

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

...And when we shall leave presently, there is nothing we shall carry with us. No doubt when we make our departure we will be wearing a suit or a dress to cover our nakedness, but that is all. You will not be carrying your bank books, or the silver and gold you have stashed away for the proverbial rainy day. Your houses and land, all your horded gain, you leave behind. Really, you go out of this world precisely as you came in — stark naked.

See "Godliness With Contentment"

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MEDITATION

Godliness With Contentment

Rev. M. Schipper

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

—I Timothy 6:6-8

Important it is, first of all, to note how it is that the apostle was moved to express himself as he does in this portion of holy writ.

It was not his intention to set forth an axiom, a mere truism, a guiding principle for Timothy and the church of Christ to follow — though it is cer-

tainly true that the blanket statement, "Godliness with contentment is great gain," may be considered such a truism and guiding principle.

Rather, as the text clearly indicates, what the apostle says here stands in direct contrast to and is occasioned by a false conception of some who

imagined that godliness is a way to get gain. The apostle is militating against those who teach a different doctrine than he taught. Those, so he says, who do not consent to doctrine which is according to godliness, pervert the truth when they teach that it pays off in material gain to manifest godliness. From such a doctrine the church of Christ must withdraw itself.

In sharp contrast to this false conception, the apostle sets forth in the text the true doctrine. This sharp contrast is not only indicated with that conjunctive word "but," but in the original text it is still more pronounced. There the apostle writes: "But great gain is godliness with contentment." He means to say: if you really want to know what is profitable for you in this present world, then you must understand that what is profitable is not mere dollars and cents, nor is it godliness that eventually adds to your material possessions; but this, and this only is profitable: godliness with contentment. And that means that you may be as poor as the Lazarus who desired to eat the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, and yet be very rich. Enriched you are with the grace of godliness with contentment.

Godliness with contentment!

Two graces set by the Scriptures in their proper order! Related they are as cause and effect. It is the order of doctrine and life.

But what is their significance? And just how are they related?

Godliness!

No fewer than eight times the apostle uses this word in this epistle. The Word of God would have us live a peaceable life in all godliness and honesty, rather than to be in rebellion against those who are in authority (2:1, 2). In chapter 3:16 the apostle presents the heart of the truth as far as godliness is concerned, when he defines the mystery of godliness as consisting in this: God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. In chapter 4:7, 8, he exhorts Timothy to exercise himself rather unto godliness, which is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. And in our chapter no fewer than four times he mentions this gracious concept (vss. 3, 5, 6, 11).

The English word is undoubtedly a contraction of God-like-ness, meaning simply, to be like unto God. While the Greek word implies reverential piety, and devotion unto God.

It should be quite apparent that we do not possess this virtue naturally. Though our first

father Adam was created in the very image of God, and therefore in a creaturely way was capable of reflecting that image; though he was God-like and, in the state of righteousness, was devoted unto his God; he did not remain that way. When he fell, through the temptation of the devil, he lost that image. He took on the very image of the father of lies. His whole being was set in rebellion against God instead of being in devotion to Him. And we received our nature from him. Consequently the course of our nature is in reverse. We by nature emulate Satan, and like him stand in opposition to the living God.

By grace, however, all this is radically changed in principal. Accordingly godliness is related to the mystery of godliness, concerning which the apostle writes in the third chapter (3:16). God became incarnate, He came to dwell in the flesh. In the Person of His Son, Emmanuel, He was born of the Spirit from the womb of the virgin. In that flesh He assumed our sin and guilt, the sinless One became sin for us; and in that nature He bore the curse that was due to us, even unto the accursed death of the cross. In His death and resurrection He justified us. And having been received up into glory, He received the Spirit without measure, and power to give that Spirit unto us, whereby we are renewed in heart, and enabled once more to reflect in principle the image of God. In one word, to be God-like once more, and consequently to be devoted to God. Such is, indeed, the source of, and the nature of the grace of godliness which we now possess.

Godliness!

Beautiful concept, indeed! For it implies that the one who possesses this grace in this world is as close to God and like unto Him as he can be. It implies that he who partakes of godliness is recreated in the very image of God, and is able to reflect in a creaturely way that image.

With contentment!

Like godliness, it also is grace!

And he who possesses this grace is satisfied with his lot in life. There is a certain harmony between one's lot and the understanding of his heart. Only he who has the Spirit of Christ within him possesses this grace.

The natural man cannot boast of this virtue. Never is he content with his lot in life. He may put on a show, and like the stoic, he may steel his nerves when he is in pain, and want you to believe he does not hurt. He may in his poverty lie down like the pig which appears to be content to wallow in his own dirt, and want you to believe he is satisfied with his lot. But the natural man cannot be content, because he has no grace. In his need, he

grumbles and complains. If he is rich and has all that heart could wish of this world's goods, he is greedy, and by hook or crook he will seek more of these riches. But he can never be happy and satisfied with his lot in life.

