

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

But the pastors watch for our souls....If we get a hold on that idea once, then we will understand why we must yield to them and be persuaded by them. When we resist we throw our eternal bliss into jeopardy. When we carp and criticize, when we pick and bite, when we nag and condemn, then we show our callous disregard for the eternal blessedness of our soul.

See "My Sheep Hear My Voice"—page 462

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## Crucified!

Rev. C. Hanko

*Ques. 39. Is there anything more in His being crucified, than if He had died some other death?*

*Ans. Yes [there is]; for thereby I am assured that He took on Him the curse which lay upon me: for the death of the cross was accursed of God.*

*Ques. 44. Why is there added, "He descended into hell"?*

*Ans. That in my greatest temptations, I may be assured, and wholly comfort myself in this, that my Lord Jesus Christ, by His inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors, and hellish agonies, in which He was plunged during all His sufferings, but especially on the cross, hath delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell. Heid. Cat. Lord's Days 15 and 16.*

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world

is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).



The world glories in her life of shame, the Pharisee in his self-righteousness, the false teacher in the number of those whom he has deceived. But as for the apostle Paul, there is only one thing in which he glories, namely, the cross of Jesus Christ! This confession the Holy Spirit laid on the lips of our fathers who composed these beautiful statements mentioned above. Thereby we also learn to confess: I am assured!

I am assured that my Lord Jesus Christ took my curse upon Himself, and delivered me from it.

I am assured, even in the dark hour of temptation, when all the sinfulness of my depraved nature asserts itself, and my conscience condemns me as being worthy of everlasting anguish and torment of hell, that even then I may find comfort in Him Who bore my hellish torments all His life, yes, especially on the cross.

"I believe in Jesus ... crucified!"

Although our Book of Instruction places four other questions between the two that are quoted above, it is obvious from the contents of both of the above mentioned, that they belong together. Our fathers are discussing the Apostles' Creed, and therefore follows the order found there. But our fathers also clearly saw that the confession, "He descended into hell" can have no other meaning but that Christ suffered the torments of hell particularly during the three hours of darkness on the cross. Therefore we depart for the moment from the order of the Catechism to fix our attention on the two related questions and answers.

"Where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst" (John 19:18).

Crucifixion was a very painful death. In our day a criminal is executed, whether in the gas chamber, or in the electric chair, or on the scaffold, as swiftly and as painlessly as possible. But the Roman form of punishment by crucifixion was the very opposite. It was intended that the victim should suffer as long and as agonizingly as possible. The cross was laid upon the ground and the condemned person was laid upon it with arms outstretched. The hands were either bound by ropes or nailed with spikes to the cross beam, while the feet were either bound or nailed to the upright shaft. Then the cross with its victim was raised up and the base jammed into a hole in the ground. The weight of the body tore at the nails in the hands and feet, caused the arms to be drawn upward and the knees to sag, so that the back pressed hard against the rough wood, the shoulder blades and ribs crowded the heart and lungs, making breathing extremely difficult. The words uttered from the cross, either by Jesus or by the malefactors were few and but short

utterances. Meanwhile the naked body was exposed to the sun. Before very long fevers racked the body.

Crucifixion was also a shameful death. Only foreigners and slaves were subjected by the Romans to such mistreatment. The naked body of the victim was exposed as a spectacle for all to look upon in scorn. Here on the Place of the Skull hung three who were condemned as criminals, with their accusations written above their heads. Here as helpless victims of their own "crime" they suffered while the wayfarer stopped a moment to shed a tear of pretended condolence, to breathe a self-righteous sigh, or to make a sarcastic remark. Crucifixion was a sign of being rejected of God and of men; it was a slow, painful and shameful death.

But was this not equally true of the two malefactors, as well as of Jesus? To ask the question is to answer it. Surely the agony of the cross was painful for the other two, but far more agonizing for our Lord. We recall that He had been captured in the garden after His bitter struggle on the previous evening. All night long He had stood on trial. No rest or consideration was shown to Him. Instead, He had been slapped, spit upon, beaten, and generally mistreated. The cross was but a climax of all the torture that He had undergone in the last hours of His earthly life.

Christ's shame was also far worse than that of the malefactors. Our sinless Lord was spiritually far more sensitive than were Adam and Eve when they sought covering for their nakedness. He was certainly far more conscious of the shame of sin and the stare of sinful men than the children of our age, who glory in it. He was deeply aware that He was made the gazing stock of all who passed by. The ribaldry, the cutting sarcasm, the bold challenges to come down, the mockery of His power and His ministry of mercy, and even of His trust in God, cut as so many sharp knives into His soul. The chief priests and rulers, who in the depths of their hearts knew better, gloated with far more wicked satisfaction than the Philistines when they watched the helpless and blind Samson as he groped before them.

But all this does not explain the inexpressible anguish, pains, torments and hellish agonies of which our fathers speak. The Catechism refers to the death of the cross as "accursed of God." This refers to the practice in the Old Testament, when Israel hung the bodies of the slain leaders of the enemy upon a tree as a spectacle of disgrace. This is what Joshua did to the five kings of Canaan (Joshua 10:26). According to the law of Moses, those bodies might not remain upon the tree over night, because that kind of exposure was an expression of God's curse upon His enemies.



God's curse is the expression of His righteous judgment upon the guilty sinner. God declares, "Cursed be he that conformeth not to all the words of this law to do them" (Deut. 27:26). Let none of us think lightly of that curse. From the time of our conception, that curse rests upon us. Every moment of every day we only add to that curse by our evil desires, sinful thoughts, corrupt words, and wicked deeds. We transgress *all* of God's commandments. We keep none of them. Our conscience accuses us, along with the Word of God, that we are guilty of sinning against the Most High Majesty of God, and therefore deserve His righteous condemnation even to the everlasting torment of hell.

Our Savior hung between the two malefactors, representatives of the fallen human race, also of you and of me. Above their heads was written their names and their crimes. Whatever the offense, these two had transgressed God's law, even as we do daily. As the repentant sinner confessed, they deserved to die even as we do. Thus the Scripture was fulfilled, that "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12).

This is our assurance and comfort in all our misery, that God made Christ a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). All our sins were laid upon Christ. All your and my guilt was reckoned to His account. As the Innocent One He bore the eternal wrath of God against our sins. He bore that wrath all His life, in an ever-increasing measure, but especially during the three hours of darkness on the cross. How can we express this better than by saying, "He descended into hell"? During the morning hours of that particular Friday the Lord was deeply aware of those round about Him. He prayed that God might forgive, and thus lay upon Him the horrible sin that also His own people were committing against Him in that very hour. He extended His forgiving mercy to the repentant murderer. He made separation between His sheep and the world by that assurance of mercy. He showed His concern for His mother. But at noon darkness descended upon the cross and its surrounding area. The sun was hidden, even as a sign that God's face was hidden from His obedient Servant. The mouths of His mockers were silenced. The crowd stood in awe. For this was plainly the hand of the Almighty. Here on Golgotha Judgment Day had descended as far as Christ was concerned. Our Lord experienced "inexpressible anguish, pains, torments and hellish agonies." The inspired Poet of Psalm 42 expresses it this way, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts; all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me." Our Lord was cast out, cast out of God. In His holy wrath God said to His Son, "Depart from Me, I know Thee not"! Only the Son who rested eternally

in the intimate fellowship with the Father could fully understand the horror of isolation in being cast out, sent away from the Fountain of Life and Blessing. Only the Christ, to whom the approval of God meant more than life itself, could drink to the full the dreg of the cup of God's holy wrath against our sins. In perfect Self-surrender He gave Himself up unto the horrors of hell until His soul cried out, "My God, My GOD, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Only once, and never again, there arose a cry from hell that penetrated to the righteous judgment of God for the sins of His people. God in heaven heard, and responded by delivering His Son from the depths. For God was in Christ reconciling us unto Himself, nevermore to reckon our transgressions against us. God gave His Son. The Son gave His life. Greater love than that is inconceivable. We stand rooted to the ground in holy amazement. God loved us when we were still enemies, and loves us still!

"And Jesus in the midst."

That cross of Jesus still makes separation. It is a savor of life unto life and a savor of death unto death. For the Word of the cross is foolishness to those perishing, but is the power of God unto all who believe.

As we stand at the foot of the cross we confess anew: "I believe in Jesus Christ ... crucified!"

In all our greatest temptations we may comfort ourselves in this, that our Lord Jesus Christ has delivered us from the depths of hell unto eternal life. Confessing and forsaking our sins we find mercy, ever again. During the severest onslaughts of the powers of darkness we can rest assured that our Savior still overcomes sin, still is mighty to save, and still preserves us by His almighty power. Although we would certainly perish if left to ourselves, we confidently look for deliverance and the ultimate victory with Him in His Kingdom.

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

*The Standard Bearer  
makes a thoughtful  
gift for the  
sick and shut-in.*



## Editor's Notes

*Publication News.* Scheduled for autumn publication by our Reformed Free Publishing Association are two paperbacks which will sell at \$3.95 each. The first will be Prof. Herman Hanko's *We And Our Children (The Reformed Doctrine of Infant Baptism)*. This valuable little book, as the sub-title indicates, sets forth the Reformed doctrine of infant baptism; but it does so over against the Baptist position. The book is an adaptation of a series of articles in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* which were written by Prof. Hanko in response to the Reformed Baptist David Kingdon's *Children of Abraham*. The second will be an edited reprint of Herman Hoeksema's *In The Sanctuary (Expository Sermons on the Lord's Prayer)*, a book which has long been out of print but which found wide acceptance when it was originally published some forty years ago. Before these books appear, you should (if

you have not already done so) join the RFPA Book Club, so that you can take advantage of the 20% discount offered on all RFPA publications.

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*Seminary Publications.* The Prot. Ref. Seminary Bookstore is offering my new syllabus in Old Testament History, *The Era of the Judges*, at a price of \$6.75. This material will be helpful for any societies in our churches which are studying the book of Judges. If you want a copy, write to: Prot. Ref. Seminary Bookstore, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, Michigan 49418. The seminary has several other syllabi which will furnish valuable aid for both Bible studies and after-recess studies in our various Men's, Ladies', and Mr. & Mrs. Societies. Write for our publications and catalogue.

