirring up a crowd against them; and also the unbelieving Gentiles did this, as in Ephesus.

In the light of this twofold reaction to the preaching of Christ, what a wonder that we read what we do in the text of Acts 13:48.

Rev. H. Hoeksema states the following truth in his, *Reformed Dogmatics*. "The preaching must be

directed not only to the elect, but also to the reprobate; not only to the godly, but also to the ungodly. It must be so distinctive that under its influence the reprobate and ungodly cannot remain, but will reveal themselves as haters of the truth of God and His Christ."

Further, Hoeksema goes on to state, "And moreover, even the elect regenerated are not perfect. There is much flesh in the church. Daily they have to strive with the desires and lusts of the flesh, and must be admonished steadfastly to walk in the way of the covenant, to hate sin, and to fight against it, and flee from it."

Such was the preaching of the apostles always, also on the field of missions. This, too, was true of Christ Himself in His preaching. Hear His word recorded in Matthew 10:34: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Such is His preaching that it even sets a man at variance with his father, and a daughter against her mother. The fruit, therefore, of the apostle's preaching was such that many despised the apostles and the word that they brought, while others were glad, and rejoiced, praising God and glorifying His Word.

Why? Why do some receive the exhortations of the Word with gladness—become humbled by it, and give all glory to God? According to many, the answer lies in the fact that some men are better than others. They are willing to have the word—they have an innate goodness that enables them to strive after the word. They open their own hearts to accept the preaching, while others *will* not.

So prevalent is this idea or theory in the church world today, that man has so constructed paraphrased versions of the Bible to change the wording of our text, so that it might read exactly in harmony with their evil theology. The result is that they make Acts 13:48 read just the opposite of the truth in-breathed by the Spirit of Christ. We take note of this by quoting from *Reach Out*, one of the versions of THE LIVING NEW TESTAMENT. Acts 13:48 reads, according to this instrument of Satan, the following way, "When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and rejoiced in Paul's message; and as many as wanted eternal life, believed."

The emphasis in this version falls upon man and his will, rather than upon God and His work. Thus the ingathering of the church is presented as dependent upon the will of man.

However, if this were true, this would be an overwhelmingly fearful thing for both the hearers and the preachers of the gospel of our Lord. Certainly, if we were to assume that the ingathering of the church was dependent upon the hearers' desire for eternal life, then it would be utterly impossible to take up the calling to preach the word of Christ. For then the salvation of Christ's church would become dependent upon the ability of the preacher to convince people to want eternal life! But natural man will not ever desire eternal life, for he is dead in sins and trespasses (Eph. 2:1). This is very evident from the preaching of our Lord, Jesus Christ. When He preached upon the mountain to the multitude, and even fed them miraculously, only a few remained with Him. Why was this true? Was not Jesus good enough in His preaching? God Forbid! Rather, Jesus explains that only those whom God draws unto Him will come to Him, believing in Him.

According to the Word of God which we are considering, the preaching of Christ is received by those ordained unto eternal life. This is wholly different! And this was extremely comforting for the apostles as they preached the gospel, as it is also for Christ's faithful servants of all ages as they go forth preaching the Word of God. May we have grace to remember this in our preaching and missionary labor.

This truth is found throughout the Scriptures. When God brought His people into the typical land

of rest He declared to them, according to Deuteronomy 7:6-8, "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor chose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." The reason Israel was redeemed out of the land of bondage and led into the land of rest is alone God's sovereign and eternal covenant love which He has set upon them, and which He promised to their fathers. God is faithful to save those whom He has called in love. He loved them eternally. He loves those whom He calls by His Word throughout the ages, for He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-4). It is the eternal ordination of our faithful covenant God that is worked out by His calling through the preaching of the gospel. Jesus explains that His sheep hear His voice, whereas those who are not of His sheep do not (John 10). In verse 29 our Lord teaches us that the sheep are given Him of His Father. Therefore, though many who are not of His sheep take up stones to slay His servants, and cut off the preaching of Christ, nevertheless, of those who are the ordained it is said "many believed in Him there."

It is evident from Acts 13:48 that the believing is the fruit of the ordination unto eternal life. For as we are ordained in Christ, so is Christ sent of God as our ordained Head to redeem us. This was the testimony of the Spirit in Deuteronomy 7:8. It is because of God's elective love alone that He has redeemed us out of the house of bondmen, whether typically or in reality.

This same testimony we receive in Ephesians 1. We are chosen from eternity in Christ unto the adoption of children, and it is on this basis also that Christ has come in our flesh, "In Whom we have redemption through His blood." It is by Christ's redeeming work that we have the forgiveness of sins, and are become righteous. And upon the basis of Christ's merits, His righteousness, He calls us out of darkness into the marvelous light of God's fellowship. He sheds forth His Spirit, making known unto us the mysteries of God's will, sealing unto us the Word.