Only he who has received the grace of contentment is perfectly reconciled to the will of God for his life. His sanctified heart and mind move him to say with the apostle: "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

And mark well, these two, godliness and contentment, are so related that the latter is impossible without the former. Only as one stands in a right relation to God can he possibly stand in a right relation to the circumstances surrounding his life in this world.

Though godliness and contentment may be and should be clearly distinguished, they nevertheless belong together in such a way that the latter is the fruit of the former. When godliness sets our eyes on that which is divine and heavenly, it is bound to have a heavenly effect on our lives in this world, where we are confronted with the circumstances of riches and poverty, health and sickness, life and death. Then no matter in which circumstances we may find ourselves, we will be heavenly minded, and perfectly satisfied. In the deep sense of the word, contentment is the manifestation of godliness as it is applied to our present circumstances.

These two, godliness with contentment, when they are experienced in their proper order, are profitable indeed!

As already pointed out, the apostle stresses in the text their profitableness. The great gain of which the apostle speaks is not to be reckoned in a material sense. According to verse five, there were evidently some who held to this view. They believed that godliness was a way to get gain, to obtain material possessions. This the apostle denies. Rather he means to say, godliness when it is applied to earthly circumstances brings contentment, and that, indeed, has great spiritual benefit in our lives.

It is apparent from the rest of the text that he is not thinking of material prosperity at all. Says he, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." When he wrote this, he may very well have had in his mind the saying of Job, "Naked came I from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither" (Job 1:21).

And isn't it striking, that when Adam was brought into the world, all that was in the world was already prepared for him? He did not help prepare it, nor did he add anything to it; and when

he left it, he carried none of it with him.

No different is it with us. When we come naked out of our mother's womb, there was nothing we brought with us into this world. We came into a world that was all prepared for us. And when we shall leave presently, there is nothing we shall carry with us. No doubt when we make our departure we will be wearing a suit or a dress to cover our nakedness, but that is all. You will not be carrying your bank books, or the silver and gold you have stashed away for the proverbial rainy day. Your houses and land, all your horded gain, you leave behind. Really, you go out of this world precisely as you came in — stark naked. That is also what the apostle is saying, and it is clear that the great gain of which he speaks cannot refer to material wealth. As far as material possessions are concerned, we are no richer when we leave this world than we were when we came into it.

Simple but humiliating truth!

Yet, somehow, so difficult for us to learn!

For seventy, perhaps eighty years, we may struggle to get gain. Meticulously we guard our earthly possessions, and even seek to increase them. And when they multiply, it is not difficult at all to act the part of the fool, who imagined he would stay here forever. He made plans for bigger facilities wherein to store his horded gain, not realizing that at less than a moment's notice his life in the world would be taken from him, and nothing of that which he had gathered could be carried with him. What we should learn from all this is the fact that there was no godliness and therefore no contentment to be found in all his thoughts and actions.

But great gain it is to live out of the faith that God is our God, and by His grace we have been recreated like unto Him. Great gain it is to know without a doubt that we possess a God Who possesses us. And most profitable it is to believe that when that great God provides us daily with food and raiment, there is nothing else that we really need. Then we experience quite profitably also the grace of contentment. And this is precisely the way the Lord Jesus would have us to live in this present world. Did He not teach us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread"?

So the apostle exhorts us: "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

Impossible! you say. No one can live in the present world with only food and raiment. That may be true of someone who is cast on a lonely island, and cut off from our sophisticated and highly developed world. You may complain that the world in which you live makes it mandatory

that you become involved in worldly things. From morning to night, and every day the facts are dinned into your ears that when you are sixty years of age you must retire. So by all means you must make arrangements for your retirement. And because of inflation it is becoming more and more apparent that social security cannot take care of you when you are old. In fact it is quite possible that social security may not be able to take care of you at all — the fund may even run dry. You should therefore make provision with other means and insurances that will take care of you when you are old. Besides, when one is old he may have to go into a home for the aged. And who does not know how soon the expenses there can eat up the little nest egg he had salted away? So you can go on and on to prove that it is the point of wisdom even to make preparations to take care of yourself when the time comes that you need it most.

But look back now over all this argument, and ask yourself: Where is the godliness in it? And where is the contentment I should have?

The only answer is: there is none of these. Really these are the arguments and machinations of an ungodly, worldly man. It certainly is not the language of faith. And he who talks this way may very well want to scratch out the word of God in our text from Scripture.

We must be reminded, according to the Word of

God in our text, that not the man of the world has great gain, even if he has amassed his millions. He is exceeding poor and wretched and miserable; and if he has nothing more, he will be miserable unto all eternity.