## Correspondence and Comment

We received the following letter from the Rev. Rolf Veenstra under the date of August 4:

Standard Bearer,  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

As one of your subscribers I have not noticed a regular feature of "reader responses." However, a "letter to the editor," especially one of appreciation, is always in order for any magazine. Forgive my failure to have done so before.

I have been particularly appreciative of your Bible studies presently considering Old Testament history. Too long our "treatment" of this material has been of a Sunday school, moralistic sort. I laud your writer for having the honesty of untraditional approaches to pre-Christian events and characters, notably Joseph, usually represented as a flawless sort of Horatio Alger Boy Scout who climaxed his climb by marrying the boss's daughter. (Sad result, of course, was that two entire tribes, especially troublesome Ephraim, were half-Egyptian, and golden-calf conditioned.)

An uncolored explanation of Holy Writ is especially essential, as I see it, to those of us who believe absolutely in the absolute authority and infallibility and historicity of Scripture. Interpret

God's Word in an unreal or really dishonest way and you will soon be shut up to making it myth, parabolic, time-conditioned, and only relatively relevant for every generation. And all of must remember that while the Bible accurately and honestly reports everything that Joseph, Job, et al, said and did, the Holy Spirit does not ipso facto give His imprimatur to everything that they did or said.

Yours for the Truth,

(signed) Rolf Veenstra

### Comment

First of all, welcome to our letters-to-the-editor department, and thanks for the words of appreciation for our writer on Old Testament history, Rev. Heys.

Secondly, I suspect that the last paragraph of this letter is possibly an oblique reference to my critical comments in our August issue concerning your recent meditation in *The Banner*. If so, then I beg to respond as follows:

1) I find a different note sounded in this paragraph than in that meditation. I refer to your explanation of inspiration and to the statement which I characterized as pure subjectivism.



2) I am happy to note that you count yourself among those who believe "absolutely in the absolute authority and infallibility and historicity of Scripture."

3) I certainly agree that the fact that the Bible accurately and honestly reports what men said and did does not imply that the Holy Spirit approves what they did or said. We may certainly distinguish between what is formally inspired and what is materially inspired, or between an inspired and infallible record of someone's words and/or deeds and words (such as the Psalms, for example) which are themselves inspired in content. My criticism was not concerning this.

4) My point was that your interpretation of Hezekiah's prayer (as "peevish") and your interpretation of Job's confession (as incorrect, in so far that you claim that Job does not teach that the Lord taketh away, but the devil takes away)—this interpretation was totally arbitrary and a violation of the principle that Scripture is and must be its own interpreter. If you believe in the absolute authority of Scripture, you must needs allow Scripture to inter-

pret itself. Now if you do that with respect to Job's confession, you will never say that Job was mistaken in that confession. For in the verse following that confession you read: "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." In other words, the Holy Spirit did indeed "give His imprimatur" to what Job said. The same is true of Hezekiah. In the first place, there is no shred of evidence that his prayer was "peevish." In the second place, the historical record shows that Hezekiah had no son as yet, which meant that if he died, the line of the promise would be broken. In the third place, the Lord Himself heard and answered Hezekiah's prayer and confirmed His answer by a marvelous sign. Again, therefore, the Holy Spirit did indeed "give His imprimatur" to Hezekiah's pious prayer.

5) Finally, I certainly agree with your statement: "Interpret God's Word in an unreal or really dishonest way and you will soon be shut up to making it myth, parabolic, time-conditioned, and only relatively relevant for every generation." History substantiates this.

HCH

## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

# Letter to Timothy

September 1, 1981

Dear Timothy,

In my last letter to you I began a discussion of a prevailing evil that is present in the Church of Christ: the evil of carping criticism of one's minister, which makes his work so exceedingly difficult and undermines the authority of His ministry. I want to pursue this discussion with you a bit in this letter. And I want to do this by calling your attention to a passage in Hebrews 13:17: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

While the text speaks particularly of the relation between those in the congregation and the elders (for they, specifically, are those who have the rule over the saints), the apostle refers here also to the ministers of the Word. They too are elders. This is clear from I Timothy 5:17: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

And it is the calling of members of the church towards their ministers that concerns us.

In this passage in Hebrews the Scriptures speak of obeying those who are our pastors and ministers. The word which is translated "obey" is not the common word in the New Testament for "Obey." It is a word which means literally: "to be persuaded, to listen to." It is rather interesting that this word should be used here. It suggests the fact that our natural inclinations are in quite the opposite direction from what our pastors say to us. This is understandable. Our pastors bring to us the Word of Christ which is found in the Scriptures. And our natural inclination is exactly the opposite of what the Scriptures say. The figure is, therefore, of unrestrained sin and rebellion against God which characterizes us in our life in the world. But the Word of God acts as a restraint, a check, a constant pull on us to draw us away from the direction in which we would ordinarily go. It tugs us away from the roads of sin and pulls us in the direction of God's will. But because we are creatures with



minds and wills and because God sanctifies us also so that our minds and wills are renewed, this work of the pastor in bringing us the Word is directed to our minds and wills so that we consider what the minister has to say and are persuaded of the correctness of the Word which he brings. We see that what he says, because it is the Word of Christ, is the truth, the description of the way of righteousness, of happiness and joy. And so we are persuaded that we ought to abandon our ways in which our natural inclinations lead us and follow the way of our pastor's instruction.

The same is true of the admonition to submit ourselves. Here too, the word "submit" means literally: "give way to, yield, resist no longer." This is a very powerful word and clearly imposes upon us the calling to deliver ourselves over, without reservation, to the instruction which we receive at the hand of our pastors. Our natural tendency is to set ourselves up as being just as knowledgeable (and perhaps more so) than those whom God has appointed over us. I recall that while I was going to college, my philosophy professor told us that he did not go to church any more. He told us that the reason for this was that he knew more than his minister and could say it better. Now this was undoubtedly true because he was a very brilliant man. But this was hardly the point. And yet he expressed what is really in all of us. We have a natural inclination to go our own way. We are like sheep who constantly go astray. We are bullheaded and like to have our own way. We are stubborn and resentful when anyone tells us that what we do is wrong. And this is characteristic of us because we all like to think that we have a corner on knowledge and ethics, that we all know better than anyone else what the truth is and what ought to be our own conduct in the problems of life. It is the natural inclination of man to set himself up as the final authority in all matters of life and walk. There is something in everyone of us which agrees with the proud boast of the poet, Henley: "I am the master of my fate / I am the captain of my soul."

And this is, after all, the point at issue. It is disagreeable and contrary to our inclinations to submit to another's authority. And to submit to a minister's authority is repugnant to us. But the authority with which he comes is the authority of his office and of the Word of Christ. And, therefore, what is required of us is that we yield to this authority and stop resisting it. We are called to fight against our tendencies to set ourselves up as authorities and to listen to Christ. This is very difficult and can come about only through the sanctifying power of the Spirit which breaks our stubborn and resentful wills and gives us the proper humility to yield to Christ.

But this is essential if we are to be persuaded of the truth. The two admonitions go together. The Scriptures are saying here: "Be persuaded by them that have the rule over you; and, in order to do this, you must learn to yield to them." Notice: Yield to *them*! Yield to what they say, surely. But yield to *them*! They are the ambassadors of Christ. They speak Christ's Word for Christ and in His name. Only when we yield to them will we be in a spiritual frame of mind to be persuaded by them. If we refuse to yield to them, you know what the result will be. We will never be persuaded either of the truth of what they say, nor will their word bring about even a semblance of change in our lives.

The whole matter comes down to this: we must recognize the fact that we have a higher authority than ourselves. We are creatures whose every breath is given by God; but we are also servants of the Lord Christ. And we bow, therefore, before His authority. We have none of our own. But that authority over us comes through our pastors. When they speak we hear the very voice of Christ Who is supremely our authority.

Now, the apostle gives a good reason why we must do this. He does not mean to say that we must do this because Christ is supremely our Lord. That is true too, and it is taught in other passages of Scripture. But he comes here with another reason: "For they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." That is quite a statement.

The idea is that pastors are fully aware of the fact that Christ, when He put them in office, gave them the responsibility of taking care of the spiritual needs of God's people. Christ will also some day, in the day of the great judgment, ask of every pastor: "What did you do for my sheep?" Christ will require of them that they explain all their conduct as pastors and give account of everything which they did to see whether or not these pastors were always caring for the spiritual needs of the sheep.

I would tremble with fear if I stood in the boots of many so-called pastors. Their concern is not the spiritual welfare of the sheep, but their own personal well-being. They shear the sheep instead of feeding them. They gather the wool from the sheep for their own financial gain rather than lead the sheep into the green pastures of the Word. They lead the sheep down roads of heresy and worldliness and care not at all what happens to the sheep as long as they have their houses and lands. They scatter the sheep on the hills and mountains of Israel while they live lives of leisure and earthly pleasure. But this is not the point here. The text is talking about faithful pastors. And it is saying that faithful pastors do all their work in the consciousness of the fact that someday they shall have to give



account of everything they do to Christ Who has set them in their office. This is a tremendous thing to look forward to. And pastors are so conscious of this that it is a thought which governs them in all their work.

When they prepare their sermons to be delivered on the Lord's Day, they are controlled by the knowledge that they shall have to tell Christ someday how they prepared that sermon for the spiritual benefit of Christ's sheep. When they come with that Word to the side of a saint in the hospital, when they bring that Word to those who grieve deeply because they have just seen one they loved very much die, when they put their Bibles under their arms to bring the Word to one who seems to prefer the ways of sin to the ways of the Scriptures—whenever they open their Bibles to speak a Word from Christ, they know that they shall have to give account to Christ someday. And they shall have to answer this question: Did you watch for the souls of My sheep?

So all-controlling is this thought, that they literally give their lives for the spiritual well-being of God's people.