Therefore, on the basis of the atonement and the righteousness of Christ we are united by His Spirit to Christ Himself. Thus God gives unto His chosen ones eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand.

The natural man has not been given this. He has eyes that do not see, ears that do not hear, etc. Jesus says to them, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. 13:15). It is obvious from this text that the unbelief of the wicked is also ordained of God.

But those who are ordained unto eternal life by the living God are covered by Christ's blood and are called by Christ's Word and Spirit unto belief. We are converted and He heals us. And we are given the conscious testimony of our righteousness in His blood, and thus by grace walk out of Christ in the works of faith, trusting in Him and praising God.

It is in confidence and in comfort that we are able therefore to preach the gospel of Christ. For we know that God never sends forth His word to return unto Him void, but that it always accomplishes His perfect purpose. It does this as well when the ungodly hearts are hardened, that God's power and righteousness may be revealed in their condemnation in the way of their sin, as it does when the ordained unto eternal life receive that Word in gladness.

Indeed, it is in gladness that we receive the blessed gospel of our salvation! For true gladness comes with the knowledge that the cause of our alienation to God is removed, that we have been reconciled by God to Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ. As we are justified by His blood we are now drawn unto God by His Word and Spirit. And the fruit is that we now in principle and soon in perfection will dwell in His fellowship and blessed communion.

Then, indeed, we have peace which God alone is able to give. For even our sins can no longer condemn us. Nor is any enemy able to have the victory. All things are well! Gladness is to have fellowship with God through the blood of our Lord, and to live in God's blessed fellowship as His servants.

And then, surely, as He proclaims His Word to us we glory in that Word. For it is the Word of our salvation in Christ. We cannot glory in anything else, can we? Surely not in anything we are able to do! But what we are forever unable to accomplish, the gospel of Christ teaches that God has done for us. He forgives us in the blessed Son and He delivers us unto the eternal life unto which He has ordained us. Let him that glorieth, glory alone in our God.

Book Reviews

ARE FIVE POINTS ENOUGH? Ten Points of Calvinism, by Leonard J. Coppes; Reformation Educational Foundation, 1980; 197 pp., \$4.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

The rather strange title of this book was chosen because the author is convinced that Calvinism is richer than the familiar and well-known "five points," and he is convinced that the wealth and breadth of Calvinism ought to be emphasized and publicly proclaimed. Dr. Coppes is a firm believer in the "five points" and spends a great deal of time in the book inveighing against the errors and dangers of Arminianism, but he has many positive things to say about Calvinism other than the specific doctrines of the "five points." A list of the chapter titles is a list of "the ten points of Calvinism": The Use of Scripture; The Sovereignty of God; The Covenantal Structure of Scripture; The Plan of Salvation (the chapter in which the five

points are briefly treated); The All-embracing World View; The Concept of Holiness; The Concept of Church Government; The Understanding of the Sacraments; The Understanding of Evangelism; The Understanding of Worship.

This is basically a good book and we strongly recommend it to our readers. It is, in capsule form, a good summary of the basic tenets of Calvinism and the Reformed faith—from a presbyterian perspective. It is relatively brief: that is its strength and its weakness. It is too brief to be of help in a thorough study of some of these important questions; but it is sufficiently brief to serve as a study guide in schools and societies. Each chapter is followed by a list of further reading. The section on infant baptism was, in this reviewer's opinion, especially good for a brief treatment.

The weaknesses are not many. There is an inconsistent line in some places where the author speaks

of the free offer of the gospel and of man's capability of doing moral good. But the references to these are only two or three in number and then of a passing kind. The author was quite unconvincing in his defense of sprinkling as the only proper mode for baptism when he appealed to Acts 1:5 and interpreted the "tongues of fire" which came on the believers at Pentecost as "droplets." But this latter is a minor point.

The book can be obtained either from the publisher, the address of which is: 9400 Fairview Ave., Manassas, Virginia 22110, or, the author whose address is: Box 55, Harrisville, PA 16038.