Only he has great possession who is graced with godliness, and who by grace possesses the virtue of contentment. That great gain will tide him over all the vicissitudes of life, and remove from him all earthly care. Such an one can lay himself down in peace and sleep, with a confidence that all is well, even when all things appear to be against him. And when he lays his head down on the pillow of death, he will not feel that he has been robbed of all his earthly goods, but he will consciously enter the state of heavenly bliss, completely transformed into the very image of God. The ungodly millionaire has nothing, while the child of God, though he be a pauper, is exceeding rich. He has his God. The ungodly, as the Scriptures teach, are like the troubled sea that cannot rest; but the child of God, though he be tossed upon the billows, possesses the calm of contentedness. He has a peace that surpasses all understanding.

Indeed, great gain is it to possess godliness with contentment!

He who possesses these virtues shall never be ashamed!

EDITORIALS

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

The E.R.C.S.

The initials E.R.C.S. stand for the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore.

By the time these lines are printed in our February 1 issue that Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore will have become a reality, according to present plans. The Lord willing, the group formerly known as the G.L.T.S. (Gospel Literature and Tract Society) among whom our missionary, Rev. Arie den Hartog, has been laboring will be instituted as the church on January 24. And they will be organized as a *Reformed* church, with the Three Forms of Unity as their confessional basis.

That is great and good news for the saints in Singapore and for us. We rejoice with the young saints in faraway Singapore because they have achieved the desire of their hearts to be established as a Reformed church in that place. We wish them

well in the future. We wish them the Lord's blessing. For without that blessing they cannot really be and continue as the church. That is always true, but it is especially and emphatically true for the young E.R.C.S. in their peculiar situation, with their peculiar problems and circumstances. Most of us here in the U.S. cannot even begin to imagine the situation in a place like Singapore in the midst of which this new young congregation exists. For in many respects they must exist in the midst of what is really a heathen environment, with all that this entails. And as far as the church is concerned, the new young congregation cannot look to other churches in that city for help and support: for there is not another truly Reformed witness in Singapore. Hence, to be the church, and to be specifically a *Reformed* church, will be a constant battle for the saints there. And so we say to the E.R.C.S.: may the

Lord our God prosper and strengthen you, and may He cause you to grow, to grow in spiritual strength, to grow in the knowledge and conviction of the Reformed faith, the faith of the gospel, and to grow numerically, so that there may be added to you such as should be saved.

We rejoice, too, with Rev. and Mrs. den Hartog. We know and are sure that the achievement of this goal of the institution of the church there represents the achievement of a goal toward which our missionary has long labored diligently and faithfully. Rev. den Hartog — and this is the testimony not only of the saints in Singapore but also of those of us who had the opportunity to observe his work there firsthand — has labored with all his heart and soul in the cause of the gospel there. He was disappointed when the institution of the church was delayed; undoubtedly that very delay has now only served to increase his joy when at last the goal is achieved. May the Lord continue to bless his labors in Singapore, and may He in due time expand the work in that area.

We may rejoice and do rejoice as Protestant Reformed Churches, too, because the Lord our God has blessed and prospered this foreign mission endeavor of our denomination. This was a work which first seemed so unlikely and impossible. It had its earliest beginnings when Rev. C. Hanko and I made what might be called an almost incidental sidetrip to Singapore at the time of our 1975 tour in

behalf of our synodical Contact Committee. I recall that in our committee meetings we almost doubted whether we should spend the extra funds for this additional trip to Indonesia and to Singapore. When we actually went there and delivered two evening messages, it was really more or less "accidental" that the group then known as the G.L.T.D., through the initiative of brother Ong Keng Ho, sponsored the meetings. There really was no indication at that time of any positive response and fruit when we spoke those two evenings. Then for some two years we heard next to nothing from the young people of the G.L.T.D. The only contact we had during that time was through our literature. And suddenly, in mid-1977 I began to receive letters asking for help and instruction with regard to the doctrine of baptism, and before long an inquiry whether our Protestant Reformed Churches could help them to become instituted as a church. What happened after that we all know. When I forwarded to our Foreign Mission Committee the correspondence I had received, they sent emissaries to Singapore a couple of times, and soon recommended that we call a foreign missionary for the field. The Lord gave us Rev. den Hartog for this purpose. And now the church is instituted there! What hath God wrought!

And how thankful and how encouraged we ought to be as churches!