This is what the reference to "souls" is all about. Jesus tells us in the parable of the rich fool that a man's life consisteth not in the things which he possesses. We have food and drink for our bodies. But that is not the whole of our life. We have also a soul life. And, contrary to what the rich fool thought, the soul cannot eat corn and drink wine. The soul, because it is spiritual, needs a spiritual food. That food is the Word of God. The ministers are called to

give that food to God's people.

The souls of God's people are constantly threatened. They are threatened, not with material and physical dangers, but with spiritual dangers. They are threatened by temptation, by the devil, by their own natures, by the world about them. And this threat is very great because it is the threat of eternal suffering in hell. Pastors know how dangerous a life we live. We do not know the half of it ourselves. It must look to Christ sometimes as if we play freely and loosely with our everlasting salvation. We jeopardize the well-being of our souls by playing fast and loose with danger.

But the pastors watch for our souls. They know that the Word of Christ is alone able to deliver us from all these fierce animals that threaten our eternal salvation. And so they are duty bound to come with that Word.

If we get a hold on that idea once, then we will understand why we must yield to them and be persuaded by them. When we resist we throw our eternal bliss into jeopardy. When we carp and criticize, when we pick and bite, when we nag and condemn, then we show our callous disregard for the eternal blessedness of our soul. When our pastors speak to us therefore, we must recognize this fact: they are watching for our souls. What a difference this will make in our attitude towards them.

But I must sign off for the present. We can talk more about this again.

Franternally in Christ,  
H. Hanko

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## FROM HOLY WRIT

# The So-called Post-Millennial Proof-texts

Rev. G. Lubbers

## NO KEY POWER—NO KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

### Chapter 7

*(This chapter in Rev. Lubbers' series has been placed out of order. Chapter 8 appeared in the August issue. Our apologies to the writer and readers alike.)*

The great institution of the Key-Power of Christ in the Church in the midst of the world is worthy of careful consideration when we examine the "golden-age" period of which the Post-millennialists

speak. As we have before stated, it is the teaching of the Post-millennial advocates that toward the end of this present Dispensation of the New Testament the entire world and all nations will be "christianized." This will be brought about by the preaching of the Word through the Holy Spirit. "All nations" will then be the domain of the church to such an extent and degree that the righteousness of Christ will prevail universally. And the question is: will there be the exercise of the key-power of the preaching and of ecclesiastical discipline in the realization of such a kingdom of peace?



This all sounds very much as if there will be no longer the reality that some enter the kingdom of heaven, and some do not. All will be kingdom of Christ, it is alleged. That will be the "victory" of the Word: all nations will become christian! The world is growing better and better. It will be beneficial to hear from an avowed Post-millennialist himself how this will be achieved by Christ through the preaching. And then we should ask the question: is there room for "key-power" in such a preaching concerning the kingdom of Christ in this world?

If one inquires: when will this utopia of the victory of the Gospel become ultimately realized, the answer is:

The redemption of the world is a long, slow process, extending through centuries, yet surely approaching an appointed goal. This process ultimately shall be complete, and before Christ comes again we shall see a christianized world (Page 38, *The Millennium*, L. Boettner).

The question will not down: will this envisioned Post-millennial "world" be christianized in the sense that all men shall be spiritual citizens of the Kingdom of God, and that, too, by virtue of the power of regeneration which translates them out of the kingdom of darkness into God's marvelous Kingdom of grace in Christ Jesus? To this question, thus put, we do not receive a direct and unequivocal answer. We read,

This does not mean that all sin will ever be eradicated. There will always be some tares among the wheat until the time of harvest,—and the harvest, the Lord tells us, is the end of the world. Even the righteous fall, sometimes grievously, into temptation and sin. But this does mean that Christian principles are to become the accepted standards in public and private life (*idem*, page 38).

But does this mean that these christian "principles" proceed from a regenerated heart, so that good works are performed in great gratitude of having been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, yea, good works which proceed from a true and living faith in Christ, are performed from the love of Christ shed forth in the hearts of the regenerated children of God, and are, therefore, performed to the glory of the riches of the grace of Christ? We will let the author of the aforementioned citations speak for himself. Writes he,

That a great *spiritual advance* (I underscore, G.L.) has been made should be clear to all. Consider, for example, the awful moral and spiritual conditions that existed on earth before the coming of Christ—the world at large groping helplessly in pagan darkness, with slavery, polygamy, the oppressed conditions of women and children, the almost complete lack of political freedom, and the ignorance, poverty, and extremely primitive medical care that was the lot of

nearly all except those who belonged to the ruling classes. Today the world at large is on a far higher plane. Christian principles are the accepted standards in many nations even though they are not consistently practiced. Slavery and polygamy have practically disappeared. The status of women and children has been improved immeasurably. Social and economic conditions in almost all nations have reached a new high plateau. A spirit of cooperation is much more manifest among the nations than it ever has been before. International incidents which only a few years ago would have resulted in wars are now usually settled by arbitration. As evidence of international good will witness the fact that the United States this fiscal year (July 1957 to July 1958) appropriated more than three billion dollars for foreign aid and mutual security programs, and since the end of World War II has given more than sixty billion dollars for these purposes... (*idem*, pp. 38, 39).

We could quote more, but this will suffice to show what an avowed advocate of the Post-millennial teachings understands by the world becoming better and better. The aforementioned citations show very clearly what, according to this teaching, must be understood by the influence of the preaching of the Gospel by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Yes, in the Millennium of this golden age of "spiritual prosperity" during this present dispensation "the world at large, will enjoy a state of righteousness such as at the present time has been seen only in relatively small and isolated groups, as for example in some family circles, some local church groups and kindred organizations" (*idem*, page 14).

Now we must measure this so-called kingdom of Christ by our Savior's own standards. Will this presentation of the kingdom accord with the fact that Christ speaks of the "keys of the kingdom" of heaven, and that this kingdom does not come by outward observation? (Luke 17:20; Matthew 16:18, 19; John 20:23). In that Post-millennial kingdom in the world, which is nothing more than some humanistic-humanitarianism at best, is the preaching of the Gospel indeed of such a kind that it calls to faith and repentance with the clarion cry of a John the Baptist, "Repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"? Is such a kingdom the realization of the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight"? Of course, not! It is the Satanic attempt to bring about a united kingdom in the world, the unification of all nations, to overcome the "wounded head" of the confusion of tongues of the tower of Babel; this has nothing essentially to do with the unity of the body of Christ in the bond of peace, which is in the one body of Christ, where we have one Lord, one faith, one hope, one baptism, one God and Father, Who is above all, in all and through all (Ephesians 4:3-6). It



is nothing else but the preaching of a "social Gospel" which is not a gospel, and which falls too under the anathema of Paul in Galatians 1:7: "but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ"! Paul writes "though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed!"

What was this truth of the gospel preached by Paul? It was the justification of the poor and guilty sinner in the blood of the Cross, and of fulfilling the law of Christ in loving the brother, by a saving faith which expects the hope of righteousness in the last day, and which fulfills the law, which in one word is: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. This is the love which Christ has shed abroad in our hearts by His Spirit when He makes the dead sinner alive, and makes him sit with Christ the glorified Lord in heavenly places (Galatians 5:5, 14; Ephesians 2:1-10).

In this preaching of the Cross there is key-power, which binds on earth and binds in heaven, and looses from sins on earth and looses in heaven, when the Judge of heaven and earth judges righteously. But in this kingdom of Post-millennialism there is no preaching of the Gospel, which is a power of God unto salvation for the most sinful sinner, who is brought to faith and conversion! Nor is there a conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment in such a kingdom; the conviction by the Holy Spirit in the consciences of men, excluding the unrepentant from the kingdom of heaven, assigning them to the company of those who are represented by the gates of hell (John 16:8-11). These are the false church, which do not possess the infallible earmarks of the true church, where Christ gathers His people into His kingdom in the way of conversion and repentance of true faith. These earmarks are: the true preaching of the Gospel, the proper administration of the Sacraments, and the exercise of christian discipline.

Is there then not any influence of the righteous saints in the earth? Indeed, there is. They are the light of the world, a city on a hill-top which cannot be hid (Matthew 5:14). And the saints walk in beautiful works, they let their light shine before men. And it is evident in these good works that they are children of their heavenly Father. But in their conversation and confession they are the condemnation of the world as was Noah in his day. We read in Hebrews 11:7 that Noah in his preaching and building of the ark "condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

It is true that Christ has overcome the world. This does not mean that the world is going to be christianized. It means that this world remains "the present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). This is the world, (*ioonos*) age, which is under the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works (energizes) in the children of disobedience. Out of this present evil world the church has been "delivered" (Ephesians 2:2, 3; Galatians 1:4). It required the atoning work of Christ to deliver us from this present evil age, the reprobate mass of mankind. Christ will put this reprobate world under His feet, and rule them with a rod of iron. That He does every day. Now is the judgment of this world. In this judged world we shall have tribulation. This is an overcome-world at Calvary and in Christ's resurrection, ascension, and sitting at God's right hand. Satan is cast out; he can no longer accuse the brethren day and night before God's throne (Revelation 12:9-11). And Christ has the keys of hell and of death; He shuts and no man opens, and opens and no man shuts.

Where there are not keys of the kingdom to open and shut, there is no kingdom. And the kingdom of the Post-millennial dream is just that. It is a dream, an illusionary mirage in the desert. For Christ connects the keys of the kingdom and the gathering of the Church of the ages. The gates of hell shall never triumph!

## GUEST ARTICLE

### Family Devotions

*Rev. Ronald Cammenga*

Regular, daily, family devotions ought to be a habit among us. We ought to be in the habit of reading the Scriptures and praying. We should not think that because something is a habit it is neces-

sarily bad. To be sure, there are bad habits. But there are also very good habits. In fact, because we are the kind of creatures that we are, because of the way in which God Himself has made us, habits are



unavoidable. We have the habit of eating breakfast every morning, for example. That's a good habit. There would surely be something wrong if, after waking up in the morning, we had to sit down and think about what we should do next. No, we automatically set the table and sit down to breakfast. We have the habit of going to church on Sunday. Now, of course, our going to church on Sunday must not be ONLY a habit. But there would surely be something wrong if we woke up on Sunday morning and had to sit down and think about what we ought to do that morning. No, we wake up on Sunday and take it for granted that we are going to church. It's a habit with us; something we do almost automatically.