COMMENTARY ON ROMANS, by Ernst Kasemann; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980; 428 pp., \$22.50. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

Ernst Kasemann was formerly Professor of New Testament at the University of Tübingen in Germany. While not the most radical of higher critics, he nevertheless stands out in the field and shows in all his works the devastating influence of higher criticism on Bible studies. This is also about the only value of this rather lengthy commentary: it demonstrates vividly the radical reinterpretation of Scripture which higher criticism, consistently ap-

plied, brings to the Bible. To illustrate this we quote just one passage taken from the introduction to the discussion of Romans 9-11:

If it had been customary since the Reformation to read the epistle as a compendium of Pauline theology, and consequently to give undue prominence in these chapters to the question of predestination, F.C. Baur pioneered the way to a historical understanding. He made this section of the letter the hermeneutical center of the whole epistle, which as he saw it was oriented to the debate with Jewish-Christians. Christian universalism is championed here against Jewish particularism. Baur thus initiated a process which has not yet ended. By resolutely raising the question of the *Sitz im Leben* of the primitive Christianity of our letter, he also set it in the relativity of all things historical. By way of exposition of chs. 9-11 Baur, the chief witness of the Protestant churches, became first the catalyst in a radical tendency criticism of the NT, then a Janus-headed figure in the history of religions, who on the one side has been viewed in terms of eschatology as an apocalyptic, while on the other side he has been viewed in terms of the cult-piety of Hellenism as a mystic.

A commentary such as this makes a mockery of the truth of the perspicuity of Scripture. One cannot understand the commentary which is supposed to make clear the Scriptures; but rooting around in the commentary, one cannot make much sense out of Romans either.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to Mrs. Florence Bouwkamp at the death of her father, MR. JOHN KNOPER.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.
Freda Zwak, Sec'y.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 26, 1981, our parents, MR. AND MRS. ARTHUR BULT celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary.

We thank our Heavenly Father for all the years of covenant Christian instruction received through them and pray that God will bless them in the years to come, keeping them ever in His care.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." (Ephesians 5:31).

Their children and grandchildren

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY EXPRESSION

The Bible Class of the saints at the Hickley (Maine) Church express their heartfelt sympathy with Mrs. Abbie Hilton, and with her children and grandchildren in the death of their husband, father and grandfather, CLARENCE N. HILTON.

We commend them to the gracious keeping of Jehovah, who is a merciful God to the merciful, a Husband of widows and a Father of orphans, with the prayer that their hope be alone on the blessed resurrection of the saints. (Psalm 18:25, 26).

Susan Moody, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

The latest news we have from our calling churches is that Redlands has extended a call to Rev. Slopsema. Though without a pastor of their own, Redlands has continued to receive pulpit supply with considerable regularity. From Redlands' bulletins of May 17, 24, and 31 we learn that,

following Rev. Veldman's extended visit, Rev. Cammenga spent two Sundays there on classical appointment, and he was to be followed by Seminarian Deane Wassink "beginning June 7 through August, if necessary." Obviously Redlands has not given up hope that the Lord will, in His

good time, send them an undershepherd.

Speaking of seminarians, from a Hope, Michigan bulletin we are informed that Seminarian Jon Smith will be spending the summer months laboring with our Isabel, South Dakota congregation.

Although it is not unusual that our schools conduct graduation exercises at this time of the year; it is interesting to note that graduating classes of our Adams, Hull, and Redlands schools all chose the same class text: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1

Also worthy of note is the fact that our Redlands school imported Rev. Cammenga all the way from Hull, Iowa to speak at their commencement exercises. If you have read the preceding portion of this column carefully, however, you have figured out that there was no need for Rev. Cammenga to make a special trip to California to give this speech since he was there at the time on classical appointment.

We missed a lecture in our spring speech and lecture list of our last news column, that being one given in the United Methodist Church of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey by Rev. Ronald Hanco, pastor of our Wyckoff congregation, on the topic "Sovereignty and Responsibility."

Do you remember Rev. Jose Martinez? You may recall that it was he who deciphered a mistakenly addressed Spanish letter that was sent to the S.B. post office box. From a May 10 Trinity Protestant Reformed Church (Houston, Texas) bulletin we quote the following: "...we plan to have a program of slides and a talk by Rev. Jose Martinez on his former labors in El Salvador. Rev. Martinez has long been acquainted with our churches and appreciative of our faithful stand for God's truth. We plan to have a time of refreshment and fellowship following the program so that we can get better acquainted with the Martinez family." Considering this idea of getting better acquainted with the Martinez family, I wonder if they have ever considered visiting Michigan?

Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on May 13, 1981 at the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church. All the churches, with the exception of Kalamazoo, were represented by two delegates. It is significant to note that not since 1953 has Classis East met in Kalamazoo. The meeting also gave occasion for the delegates to view the new church building there.

The business of the session, except for the one item involving a request for the erasure of a baptized member, was routine.

The report of the church visitors was heard. The visitors report that all the churches were visited and they concluded their report as follows: "We

see once more the wonderful evidence of God's grace working mightily in our consistories and in our congregations."

Kalamazoo, upon review of its pastor's salary for 1982, requested and was granted a \$1000 increase in subsidy for 1982. Covenant requested and was granted permission to contact the churches in Classis East and Classis West (via synod) for collections for its building fund.

Classis will meet next on September 9, 1981 at Southwest Church.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon Huiskens
Stated Clerk