The Hebrew Vowel Points or the Power Thereof

In the GKN document "God With Us," the report/decision dealing with the nature of the authority of Scripture, there is a paragraph which rather derisively refers to one of the Reformed confessions without naming it and without quoting its statements. The paragraph in the GKN Report reads as follows (It is found on page 47 in the section we have already considered in our critique.):

As is described in Chapter III, in the Reformed tradition the teaching of the infallibility of the Holy Scripture has been defended for a long time in a sense of an absolute inerrancy. One then proceeded from the so-called mechanical inspiration by which one understood that the Holy Spirit literally dictated the Scriptures to the writers of the Bible. Sometimes the reasoning was so strict and direct that it was held that even the vowel marks of the Hebrew text were inspired. Apparently they did not yet know that these

vowel marks were added to the text of the Old Testament in the Middle Ages.

The reference in this paragraph can only be to the one Reformed creed which makes mention of these Hebrew vowel points, namely, the Helvetic Consensus Formula. This was a rather late Reformed creed, composed at Zurich, Switzerland in 1675 by John Heidegger, of Zurich, with assistance from Francis Turretin, of Geneva, and Luke Gernler, of Basle. Its main purpose was to condemn and exclude from the Swiss churches the errors of Amyraldianism. But because of a current controversy about the doctrine of Scripture, particularly about the reliability of the Hebrew and Greek original texts of the Old and of the New Testaments respectively, it also included three articles about Scripture. It is in the second of these articles that

reference is made to the Hebrew vowel points, a matter which I will explain in due course. But to understand and appreciate what this confession says on the matter, it is necessary to have all three articles before us. As you read these articles, ask yourself where the doctrine of *mechanical inspiration* occurs, as the Dutch Report alleges. I could not find it! The articles do indeed teach *verbal inspiration*, but this is by no means the same as mechanical inspiration. Here are the articles:

I. God, the Supreme Judge, not only took care to have His word, which is the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16), committed to writing by Moses, the Prophets, and the Apostles, but has also watched and cherished it with paternal care ever since it was written up to the present time, so that it could not be corrupted by craft of Satan or fraud of man. Therefore the Church justly ascribes it to His singular grace and goodness that she has, and will have to the end of the world, a "sure word of prophecy" and "Holy Scriptures" (II Tim. 3:15), from which, though heaven and earth perish, "one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass" (Matt. 5:18).

II. But, in particular, the Hebrew Original of the Old Testament, which we have received and to this day do retain as handed down by the Jewish Church, unto whom formerly "were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2), is, not only in its consonants, but in its vowels — either the vowel points themselves, or at least the power of the points — not only in its matter, but in its words, inspired of God, thus forming, together with the Original of the New Testament, the sole and complete rule of our faith and life; and to its standard, as to a Lydian stone, all extant versions, oriental and occidental, ought to be applied, and wherever they differ, be conformed.

III. Therefore we can by no means approve the opinion of those who declare that the *text* which the Hebrew Original exhibits was determined by man's will alone, and do not scruple at all to remodel a Hebrew reading which they consider unsuitable, and amend it from the Greek Versions of the LXX and others, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Chaldee Targums, or even from other sources, yea, sometimes from their own reason alone; and furthermore, they do not acknowledge any other reading to be genuine except that which can be educed by the critical power of the human judgment from the collation of editions with each other and with the various readings of the Hebrew Original itself — which, they maintain, has been corrupted in various ways; and finally, they affirm that besides the Hebrew edition of the present time, there are in the Versions of the ancient interpreters which differ from our Hebrew context other Hebrew Originals, since these Versions are also indicative of ancient Hebrew Originals differing from each other. Thus they bring the foundation of our faith and its inviolable authority into perilous hazard.

First of all, let me explain what is meant by

Hebrew "vowel points." The Hebrew language, in which the Old Testament was originally written, has an alphabet of only twenty-two consonants; it has no vowels. That is, the spoken language had vowel sounds, of course: for without these there can be no speech. But there are no vowel symbols in the Hebrew alphabet, only consonants. And the "vowel points" are a system of symbols added to the written Hebrew of the Old Testament, and written either above or below the words themselves. These "vowel points" represent the sounds of *a, e, i, o, u*. These points as now used date back to the sixth or seventh century after Christ. When Article II of the Helvetic Consensus Formula speaks of "the power" of these vowel points, it refers to the fact that as long as Hebrew was a living, spoken language, the vowel sounds of the various words were evident and known to any Jew; he would not need the addition of symbols in order to understand how a word was to be read and pronounced. This is the "power," or significance, of the points. Moreover, this "power" of the points was indicated in written Hebrew by especially three or four consonants: Aleph, He, Waw, Yodh. This is explained in Davidson-Mauchline, *Hebrew Grammar*, p. 14, as follows: "So long as Hebrew was a living language, the helps to vocalization described above (referring to the vowel letters, HCH), though scanty, might be found sufficient. But when the language ceased to be spoken and became unfamiliar, fuller representation of the vowels was needful for correct reading." And again: "During the time when there were no written vowel signs, a tradition of pronunciation of the words of the Scripture was handed down. It was this tradition, named the *Massora*, which Jewish scholars, the Massoretes, in the early centuries of the Christian era, sought to preserve by the introduction of a system of vowel signs which received the name of the Massoretic System of Points. Its purpose was to preserve and to transmit with accuracy the textual tradition and to remove ambiguities concerning the reading and interpretation of the consonantal text.... It probably dates from the sixth and seventh centuries; the signs are not regarded as integral parts of the words but are placed above or below so that they are *outside* them." This last phenomenon is due to the fact that the Jewish scholars had such respect for the sacredness of the Hebrew text that they were very careful to preserve it unchanged and would not tamper with it by inserting any changes or additions in the text itself.