That's what ought to characterize our family devotions. We ought to be in the habit of having regular family devotions. To be sure, our family devotions, like our going to church on Sunday, must not be ONLY a habit. It must never be the case with us that we have family devotions simply because we are in the habit of it. We mustn't have family devotions simply because our parents had them with us when we were growing up. We mustn't have family devotions simply because this is the way things are done in our churches. And we surely mustn't have family devotions merely because we consider it a part of our distinctive Dutch heritage. If these are the reasons why we make family devotions a habit, then our family devotions will be ONLY a habit. And either we will very soon lose them altogether, or they will degenerate into a pious formality. Nevertheless, in the good sense of the word, we ought to be in the habit of having family devotions. Family devotions ought to be carried on daily and regularly in our homes. We ought to be in the habit of having family devotions because it is a good and spiritually beneficial habit. We ought to be in the habit of having family devotions because we understand it to be our solemn duty and obligation before God. We ought to be in the habit of having family devotions because they afford us an excellent opportunity to worship our God through prayer and the study of the Scriptures. We ought to be in the habit of having family devotions because they afford us parents an excellent means by which we may fulfill our calling to instruct the covenant seed in the truth of God. For all these reasons we, like our fathers before us, ought to make family devotions a habit in every one of our homes.

Perhaps you ask: But where do the Scriptures specifically enjoin family devotions upon us? Where in the Bible are we told that we must have family devotions? It is to be admitted that the Scriptures do not specifically enjoin family devotions upon God's people. There is no specific passage of

Scripture to which you can turn that will say in so many words: Thou shalt conduct family devotions. And you surely will find no passage of Scripture that commands that family devotions be carried on in the way in which we customarily conduct them. No passage of Scripture is going to say in so many words that before our meals we must pray, and after our meals we must read the Bible and pray once again.

Nevertheless, it is the case that the Scriptures very clearly enjoin upon us the practice of family devotions. Everything that we Christians do is not to be found as a direct command in the Word of God. There are many things that pertain to our walk in the midst of the world that are deductions and implications from Scripture. The Scriptures, for example, nowhere say in so many words that we ought to have our own Christian schools. Yet, our churches have always insisted upon this, wherever the Lord makes this possible. It is simply an implication that we have drawn from the Scriptural truth concerning the covenant. There are many things in our lives that we do, not because Scripture explicitly commands us to do them, but because they are certainly implied in Scripture. Strikingly, when speaking of Holy Scripture, the Westminster Confession of faith says this: "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture." There are things that the child of God must deduce from the Scriptures. The practice of family devotions falls into this category. It is a practice that by good and necessary consequence we deduce from Scripture. It is a practice which the Scriptures clearly imply.

How does Scripture imply that we ought to have family devotions? From what passages of Scripture may this practice be deduced? There are, first of all, several passages of Scripture which urge prayer upon the child of God. The Scriptures make very plain that the child of God must be instant in prayer. In Luke 1:18 we read that Jesus spake a parable unto His disciples "unto this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." In Luke 21:36 Jesus exhorted His disciples: "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." In Romans 12:12 we read: "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." The apostle writes in Ephesians 6:18: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." The admonition of the apostle in I Thessalonians 5:17 and 18 is: "Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus



concerning you."

The clear teaching of Scripture is that the child of God must be always, continually in prayer. If that is the case, is it not reasonable to conclude that also our family lives are to be characterized by prayer? If we are to pray always, are we not to pray also as families? Is it not true that our prayers as a family, our family devotions, are but one part of fulfilling the calling of Scripture that we must be instant in prayer? I would maintain that from these Scripture passages, the practice of family devotions is a good and necessary consequence.

Besides insisting on the necessity of prayer in the life of the child of God, the Scriptures also exhort the child of God to be a student of God's Word. The word of the Lord through His servant Moses was: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:6, 7). The word of the prophet Isaiah to backsliding Israel was: "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for My mouth it hath commanded, and His spirit it hath gathered them." In John 5:39 Jesus says: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." And finally, in Acts 17:11, the apostle Paul holds before us the worthy example of the Berean Christians: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures *daily*, whether those things were so."

The clear injunction of Scripture is that we must always be studying, always reading, always searching the Word of God. Is it not reasonable to conclude from that that also in and as families we ought to be doing that? If we are to search the Scriptures daily, are we not to be busy doing that in our own homes and with our own families? Is it not also clear that the practice of reading the Scriptures as a part of our family devotions is a good and necessary consequence to be drawn from the teaching of the Scriptures?

Besides these Scripture passages which enjoin prayer and the study of the Scriptures upon the child of God, there are also a couple of passages in Scripture which rather clearly allude specifically to the practice of family devotions. The first such passage is Genesis 4:26: "And to Seth, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." This text undoubtedly refers to the first gathering of believers for the public worship of Jehovah. Men

began in the days of Seth to gather together publicly in order to call on the name of the Lord. That very fact implies that private, family worship of the Lord had preceded this. The fact that "then" men began to gather publicly to call upon the name of the Lord exactly implies that before this time the worship of the Lord had been in the nature of family worship. Nor does the "then" imply that now that men gathered to worship God publicly they no longer continued the practice of doing that as families. They certainly continued to do that. The "then" means that now in addition to that, besides and alongside of that, they also began to call upon the Lord's name publicly.

Deuteronomy 6:7 is also noteworthy in this connection. There the Lord tells His people that a man is not only to teach his children the Word of the Lord when he walks in the way, when he rises up and when he lies down. But he is also to instruct his children when he "sits in his house." While he is sitting down in his house, surely while he is sitting down in his house to eat his meals, he is to be instructing his children.

Strikingly we read of Jesus that, before He distributed the bread to the multitude of over four thousand which He miraculously fed, He gave thanks. Our prayers before our meals are not a custom which originated with our Dutch forefathers. It's something our Lord Himself taught us to do by His own example.

And, finally, there is also the word of the apostle Paul in I Timothy 4:4, 5: "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." And the striking thing is that the context here is exactly concerned with food and with eating. The apostle has said in verse 3: "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." Family devotions at meal times are exactly an expression of this thanksgiving which the child of God ought to give to God for the creatures, for the food and drink, which He gives to us. Prayer and the reading of God's word at meal times is not only proper, but ought to be considered by us as necessary, a good and necessary consequence of the teaching of Holy Scripture.

(to be continued)

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



## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

# Acts—Christ Gathers His Church (1)

Rev. J. Kortering

In the opening statement, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up" (1:1, 2), Luke makes obvious reference to the Gospel that he had already written. Now he proceeds to write about the things that Jesus *continues* to do. The Holy Spirit was given to the church, and in His strength the apostles went forth to teach and preach. The exalted Christ continues His work in the gathering of the church. In a few short years the Gospel spread from Antioch to Asia Minor to Achaia to Macedonia to Rome. Many of the Jews continued to reject Him, yet the door was opened to the Gentiles. Only one thing explains this great wonder: Jesus, Who began His ministry as a babe in Bethlehem, climbed the hill of Calvary, arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, now gathers His church by His Word and Spirit. We see the evidence of this in the Book of Acts.

### AUTHOR AND DATE

The opening verses quoted above indicate that Luke had written the Gospel prior to writing this book. Looking back at the first four verses of the Gospel, we notice that there too he mentions Theophilus and expresses, "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed" (1:4). Luke became the historian, both of the life and ministry of Jesus while He was on earth and of the gathering of the church in the early years. The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles are companion volumes, both written by Luke, the beloved physician.

In connection with our article on the Gospel of Luke, we made reference to the fact that Luke also wrote Acts. We summarize the proof as follows:

1. The style of writing in both the Gospel and Acts is similar. Luke was well educated and his Greek vocabulary and sentence structure indicate this.

2. Luke was a traveling companion of Paul and was therefore an eyewitness to much of what he wrote in this book. He does not refer to himself by name, a practice which was common with the authors of the Bible. He does use the pronoun "we" in certain sections: Acts 16:10-17; 20:6-16; 21; 27 and 28. He traveled from Troas to Philippi and re-

mained there for some time. On the third journey he rejoined Paul and accompanied him to Jerusalem. Also he was with Paul on the journey to Rome and during his first and second imprisonment (Col. 4:14; Philemon 24; II Tim. 4:11).

3. He is referred to as "the beloved physician" in Col. 4:14. We do not know much about his labor as a medical man. The Gospel account makes special reference to events that had medical significance, e.g., Luke 4:35; 4:38; 5:18; 6:6; 8:43; 8:55; 9:38; 18:25; 22:50. The same could apply to the reference in Acts 28:1-6 when the viper bit Paul and had no fatal results. A doctor would appreciate the reaction of the barbarians to the non-effect of venom.

4. The early church fathers attributed Acts to Luke. From the very beginning it was commonly accepted that Luke had written this history.

This is not to say that there was no subsequent controversy over the authorship of this book. Around the year A.D. 144 one named Marcion insisted that there was only one Gospel, his version of Luke, and that there was only one true apostle, Paul, and that only his nine epistles to the churches and the one to Philemon were authentic. The early church combatted this error and thereby had opportunity to assert the complete canon of Scripture including Acts. Luke's account of the history of the gathering of the church was especially crucial in this debate.

More modern critics have tried to discredit Luke's authorship of Acts. They suggest for example that if Luke wrote Acts and he was Paul's companion in travel, why is there so little mention in the book of Acts of Paul's great suffering which he refers to in II Cor. 11:23-27. Also, if we read the epistles of Paul to the churches, we learn of much spiritual controversy and weakness in the churches which do not appear in Acts. An example of this is the council meeting held in Jerusalem regarding circumcision of the newly-converted Gentiles. From Acts it appears that this council settled the matter; from Paul's letters to the churches we see that the problems continued to plague the churches. Does this discredit Luke's authorship? The answer must be, no! Paul wrote from a different



point of view. He became the pastor of the churches and deals with many things in a pastoral way. Thus his reference to his personal persecution was not to make more of it than others, it was to discredit his accusers in Corinth who claimed that he, Paul, was not an apostle and that he was preaching for personal gain. On the other hand, Luke wrote Acts from the point of view of history and a record of events that demonstrated the success of the gospel.