We have already noted that the articles of the Helvetic Consensus Formula give absolutely no indication of a theory of mechanical inspiration. What we, in fact, have in these articles is a beauti-

ful confession of the truth of verbal inspiration and a beautiful confession of faith that the Lord our God caused the Scriptures to be preserved for His church down through the centuries. And the Dutch theologians who composed the Report/Decision concerning the authority of Scripture may babble about mechanical inspiration and may meanwhile so tamper with the whole doctrine of the inspiration and authority of Scripture that virtually nothing is left of it, and they may meanwhile prate about the alleged ignorance of seventeenth century Reformed theologians; but give me the Helvetic Consensus Formula and its sound faith any day in preference to the unbelief of the report, "God With Us."

But let us examine that charge of ignorance.

Is it really true that the men of the seventeenth century "apparently...did not know that these vowel marks were added to the text of the Old Testament in the Middle Ages?" Were these men indeed ignorant?

The opposite is true. The reader may judge whether the Dutch theologians, with all their vaunted learning, are indeed ignorant of the facts or whether they are deliberately twisting the truth.

But here are the facts. And they may all be confirmed by consulting Francis Turretin's *Institutes*, Locus 2, "The Doctrine of Scripture."

1. When the Helvetic Consensus Formula speaks of the "original," it is not referring to the autographs, i.e., the books of Scripture as they came from the hands of Moses, Isaiah, Paul, etc. But they mean Hebrew and Greek copies of these autographs; and they are dealing with the question of the purity and reliability of these copies. Turretin treats this matter under Question 10: "Has the original text of the Old and New Testament come to us pure and uncorrupted? (Affirmative, against the Roman Catholics)." Turretin deals with this question, in part, as follows:

I. This question is forced upon us by the Roman Catholics, who raise doubts concerning the purity of the sources in order more readily to establish the authority of their Vulgate (Latin version, HCH) and lead us to the tribunal of the church.

II. By "original texts" we do not mean the very autographs from the hands of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, which are known to be nonexistent. We mean copies (*apographa*), which have come in their name, because they record for us that word of God in the same words into which the sacred writers committed it under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

III. There is no question of the sources being pure in the sense that no error has crept into many sacred codices, either from the ravages of time, or the care-

lessness of copyists, or the malice of Jews and heretics. This is recognized on both sides, and the variant readings, which Beza and Robert Stephanus have noted in Greek, and the Jews in Hebrew, witness sufficiently to this. But the question is whether the original text, in Hebrew or in Greek, has been so corrupted, either by the carelessness of copyists or by the malice of Jews and heretics, that it can no longer be held as the judge of controversies and the norm by which all versions without exception are to be judged. The Roman Catholics affirm this; we deny it.

Turretin then goes on to explain and to produce many strong arguments for this position. In the course of these arguments he even makes mention of the Massoretes and their work, as follows, using their work as one of the arguments in favor of a reliable Hebrew text: "The care with which the Massoretes not only counted, but recorded in writing, all variations in pointing and writing, not only with regard to verses and words, but to individual letters, so that there could be neither place for, nor suspicion of, forgers, an argument used by Arias Montanus in his biblical preface." (pp. 113-115)

2. There was indeed a debate in those years as to the question of the origin of the vowel points. For a long time it had been held that the so-called Massoretic Text had come either from Moses or from Ezra and the Great Synagogue; and many Reformed theologians still held in the seventeenth century that this was the case. But there were others — and a certain Louis Cappel was a leader among them — who held that the vowel points were a later help invented by the Massoretes in order to help with the preservation and reading of the traditional text. But to speak of ignorance in this connection is foolish. Reformed scholars like Turretin were well aware of the two possibilities. They were also well aware that not only Roman Catholics but also some Reformed men used the late date of the Massoretic points as an argument against the reliability of the Hebrew original. I could quote at length from the same work of Turretin already mentioned, but two paragraphs will suffice in this regard:

XII. (3) Even if the points were added at a late date, as these who date their origin from the Massoretes of Tiberias claim, it does not follow that they are merely a human device, depending only on human judgment, which indeed, if it be assumed, considerably weakens the authority of the Hebrew manuscript. For the pointing, in the opinion of those who hold this hypothesis, is not supposed to have been done according to the judgment of the rabbis, but according to the analogy of Scripture, the nature (*genius*) of the sacred language, and the meaning that had long been accepted by the Jews, so that even if the points were not, as on this hypothesis, part of the original with regard to their shape, it cannot be denied that they always

were part of it with regard to sound and value, or power. (Here you have the same position as that of the Consensus Formula; and note the sound and scholarly argumentation. HCH) Otherwise, since vowels are the souls of consonants, the text would always have been ambiguous; indeed no clear meaning of the word would be possible unless [the vowels] were as old as the consonants, as Prideaux in his twelfth lecture on the antiquity of the points soundly observes: "That the points and accents were part of the original in respect to sound and value no one denies: [the question] only concerns the marks and characters." And again, "the vowels were as old as the consonants with regard to underlying quality (*vis*) and sound, although the dots and marks which are now employed had not then appeared." Indeed it is hardly possible to doubt that the vowels, if not with the same marks that are now written were nevertheless indicated by some marks in place of the points, in order that the sure and unchanging message (*sensus*) of the Holy Spirit, which otherwise, depending merely on human learning and memory, could easily have been forgotten, or corrupted, might be retained. [This could have been done,] as some suppose, by the letters *aleph*, *waw*, and *yodh*, which are therefore called "the mothers of speech." Such is the opinion of the learned [Brian] Walton, who says, "By usage and the tradition of the elders, the true reading and pronunciation had been preserved by means of the three letters, *aleph*, *waw*, and *yodh* which are called mothers of speech and which served in place of the vowels before the introduction of the points" (*Prolegomena to the [London] Polyglot* 7).

Here, therefore, Turretin argues that regardless of the alleged late date of the Massoretic points, those points — and the Hebrew Original — are reliable. But he also makes it plain that the whole theory about the lateness of the points was at that time not firm, at the same time asserting that this is not the decisive factor:

XIII. (4) Our adversaries arbitrarily assume what

requires proof, that points are a modern and human addition, a conclusion with which a great many Jews, notably Eli Levi, who lived a century ago, disagreed, in which they were followed by many highly regarded philologists (*grammatici*) and theologians, both Protestant and Catholic — Junius, Illyricus, Reuchlin, Munster, Cevalerius, Pagninus, M. Marinus, Polanus, Deodatus, Broughton, Muisius, Taylor, Booth, Lightfoot, and most theologians since them. The whole case seems to have been settled by the Buxtorfs, father and son, the first in his *Tiberias*, the second in that most thorough work with which he refuted *Arcanum punctuationis revelatum*. It would not be difficult to support this position by a number of considerations, if we should now turn our attention to it, but since the question is one of philology rather than of theology we do not care to make it our battle. It is enough to have it understood that to us the teaching that regards the points as of divine origin has always seemed truer and safer, for the support of the authenticity of the original text whole and complete against heretics, and the establishing of a sure and changeless principle of faith, whether [the points] come from Moses or from Ezra, the leader of the Great Synagogue, and so it is useless for our adversaries to seek to question the authority of the Hebrew manuscripts on the ground of the newness of the points. (pp. 131-133)

It ought to be clear, therefore, that the authors of the GKN's Report/Decision do the Helvetic Consensus Formula and the theologians of that day gross injustice by their statement. And while the Report/Decision leaves the impression, or tries to, of great learning and thorough investigation, it would appear that its authors cannot stand in the shadow of the great men of God of the seventeenth century who are criticized by the Report.

[Note: all the quotations of Turretin are taken from the recent Baker publication, *The Doctrine of Scripture, Locus 2 of Institutio Theologiae Elencticae*, Edited and Translated by John W. Beardslee III.]

TRANSLATED TREASURES

A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

(In the last article Kuyper began a discussion of the reformation of the church by way of separation from the denomination. He talked briefly about the fact that such reformation always begins in the local congregation. But as that reformation begins in the local congregation, it can be either opposed or supported by the local consistory. If the local consistory supports such reformation then it comes into conflict with the federation of

churches. But if the local consistory opposes such reformation which begins in the congregation it becomes the means whereby the federation also opposes the reformation which has begun. Both of these Kuyper now intends to discuss.)

An individual who comes into conflict with the church federation can be either a common member

of the church or a person who is in a certain office or in a certain ministry connected to the church.

Common members can come into conflict with the church federation in two ways: because they act contrary to a certain rule laid down for the churches by the church federation, or because they are wronged by the church federation in an appeal to a broader gathering.