In trying to affix a date for the writing of Acts, we must consider the following:

1. There is no indication of the destruction of Jerusalem which took place in A.D. 70. It would seem strange, to say the least, that Luke would write a historical account of the advance of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome and not make some reference to Rome's sacking Jerusalem if that had actually occurred.

2. Also, there is no mention of Nero's terrible persecution of the Christians. As we learn from history, Rome was burned about A.D. 64, and Nero blamed the Christians for it. This led to one of the worst periods of persecution, and that persecution had a tremendous impact upon Christians everywhere. Yet, we do not read of this in Acts. Rather we get the impression that the gospel was well received wherever the apostles went.

3. Another consideration is that there is no mention of the death of Paul. This we know took place during the time of Nero. Acts closes with Paul's imprisonment. If he had in fact been executed, would not Luke have closed his account of Paul's missionary labors with such a reference?

These facts lead us to consider the year A.D. 63 as the approximate time of the writing of Acts. During those years, there would also have been need for such a history that Luke wrote. We will examine this in connection with the purpose of Luke's writing it.

## PURPOSE OF WRITING

We must remind ourselves that the purpose of writing this book did not simply rest in the heart of Luke. Rather the Holy Spirit over-ruled all of Luke's thoughts and provided the church with this book. *God* had need for this book and He moved Luke to see that need as well.

In this connection we point out three things.

First, the book of Acts serves as a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles. It would seem that originally the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles circulated as a two-volume set. Both were written at about the same time, the early to middle 60's. We can just imagine how the historical

account was useful to the early church. In time, however, Luke was joined to the other gospel accounts (Mark and Matthew) and later John was added. Next to the Gospel accounts, the church had Paul's letters. These dealt with specific needs in specific churches, but they were, however, edifying for all the churches. Without the book of Acts, we can see there would be a vacuum, a lack, especially since it is a book that demonstrated the establishment of the churches and the continuity that existed between them. To meet this need the Holy Spirit led Luke to write Acts.

Secondly, Luke had a continuing concern for his friend Theophilus. As we pointed out in connection with the Gospel of Luke, the name means "lover of God" or "loved by God." More than likely he was converted by Luke's preaching. There must have been more to this man than his being a personal friend of Luke. Since he is addressed as "most excellent" (Luke 2:3), he seems to be a Greek that lived in Rome, perhaps one with some position of authority, and therefore in a key position to influence the gospel for good. We can only imagine that the Holy Spirit used Luke to direct the evidence of the Gospel and the spread of Christianity to convince this man that Jesus is indeed the Christ, Savior and Lord. By such evidence the door would in turn be opened to the entire world.

Finally, the contents of the book of Acts indicate that Luke also had a purpose in defending the faith of Christianity over against any Roman charge that Christians were guilty of sedition or insurrection against world government.

Let's try to place this book in its historical perspective. During the writing of it, Paul was in prison. The movement of history was leading the world against Christianity. Nero was on the horizon. The world-wide curiosity about Christianity centered in this question: Do Christians stir up trouble, do they fulfill their obligations as citizens, are they trouble-makers? The Jews were constantly stirring up the people, trying to establish this case against Christianity. Consider how they did this before Pilate, and in the uprisings in Jerusalem, Iconium, Derbe, Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and even Rome. As trouble arose, the Jews tried to blame the Christians and cast them in an evil light.

Luke sought to disprove this in the Acts of the Apostles. He set forth the fact that the Jews were the trouble-makers, not the Christians. Christ Himself was not guilty of insurrection. He taught the people to render to Caesar the things of Caesar. He paid his taxes. Even Pilate had to testify, "I find no fault in this man."

The same was true of His followers. Peter and



Paul did not set the people against the government. They preached Christ Jesus, the Living Lord, Who required obedience to government. Christians are not instructed to rise up against the government, not even repressive governments like Rome. Rather, they are to be obedient for Christ's sake.

Luke sets forth in Acts the evidence that even Jewish and Gentile officials in government believed in Christ and found no incompatibility in doing so. In Cyprus the proconsul believed (13:7, 12); in Philippi the chief magistrate apologized to Paul and Silas for illegal beatings (16:37); in Corinth Gallio

declared that the disagreement with the Jews was religious not civil (18:12); at Ephesus, the leading citizen declared Paul was not guilty of public sacrilege (19:31, 35); in Palestine Felix and Festus found Paul innocent, and even the Jew Herod Agrippa II and his sister Bernice agreed that nothing was done amiss (24:1-26, 32). At Rome Paul was allowed to carry on his missionary activity (28:30ff.).

Let the whole world behold that Christ is Lord and that His Lordship does not make a Christian violate his earthly citizenship.

## ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. VanBaren

# Denied Admission to the Ministry

Several accounts have been presented in church papers about the recent action of the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in denying admittance of a candidate for the ministry in the C.R.C. The action was certainly unprecedented in recent years in that denomination. This candidate questioned the literal character of the first chapters of Genesis. The account of what happened is interestingly presented in *Calvinist Contact* of July 3, 1981.

For the first time in many, many years, a candidate for the ministry was denied admission into the ministry of the Christian Reformed Church, because of his belief of the event character of Genesis 1-3.

Clayton Libolt is a 34-year-old Old Testament Scholar who graduated from Calvin College and Seminary a few years ago and who pursued his MA degree at the University of Michigan and was working on his doctorate.

Mr. Libolt had been recommended by the faculty of Calvin Seminary and by the board of trustees of Calvin College and Seminary.

When his name came up for approval at synod's advisory committee, that committee chose to interview him. Six of the 13 members of that committee were unhappy with what they had heard. The remaining seven, a majority of one, recommended that synod approve Libolt's candidacy only after interviewing him on the floor of synod. The committee itself was united on only the second part of that recommendation: that Mr. Libolt should be interviewed by the full synod.

...When asked how the Bible is different from other books regarded by some as "holy", he responded directly: "It's inspired by God."

But the anxiety of some delegates was evident when, on several occasions, Mr. Libolt expressed his belief that the opening chapters of the Bible are "not transparent to the event." Here the chairman of the advisory committee which had earlier interviewed Libolt—Rev. Peter Brouwer, delegate from Classis Minnesota South—zeroed in on the young scholar's views: "When in Genesis 3 it tells us there was a tree, was it a *real* tree? When it tells us there was a voice which spoke to the woman, was it a *real* voice?" After wondering aloud what was meant by the questioner's use of the word "real," Libolt explained that, "because of the kind of God we have, it's quite possible that the events happened just that way."

But he would go no further than possibility, although he was invited to do so several times over. At each point, he noted that "because of the kind of literature we have been given at that point in Genesis, I don't think the (Genesis 1-3) narrative says or means to say that these things are 'real' in the sense of your question." The kind of writing one finds in Genesis' early chapters, he insisted, is "not like a newspaper report."

When asked to interpret a New Testament passage from St. Paul's letter to the Romans (the fifth chapter in which "the one man Adam" is compared with "the one man, Jesus Christ"). Libolt argued that the purpose of that passage was to teach that "in one man, Christ, there is the possibility of life," but in his view the passage would not require the presence of a historical character named Adam.

...At 7:30 p.m., the synod re-entered closed session to consider what it had heard and what it would do. An hour later, Calvin Seminary president John Kromminga came out of the session. He took Libolt aside to explain that the delegates had reached their decision.



By an unofficial count of 95 to 58, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church had decided that Clayton Libolt would not be made a candidate for "the ministry of the word and sacraments" in this denomination in 1981.

The synod is to be commended for its action. One could be encouraged, too, by the rather sizable support for the rejection of this candidacy. Surely a Reformed church could not do otherwise.

Yet some very troubling questions must remain within the C.R.C. What are the views of the faculty of Calvin Seminary who recommended this man for the ministry in the C.R.C.? Were they ignorant of Libolt's views—or do they hold to and teach them too? What of the board of trustees of Calvin College and Seminary and of the seven members of the advisory committee—all of whom also recommended Libolt for the ministry? Are his views acceptable to them? What of the 58 members of the synod who voted for accepting Libolt as candidate in spite of the clear statement of his views on the floor of synod?

Other disturbing questions must remain. What of those who substantially maintained publicly

these same views—which were condoned by classis and synod when protests and appeals against these views were rejected by the broader gatherings? Some men, maintaining the same views of Libolt, remain ministers and professors in good standing in the C.R.C.

It seems to me that two actions must follow out of synod's decision. First, the synod ought to insist that the views expressed by Libolt are not acceptable in the C.R.C.—and that those who nevertheless maintain them, walk contrary to their ordination vows and their signing of the formula of subscription. After all, to reject one man while allowing many others to teach the same things, would be the height of hypocrisy. But secondly, those who agree with Libolt can not in good conscience remain silent. Either they properly protest the action of the synod, or they resign from the office of the ministry. Surely these can not teach and preach what synod now rejected. Nor can one in good conscience go "underground" with his views until such time as they prove to be more popular in the C.R.C.

## Union Dues Vs. Religious Beliefs

The *Grand Rapids Press*, June 28, 1981, presents a report of a court battle concerning the paying of dues to a union in spite of one's religious objections:

When Doris McDaniel was fired nine years ago for not paying her union dues, she began waging a battle on behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that labor unions fear could hurt their pocketbooks.

At issue are sections of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which requires companies and unions to accommodate employees' religious beliefs unless doing so causes the union or company "undue hardship."

Dozens of cases like the one involving McDaniel are before courts across the country, and the battle now centers on the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco. There, a three-judge panel on Jan. 15 heard two separate but similar cases involving Seventh-day Adventists' challenges of union dues-paying.

...Among the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a recommendation against union membership or financial support of labor organizations.

"We have members who are union members and we leave it to their individual conscience," said John

Morgan, a spokesman at the church's national headquarters in Washington. "But we think there is an inherent problem in any organization in which people unite for suppression or coercion—where a small group of people seeks to manage or control all activity in a given area."

In "closed-shop" states—where laws allow labor contracts that require union membership as a condition of employment—unions argue that religious objectors can remain non-members but should be required to pay the union an amount equal to regular dues.

This year, U.S. District Judge Noel Fox in Grand Rapids ordered Essex International Inc. of Berrien Springs to reinstate and give back pay to McDaniel, who was fired in 1972 because she would not pay dues to the local chapter of the International Association of Machinists.

Officials of the union and Essex had denied her request that she be permitted to contribute an amount equal to the dues to a local, non-religious charity.

...The union contended that the Title VII section was unconstitutional because it amounted to governmental "establishment of religion," which is prohibited by the First Amendment. But Fox disagreed, saying there was a "great distinction between unconstitu-



tional government sponsorship of religion and constitutionally permitted protection of religious beliefs and practices."

"This opinion may force defendants in these cases to at least attempt to make an accommodation, rather than stonewall," Boothby said. "Normally, what we face is the union and the company doing nothing until we get into court."

...Since the court cases began, Congress has acted—amending the National Labor Relations Act to prohibit the requirement of union membership or financial support from members of seven religions "historically holding conscientious objection"—Seventh-day Adventists,

Amish, Plymouth Brethren IV, Mennonites, National Association of Evangelicals, Christian Missionary Alliance and Old German Baptists.

It appears that courts, in some instances at least, give legal redress to those who for conscience' sake can not belong nor join nor support the union. We, perhaps, ought to take advantage somehow of this fact. There ought also to be investigation into the "amending the National Labor Relations Act to prohibit the requirement of union membership or financial support from members of seven religions ...." Could not the name of our churches, small though they may be, be added to that list?

## THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

### Missionary Methods (6)

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

In the previous issue we discussed a bit of the history, the setting, and the audience to whom the Apostle Paul preached on Mars' Hill in Athens (cf. Acts 17:16-34). In this issue it is our intention to examine the content and the fruit of the Apostle's preaching (cf. verses 22-34).

This entire incident in the ministry of the Apostle, it strikes us, is a beautiful example of what the Apostle confessed to the Corinthians: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without the law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you" (I Corinthians 9:19-22). Mind you, the Apostle does not compromise, either in his method or in what he preaches. He proclaims the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. But the Apostle does that in terms to which the Athenians can relate. The Apostle points to their superstition, to their idols, to their poets and commands them to repent and believe in the resurrected Christ. Note that the Apostle does this not on the basis of an exposition of the law and the prophets as he always did before the Jews. Rather, the Apostle points to

the God of creation. To the Athenians he became as an Athenian that by all means he might save some of them.

According to verse twenty-two the Apostle "stood in the midst of Mars' Hill." Concerning the significance of this, John Peter Lange comments: "With all the confidence of faith he takes a position in the middle of the plateau on the hill.... He saw before him the Acropolis, which rose above him, and was adorned with numerous works of art; beneath the spot on which he stood, was the magnificent temple of Theseus; around him were numerous temples, altars, and images of the gods" (*Lange's Commentary On The Holy Scriptures*). The Apostle was standing on the very throne of Anti-Christian philosophy, art, science, religion, and culture! Here he will proclaim the gospel of the sovereign God as revealed in the resurrected Christ. Seeing all this idolatry the Apostle proclaims: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious" (vs. 22). "Too superstitious" means "very superstitious." Some commentators attempt to soften the blow by interpreting Paul to mean that the Athenians were very religious, even a God-fearing people (cf. Lange, A. T. Robertson, *et. al.*). This simply is not true. The Apostle points to the very heart of the problem of these Athenian philosophers. They were very superstitious. This means they were wholly given to idolatry and vain philosophy. They had turned from the living God, the one, true God to serve idols. The Apostle certainly does not compromise



the gospel or accommodate himself to this heathen audience. He begins by pointing to their unbelief as that was manifest in their idolatry. This is where every missionary must begin. Paul simply tells them that in all of their affairs they are very superstitious.

As proof of all this superstition the Apostle cites: "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with the inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you" (vs. 23). Among the multitude of altars and shrines to the many gods was this one inscribed: "To The Unknown God." Apparently the Athenians were concerned lest they miss one of the gods. They feared the anger of the god they might have overlooked. More than this, the altar to the unknown god indicates the weakness and the utter futility and foolishness of their idolatry. To this point our own Rev. George C. Lubbers wrote convincingly: "So morbid is their fear that they even have an altar erected to the UNKNOWN GOD. They had written that supercription on that altar. And it should be quite evident that Paul is not here teaching or suggesting that the Pagan was in real spiritual quest after the living God. They were not *seeking* God. Paul only cites this as evidence that the Athenians' multiplicity of 'gods' shows that none of these are truly gods, for else they would not have still built an altar to another. Paul points to the 'Achilles heel' in their idolatry. It is here that he points to the deep spiritual-psychological bankruptcy of all the other 'gods,' and even this unknown god does not avail them aught. Notice well that Paul is here not merely engaging himself in some clever witticism, but is giving, by implication, a profound, basic and soul searching psychoanalysis of the basic problem of all their religiosity. With this one observation he points out the 'Achilles heel' of the vaunted invulnerableness of the religion of these Epicureans and Stoics!

"Paul is not engaging in a philosophical discussion of 'comparative religions,' that he may come to the 'conclusion' that the Christian religion excels that of paganism on certain points as to doctrine and ethics, being careful not to expose 'Athens' as being entirely corrupt and worse than useless, but he is preaching! He is preaching Christ here on Mars' Hill: Jesus and the resurrection! And all the world must stand 'under sin,' and all the world must stand guilty before God, and every mouth must be stopped (Romans 3:19). The entire world must *become*...guilty before God. Also here in Athens on Mars' Hill! Here the glories of the Graeco-Roman world stand in the condemnation; the Greek moralist too is guilty; thus he stands in his own conscience. The altar to the UNKNOWN GOD

attests to this fact. Thus Paul preaches.

"Have we not pointed out that Paul here too knows himself a debtor to the Greek as well as to the barbarian?

"Well, then, all the philosophic constructions with which the Greek attempts to bolster his idolatrous world with his 'wisdom' must be shown to have this one 'Achilles heel.' And here too Paul will be caused to triumph in Christ, making the savour of His knowledge known in every place, to the one the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life. For Paul is not as many, which corrupt the Word of God; but of sincerity, but as of God, in the presence of God he speaks in Christ! And in this preaching he does not find a spiritual-ethical good *point of contact* with these pagans. There is none. There is only a point of 'apprehension' for those who are 'grasped' by the Spirit of grace, and plucked out of this evil world. And these were but few here in Athens!

"Still Paul appeals here to the 'conscience' of these men, and evil conscience, a non-sanctified conscience! Thus we read in II Corinthians 4:1, 2: 'Therefore seeing we have received this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not! But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but *by manifestation of the truth* commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' Here is no mere sparring for advantageous position in debate, no cheap trafficking of the Gospel as done by ancient and modern 'gospel hucksters,' but a commending to the consciences of these haughty Epicureans and Stoics! These are weighed in their own consciences and found wanting. All their 'gods' are found wanting! The altar to the UNKNOWN GOD attests to this fact. And the imaginary impregnable fortress topples, as did Dagon of old when he fell prostrate to the ground" (*The Standard Bearer*, vol. 41, pp. 428, 429).

Concerning this altar to the "UNKNOWN GOD" the Apostle continues "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you." There is another reading of this sentence which is translated: "What therefore ye ignorantly worship, this declare I unto you." This latter reading has the better support and we accept it as the correct one. It was not, therefore, as many commentators explain, that the Athenians ignorantly worshipped Jehovah by means of their altar to the "UNKNOWN GOD." Not at all! *What* they worshipped in their spiritual ignorance and blindness out of the hardness of their hearts was not the Almighty God but an idol. They worshipped a conception of their own minds and that is an idol. In their spiritual ignorance they re-



jected God as He was plainly revealed to them in the things which are made. In the creation all about them those Athenians could see even God's eternal power and Godhead. But they had changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things (cf. Romans 1:18 ff.). This accounts for all their foolish wickedness and futile superstition. This is what I declare to you, says Paul. He speaks plainly of their spiritual ignorance and blindness. The Apostle did not, therefore, proclaim an idol unto them, nor did he commend them for seeking after the true God. He

pointed them to their idolatry which came from their spiritual blindness and rejection of the one, true God. Paul proclaimed the sovereign God of heaven and earth, the Creator God.

Note well, Paul *declared* God to them. That word means: to announce, promulgate, make known, proclaim publicly, publish abroad. One thing it does not mean is: to offer or invite! The Apostle simply published abroad there on Mars' Hill the glorious gospel of sovereign grace in God's Christ. And Paul did that against the black background of the idolatry, vain philosophy, and foolishness of the learned Athenian philosophers.

## Report From Singapore

*Rev. Arie den Hartog*

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ. Greetings in the name of our great God and Savior. It has been quite some time since we have written a report about the work of the Lord in Singapore, a work which God has been pleased to give us as Protestant Reformed Churches to do. We rejoice with thanksgiving to the Lord that He continues to prosper and bless our work in spite of our own many weaknesses. The Lord causes the G.L.T.S. not only to continue to grow in numbers but also to grow in the spiritual knowledge of the truth of His Word and especially the truth of the Reformed Faith which we love and cherish as the Lord's heritage to us.

Let me tell you again some of the major developments of the work here. In the month of June we had one of the greatest yearly events for the G.L.T.S. I refer to the annual June Camp or Retreat. I have told you about these before, indicating that they are somewhat similar to our own annual Protestant Reformed Youth Conventions. The theme of the week-long camp this year was "I Love Thy Kingdom Lord." The camp was held at a most beautiful facility belonging to the Presbyterian Church in Singapore. In past years the G.L.T.S. has had camps under some pretty adverse conditions. Therefore it was an unusual joy to have the beautiful place that we had this year which included a chapel for our meetings, dormitories for sleeping quarters and even a dining hall for meals. Your missionary was asked to give a series of five messages on the camp theme. I also preached a message on the subject of the millennium. There were many activities during the camp besides the messages, including such things as discussion groups on rele-

vant Christian topics, chapels, a visit to an area nursing home, various types of recreation, and Christian fellowship. The whole camp was a very blessed and wonderful experience and I am sure very beneficial for those who attended. Attendance was regularly over sixty. During the evenings we always had additional visitors. On Friday evening we had more than 100 young people in attendance. I could go on to tell you many more details of the camp but I must keep this report as short as possible. We were again much impressed by the godliness and zeal of the youthful saints in Singapore.