If you take the first instance and if such a member is branded as an opposer of ecclesiastical ordinances, then the church federation can either look through its fingers and let the irregularity take its course, or it can demand that the opponent cease from his unlawful action. If the opponent gives in, then the matter is ended. But if he, out of obedience to the Word of God, considers it impossible to give in and carries on his case, then the church federation will discipline him and will try to make him submit. The means which the church federation will use to do this are: 1) denial of eligibility of ecclesiastical offices and positions; 2) denial of the use of the sacraments; 3) suspension from membership; 4) and finally, excommunication.

The one who "resists," convinced that he cannot concede anything, continues to press his case even though discipline after discipline comes upon him. Even when the sacraments are denied him, e.g., he continues to go to the sacraments.¹

This places the consistory before the question whether it will help to punish the one who resists, or, shrinking back from this, will refuse to execute the punishment laid upon him. If the last happens, then the conflict passes from the individual person to the consistory, and thus will be discussed later. But if it does the first and lends itself to that in order to punish the resister of ecclesiastical regulations by withholding the means of grace, then the conflict comes to its climax against the one who is unrighteously condemned and the ecclesiastical federation which desires to force him.

In such a case it would be irresponsible for such a person to submit. This would be a departure from his former faithfulness. And nothing would remain for him but to come to the sacraments, and if these are denied him by force, to institute, with like-minded people, their own administration of the means of grace; or, if there are no likeminded people, to seek in another church what his own church withholds from him.

If this leads to his excommunication, then he need not consider himself as excommunicated from the church. But there does rest on him the obligation to proceed with a new organization in his church, and, without show or desire for scandal, in the fear of God, to labor for reformation because he longs for the pure administration of the means of

grace for himself, his own, and those who stand with him.

The second imaginary case is that he comes into conflict with the church federation by the decision of a broader gathering: either that he himself appeals against a decision of his consistory, or that his consistory agrees with him but then another appeals against this decision of the consistory. Actually, however, it comes down to the same thing, and the progress of the conflict shall be the same as the progress of reformation of which we spoke above. Either such a one shall then submit himself to the sentence of the ecclesiastical gathering, and then there is no more conflict, or, if he cannot submit, then the church federation might drop the case; or if it comes at last to excommunication, then from that excommunication the same obligation as above leads to independent action.

Actually, conflict between common members and the church federation brings up the question of a break with the church as such, a reason why we postpone further discussion of this sort of conflict to the next paragraph.

In the meantime, before we come to the question of the conflict of the consistory and the church federation, we must discuss the unusual conflict which arises, not from the common members, but from persons in ecclesiastical offices.

This kind of conflict is of a more serious kind. Discipline of a common member is less damaging, and common members are subject to less discipline. Excommunication of common members almost never occurs. A certain shame, joined with an awareness of helplessness, usually prevents churchmen in power from persecuting with spiritual punishments anyone to whom nothing else is to be charged than that he is zealous for the honor of God. But it is a different matter if the opponent is an officebearer or an ecclesiastical person. Then there is much more of his influence to fear and the church federation has in its power much more powerful means to punish him. He who is in office can be suspended from that office or set out of that office. The same holds for non-official positions in the church. A supervisor who does not desire to be in league with ungodliness can cause much trouble to the church federation, but the church federation can also take away from that supervisor his membership. A janitor, a precentor, an organist, who will not slavishly go along, can be punished with respect to his daily bread. This can also be done to religious teachers who are considered troublemakers. And with respect to offices, what is easier than to remove on high authority a deacon or an elder who dares to test the ecclesiastical ordinances with God's Word? But what ought to stand on the

foreground is the seriousness of a conflict between a church federation and the minister. All other conflicts reach their apex in this. This is true on the one hand, because of the powerful influence which a minister exercises and because of the public nature of his actions; but also, on the other hand, because the church federation can attack him directly and set him outside his office and work, yes, out of his house and goods and money.

Almost all thoroughgoing reformations are born out of this kind of conflict, and the reason is clear why right here the highest moral power becomes manifested.

A common member of the congregation can allow himself to be cut off almost without having wrestled with his God, in a somewhat insolent way perhaps. Also, having been cut off, he remains what he always was. Especially today the suffering which accompanies being cut off amounts to almost nothing.

For a supervisor or janitor, for an elder or deacon, to be deposed is most disagreeable. But in the end he is not ruined. A supervisor loses a certain monetary influence. A janitor loses a very small part of his earnings. An elder or deacon returns to ordinary life without having lost what the world considers desirable.