Immediately after the camp our family spent a three-day vacation on the island of Santosa, a resort island just off Singapore. This was a much needed, brief but enjoyable and refreshing vacation. All of this was arranged and paid for by the members of the G.L.T.S. We were much moved again by their love and appreciation for us.

The month of June is always an exceptionally busy month for the G.L.T.S. In our churches in the U.S.A. it is usually the case that the summer months have fewer church activities. It seems that things go on all year round here and even increase during the summer months. During the month of June the G.L.T.S. observes its anniversary every year. This includes an annual general meeting of the society where there is election of officers, the budget for the year is adopted, and reports from various departments are read. This year was the 18th anniversary. Considering that this society has existed some 18 years without becoming a church, one can appreciate the intense longing for institution of the



church. I might add that the budget adopted this year is nearly \$50,000. This is a very large sum of money which requires a lot of sacrificial giving, considering the average income of the members of the G.L.T.S. This budget includes partial or full support of three brothers studying for the gospel ministry. The observance of the anniversary always includes a special Lord's Day worship service. This was again a great highlight of the year. I preached a sermon based on Lamentations 3:22-23 with the theme: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." Attendance at this worship service was the highest ever at a worship service, 168 besides the small children. After the worship service there was a buffet luncheon and fellowship.

Another significant event at the general meeting of the G.L.T.S. was the announcement of another young brother's intention to study for the gospel ministry. We rejoice that the Lord is providing for us another future laborer for His church. His call to the ministry is in itself a beautiful story. I cannot tell you the whole story. The brother had for a long time been wrestling with the call to the ministry. He has just completed his military service. He was also considering the possibility of studying to become a lawyer. The brother applied to the Singapore University to study law and was accepted. However, just before the beginning of school he was so compelled by the call to the ministry that he decided to forego his place in the University to study law and he decided instead to take up studies for the ministry. This decision was taken against much opposition from his home. He is presently studying liberal arts courses in the Singapore University. He is also taking two courses under my instruction. In one or two years we shall be attempting to get this brother in our seminary in the U.S.A.

For the last few months we have been making quite a few pastoral calls to the homes of our members. At one time we had thought that this was impossible because of the pagan homes. However, we are finding that it is often possible to make such calls as long as a Singaporean brother goes along with me. Thus we make these calls somewhat like our family visitations in the U.S., with one of the leaders of the G.L.T.S. It is a good way to get to know our members better and to be able to minister more specifically to their individual needs.

Just a couple of weeks ago we started another "house church," or tape hour. I have told you about these before. We have worship services at these where we listen to tape recorded sermons. We now have five of these tape hours meeting simultaneously at various locations in Singapore every Lord's Day evening. We still hope and pray that the day will come that we shall be able to have

a second worship service on the Lord's Day. Meanwhile our tape hours are a real blessing to the members that attend. We listen to many of our Protestant Reformed ministers preaching. We also sing from *The Psalter*.

Let me devote the rest of my space to report to you the progress towards the organization of the church in Singapore and in that connection the result of the decision of our synod of 1981 and the recent visit of the emissaries, Rev. Kamps and Rev. Engelsma. We know that many of our readers are very anxious to hear about this. As many of you know, there has been a difference over the question of when creeds should be adopted in the development of the church on the mission field. The question involved is not that of the necessity and importance of creeds for the future church in Singapore. There is no difference of opinion on this question at all. All see the need of studying and adopting creeds. The question is whether it is absolutely essential for the church on the mission field to adopt the creeds before her organization and whether organization should be delayed until such time as the creeds can be adopted. The G.L.T.S. from the time that we first arrived here to the present has been spending much time carefully studying our Three Forms of Unity. The opinion both of your missionary and the G.L.T.S. was that before creeds can be adopted they must be carefully studied. In this way a group such as the G.L.T.S. will come to know and love our creeds and make them their own confession. We were of the opinion that such a careful study would take an extended period of time. At the same time there is a great desire for the organization of the church in Singapore. We did not want to see the organization of the church delayed any further until the completion of our study of the creeds.

Thus the decision of our 1981 synod came as a very great disappointment to us. It seemed that this decision would again delay the organization of the church for a long time. There was a strong feeling that we needed more time to study our creeds and on the other hand did not want to delay the organization of the church. There was a strong feeling against signing the formula of subscription to our creeds before an opportunity to study them carefully. Several meetings of the executive committee were held to wrestle with the dilemma of what to do under the circumstances. We were in the state of great crisis.

We thank the Lord that the emissaries Rev. Kamps and Rev. Engelsma were sent here to help with the crisis. Though there was great disappointment in the G.L.T.S. over the decision of our synod, the emissaries were graciously received. Furthermore, we are all very thankful to the Lord for the



great amount of good which they did while they were here. They were kept very busy giving speeches, preaching, and counseling the members of the G.L.T.S. Their main labors were connected with the explanation and discussion of the decision of the synod with the leaders of the G.L.T.S. The impressions that were left did much to relieve the situation. The emissaries did much to convince the G.L.T.S. that our churches were seeking their highest good and that our churches also greatly desired that the church be organized in Singapore as soon as possible.

After several more meetings of the executive committee they were not however convinced of the correctness of the principle of the decision of our 1981 synod. There is a clear understanding of the importance of creeds for the church. There remains however, a disagreement on the question of when these creeds must be adopted. The G.L.T.S. continues in their desire to have more time to study the creeds. They disagree that in a situation in which the creeds are already being studied and where there is already a love for the truth of the Reformed Faith, that in such a situation organization must be delayed until the study of the creeds is complete.

After a difficult struggle the G.L.T.S. was led by

the grace of God to see the wisdom of submitting to the decision of our synod though not agreeing with it. The best course of action under the situation was decided upon. Thus it was decided to set aside as much as possible the work of the G.L.T.S. for the next few months so that we can concentrate as much time and energies as possible on completing our study of the creeds. This will mean that the leaders will be meeting three times per week to study the creeds under the instruction of your missionary. This will also mean that the leaders will be greatly burdened with a tremendous amount of work besides all the other work in which they are involved. We hope, however, that all of this will result in the speedy organization of the church while at the same time giving opportunity for the careful study of the creeds. We pray that the Lord will bless all of these efforts unto the end of the establishment of a strong Reformed Church in Singapore.

We hope that this somewhat detailed explanation will help you to understand and appreciate our situation here in Singapore. We covet your prayers on our behalf. Pray also that the Lord might continue to prosper our work as Protestant Reformed Churches here in Singapore and that He might continue to bless our relationship with the G.L.T.S.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### A Dream Come True

*Rev. John A. Heys*

In faithfulness to his calling Joseph gathered the surplus food in Egypt for seven years, and built up a huge store of food for the seven years of famine that were coming. Most likely he bought the food from the farmers, and it was not commandeered by the government. And I say that he did this in faithfulness because once again in servitude he does his calling in the fear of God's name. In Potiphar's house he was faithful, even though Potiphar thought otherwise of him. In prison his faithfulness was noticed and commended. Now he is found to be faithful in the office which the king gave him. It was not an office which he sought. He did not after striving, and working himself up, attain to this lofty position in the Egyptian kingdom. It was God's providence and the king's appointment that made him next to the king in the land of Egypt.

To that faithfulness belongs also the fact that he did not once try to escape and to get back to his father's house. In Potiphar's house there were long

periods when his master was gone, and the opportunity certainly presented itself for this slave to become a free man by returning to Canaan. He made no attempt to break out of jail, even though many liberties were given him. His only attempt was that of the legal way of the king reviewing his case. And even then, it would be to return to Potiphar's house as his slave, or to be sold by him to another man in Egypt. As an exalted ruler in Egypt whose work required of him that he travel from one end of Egypt to another, and furnished him with horse and chariot, and placed huge sums of money at his command, he still did not make a break for liberty. He never used the freedom in Egypt to help him get out of Egypt.

Why? Was he fearful of being caught? Did he have a timid nature that made him so look up against all the dangers of flight, and of hiding from pursuers, that he just could not make the step? Was he—so in contrast to Moses—attracted by Egypt's



wealth and culture? Did he delight so much in the pleasures of Egypt that he forgot the promises of God and the land of promise? It is true, as he said, that "God hath made me forget all my toil and my father's house" (Genesis 41:51), after Asenath, the daughter of the Priest of On, who was in the service of Ra, the Egyptian sun god, presented him with a son. His lonesomeness vanished both by the acquiring of a family and the press of the work he was called to do. The sharp edge of the cruelty of his brothers, of Potiphar, and the forgetful butler was gone. The memory of the joys at home also faded as years went by and new and exciting experiences were his in this strange land. Yet all this does not explain his failure to attempt an escape.

From God he received the grace of contentment with his lot. Long before the Apostle Paul was on the scene and could write, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11), Joseph had also received that same grace. From God also he received grace to be obedient to those in authority over him. He would, by God's grace, be obedient to God, and therefore he obeyed Potiphar without complaint, and even as though all these goods were his own. Therefore also he was—though unjustly in prison—subject to the rules and regulations and sought the good of the prison. And now as well, Joseph recognizes the hand of God and an appointment by God to be servant to Pharaoh and Egypt, and he serves to the best of his ability. Today men take little or no pride in their work. They work only for that pay check at the end of the week. And the workmanship on their products is often a shame and a disgrace. But Joseph sought Egypt's good as though he was seeking his own good, because he saw it all as God's domain and his own calling to be faithful to God in His creation.

He may have seen his position as one in which he could help his father's house, for the famine would also be in that land, but behind it all, and basic to it all, is his faith in God and desire to be pleasing in His sight. And we do well to remember Joseph and to emulate him. Our working conditions may not be ideal, and the owner may not care about our life and health. The pay may not be what others get in other places of employment, and for the same or similar work. But look a bit higher. Look to Him Whose servants we all are. And ask not, "What am I worth? Am I being treated fairly?" Instead ask those words of the Apostle Paul, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" and "What does God demand of me?" The unbeliever cannot do that and must go on strike, which causes the cost of living to go up another notch and makes another future strike inevitable, and is equally a failure in the attempt to get ahead of the unbelieving and unmer-

ciful master. But the believer is interested in what God has to say in His Word. He does not try to live by bread alone—and no man ever will live by bread alone—but also by the words that proceed from God's mouth and exhort him to leave all vengeance and recompense unto God, and, if he must, seek employment elsewhere; but always being "subject unto the higher authorities, for there is no authority but of God, the authorities that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the authority, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Romans 13:1, 2).

Now it is not at all impossible that Joseph expected, or saw the great possibility that his brothers would also come to Egypt for food. We read in Genesis 41:56, 57, "and the famine was over all the face of the earth; and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because the famine was so sore in all the lands." And Canaan, remember, bordered on Egypt. They were separated by the River of Egypt, which is not to be confused with The river of Egypt, namely, the Nile.

But before we run ahead, let us consider the reason for that famine. For surely God has a purpose in whatever He does. We are so aimless, and we do so much thoughtlessly, but the All-wise God does nothing without an immediate reason and without an all-controlling reason. The immediate reason for that famine was to get Jacob and his family out of the promised land and into Egypt. The all-controlling reason behind this famine is that which moves God in all His works: the glory of His own name. The move of Jacob and his family into Egypt will serve that purpose of God's glorification. And the famine will bring Jacob and his family—or let us be a bit more specific, the Church—into Egypt, where He will show forth His glory and get Himself honour and glory both upon the enemy, and in His Church.

Every detail in that coming of Jacob and his sons into Egypt must not be spiritualized. Egypt is going to be a picture of Satan's power over us in that as hopeless as it became for the Israelites to get out from under the bondage of Pharaoh, so we are in the house of the bondage of sin. But Jacob's journey into Egypt is not a picture of how we got into that bondage of Satan. For one thing Adam and Eve did not get us into the kingdom of Satan because of a scarcity of food. They had the abundance and wealth of paradise. What is more, God warned Adam against getting himself in the service of sin, while here He encourages Jacob to go and assures him that he will be brought up out of that bondage.



But the broad lines are there. God, in order to glorify His own name, will bring His Church into Egypt and under cruel, inescapable servitude to teach His people their hopeless situation as sold under sin and in the bondage of the devil. And then He will bring them out with a high hand, and reveal to them what He in His grace does for His Church. What is more, He will, while they are in that bondage, show them His blessing as they grow to be a tremendously large nation, so great that another Pharaoh becomes fearful of them, seeing the possibility that they take over his entire land. And this is a truth for us to consider today. We are rapidly approaching those days when Egypt's bondage and cruelty will be over-shadowed by the cruelty and impossible living conditions in the day of the Antichrist. And although we cannot expect, and must not expect God to bless His Church with earthly, material wealth and treasures, He will as surely bless His Church in those days as He did Israel in that day. He will no more forget His Church in that day than He did for one moment in Egypt. And deliverance will come; and plagues shall fall on that world of iniquity.

But to return to the narrative, how often is it not that what is *not* said is as important, or even more important, than what *is* said? We read in Genesis 42:6-9 that Joseph knew his brothers when they came and, as the eleven stars of his dream, made obeisance to him, and that he remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them. The brothers remembered neither that dream, nor at the moment the cruelty that they had inflicted on this brother, who stood before them but was unrecognized by them. Nothing actually was farther from their thoughts. And after all they did not know whether the Ishmaelites had sold Joseph into Egypt or somewhere else, and if sold into Egypt whether he was not sold later on and to some remote corner of Egypt.

But although we read that Joseph remembered the dreams, we do not read—and that is significant—that he remembered their cruel treatment of him. He did, no doubt about that. But it is not mentioned, because he was not ruled at the moment by that memory. And his "rough" speech to them must not be understood as the result of a fit of anger at the thought of their great wickedness to

him. Emphasis is laid upon the fact that he remembered the dreams which God gave him. He remembered God's word and God's promises to him. He saw the dream come true.

And let me ask, "What means more to you, the cruelty men heap upon you, or God's promises to vindicate His people in the day of Christ? Are you going to run quickly to the rulers in the church with your grievance against a member, or are you going to run quickly to the word of God for comfort and for instructions as to how He would have you handle the matter? Will you listen to Him when He says, 'Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God'? Or are you going to write a new Sermon on the Mount and write boldly, 'Blessed are they that fight for their rights and for the things of this world; and they shall be called the children of God'?" Let me give you some good advice. If the brother sins against you, do not take the matter to the authorities in the church **UNLESS YOUR PRIMARY AND ONLY PURPOSE IS TO SAVE HIM FROM SIN.** You must go there for his sake, not for your own. You must go there for the sake of the Church of God, not for the return of some earthly possession, honour, or the like for yourself.

And Joseph's "rough" speech to his brothers had their spiritual well-being in mind. He is seeking to bring them to confession of their sin against GOD, not against himself. Evidence of this is that he puts all their money in their sacks—a manifestation of his love for them. Likewise his speech after their second visit for food, when he could not restrain himself, and had to leave the room to weep. And never forget his words of peace after his father died, "Fear not (for they feared his wrath)... ye meant it for evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Joseph is interested in the good of God's church and not in self vindication.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Hudsonville Ladies Society express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. John C. Lubbers at the death of her brother MR. JACOB SCHUT.

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." (I Thess. 4:14).

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

## News From Our Churches

"In harmony with the decision of this year's synod that our church in Lynden resume calling a missionary for the Monroe-Mt. Vernon Washington area, Lynden has composed the following trio: Revs. Bekkering, Koole, Joostens." That bit of in-

formation was taken from the "News from our sister churches" section of a Hull bulletin. We have since learned that Lynden has extended their call to Rev. Joostens. We have also heard that Rev. Joostens is considering *another* call from the west coast,



this one from our Redlands congregation.

In our last news column we reported concerning the tour of our churches by Mr. and Mrs. Lau. We have traced a part of their trip, via bulletin announcements, only to find that their trip ended prematurely in Redlands where Mr. Lau Chin Kwee was admitted to a hospital due to a bleeding ulcer. In compliance with a doctor's recommendation the Laus have returned to Grand Rapids.

The work of evangelism goes on! Please take note of the following evidence of the truth of that statement: 1. From a Hull, Iowa bulletin: "At the Reformed Witness Committee meeting held this past week, a letter was received from Joseph Tan of West Malaysia. Mr. Tan had obtained a copy of our Reformed Witness pamphlet. He requested more copies for his own use, for distribution in his country, and possibly even for translation into his native language." 2. From a Loveland, Colorado bulletin: "Members of the church extension committee will distribute a pamphlet, 'The Key to Good Preaching' written by Rev. J. Slopsema and made available to us from the Reformed Witness Committee of Doon-Edgerton-Hull. 500 copies have been mailed this week and the committee plans to send them at that rate each month." 3. From an Edmonton, Alberta bulletin: "We received a call from a listener of our radio program who said, 'The radio message is like going to a meal, and being completely satisfied.'" 4. From a South Holland, Illinois Newsletter: "...there is an aspect of our work which is brought out in the correspondence we receive. It is this: that the distribution and reception of our pamphlets is now to a very large extent, carried on by others—by those outside of our own Protestant Reformed circles. Yes, this is of the Lord Who watches over His Own Word. This is an ideal situation, is it not? Ought not these considerations encourage us to persevere in our labors?" Concerning their latest pamphlet they write, "Very shortly, we hope to receive from the printer, the pages and the covers for our new pamphlet: 'Remembering the Lord's Day.' When we do, it is again our plan to call for some assistance from the congregation in preparing the pamphlet for distribution." That same newsletter contains a vast number of excerpts from correspondence that the committee has received, some of

which clearly illustrates the committee's observation that pamphlet distribution is being "carried on by others." *Trengganu, Malaysia* - "Kindly send me a complete catalog of your tapes. The Lord willing, I will start a tape ministry to spread the Reformed faith next year in my church and my community." *Philadelphia, Penn.* - "Dear Brethren: May the Lord Himself bless your efforts in His behalf through the work of evangelism and the publication of various pieces of literature. I have found your Consolation booklet to be helpful in my ministry among the sick. I would like 100 copies." *Mt. Laurel, N.J.* - "I used hundreds of your pamphlet, 'God is Our Refuge and Strength!'" *Titusville, Fla.* - "Please send 12 copies of 'Modern Bible Versions.' I gave away my supply of these booklets. I intend to pass out more of them to friends and neighbors. The need for this pamphlet is great."

From the summer issue of "First News" (bi-monthly newsletter to the congregation of First Church in Grand Rapids) we learn that Rev. C. Hanko and his daughter Alice left on July 29 to pick up the work in Bradenton after a two-month break in the services there, and that Rev. Harbach has agreed to labor there during the month of September. The newsletter further reports: "Because of our unforeseen absence from Bradenton, we cannot report the kind of progress for which we had hoped in the field itself. But there are other indications which indicate that the Lord is indeed blessing our efforts there. One of them is the assistance which has been offered by one of our sister congregations. Southeast has agreed to contribute \$4,500 to the cause this year. That, by itself, is important for us, because our budgeted amount for the year in Bradenton is being rapidly depleted. But, in addition, and perhaps even more importantly, two members of Southeast's consistory have for the past several months been meeting with our church extension committee, thus involving Southeast in the actual conduct of the work. We welcome this kind of cooperation and hope that it will yet prove to be mutually beneficial." We are thankful for these evidences of the Lord's blessing on our labors. We repeat a part of the quote from the South Holland newsletter: "Ought not these considerations encourage us to persevere in our labors?"