But this is entirely different for the preacher. For a minister of the Word, excommunication is nothing less than being cut off from his life's position, a taking away of his sphere of work, a deprivation of the whole of his existence. Behind all this is the goad either to be unfaithfully silent, or to continue to teach and then continue the conflict in a new kind of suffering. Think of Kohlbrugge, what that way of suffering cost him.

For this reason we say that a much higher grace is demanded of the minister of the Word to remain faithful in such a conflict than is demanded of a common member or elder. The moral triumph over flesh and sin must be so much stronger in the minister, his readiness to serve his Lord so much more invincible, his desire for obedience so much stronger, his willingness to make sacrifices must shine so much more brightly.

Common members and also elders who are so ready to complain about the unfaithfulness of our ministers must ask themselves once if they would be found as faithful if their whole life's position, yes, the bread of their wives and children was at stake.

But, on the other hand, one must then also be zealous in prayers that God will be pleased to pour out His overflowing grace in the heart of many ministers of the Word, to break in them the tempta-

tion of false reasoning with which they justify themselves; and thus to give to the churches of Christ those natural leaders for the work of reformation without whose leadership and cooperation the reformation of a church rarely succeeds. And if the prayer is heard, then also the extraordinary measure of moral courage and power of faith which develops in the ministers shall give to their words such a fervor and to their appearance such power that the opposition in the church federation succumbs of itself.

Only through the spiritual awakening of the ministers of the Word can a church be saved; but also only by the passivity of ministers a hostile church federation remains strong.

The consequence of a conflict between ministers and a church federation is always very serious.

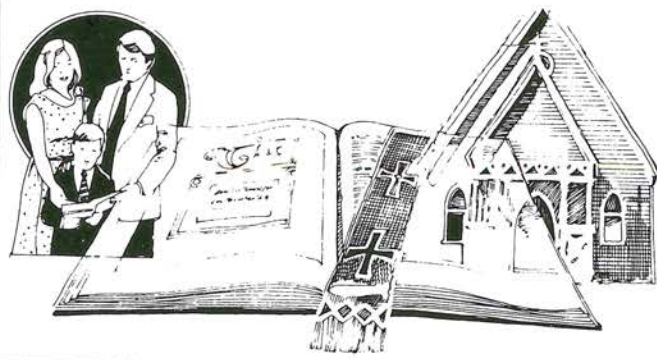
It is serious in a tragic sense when the minister of the Word, after a moment of zeal, again lays his head in his bosom, gives in, so that the work of God which he undertook is abandoned.

It is serious in its direct consequences. This is true because a minister who is suspended must in such a case continue to preach in the church; or, if this cannot be, then outside the church. And if he is excommunicated, then he gathers forthwith the faithful to himself and preaches the Word if necessary in a stable or a barn, from a shipdeck or in an open field.

Having come to this point, this conflict can also very easily lead to a break with the church itself even as the consequence of the conflict between common members in the church federation spoken of in the following paragraph.

¹ It is highly doubtful whether this is proper for a child of God. It would seem that both Scripture and our Church Order rather require of such a one that he submit to the decision of his consistory, but under protest, and that he carry his protest through to the broader ecclesiastical assemblies. It seems as if Kuyper here is advocating rebelling within the local congregation.

Take time to read *The Standard Bearer*



FROM HOLY WRIT

The So-called Proof-texts of Postmillennialism

Rev. G. Lubbers

Chapter XII

THE LAW GOING FORTH FROM ZION

In most beautiful poetic strains of prophecy and with the richest metaphors the Holy Spirit shows us the distant, future glory of the church of the New Testament era, as well as the church in glory in the ages to come, in Isaiah 2:3-5 and Micah 4:2-5. No distinction or separation is made here between the Messianic Kingdom, conceived of as belonging to the time before the final return of Christ, and the so-called Kingdom in the ages to come. There is not a bit of this Postmillennialism in these texts. Both the Post- and the Pre-Millennials appeal to these passages as teaching their Millennium views. But the prophetic *perspective* sees both comings of Christ in one revelation. The prophets see both the New Testament Dispensation, as the time when all things are being united under one Head, and the final great and glorious perfection of this uniting of heaven and earth, in the new heaven and the new earth, when the tabernacle of God shall be with men. That will be the one, grand, holy, temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:22).

Hence, the future spoken of in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 is not the Postmillennial kingdom, when the whole world shall be "christianized" before the glorious return of Christ upon the clouds of heaven. It is true that Postmillennial writers point to many passages of Scripture which speak of the vastness of the redeemed multitude; they point to evidence which in their mind indicates that the world is growing steadily and slowly and constantly better; they rather exultantly point to what they consider the material prosperity of the Postmillennial kingdom on the horizon like a man's hand; yet, even so, they admit that in this "golden state" the men who join the kingdom will not be sinless. This kingdom will not reach the perfection of heaven ever in this age!

We must surely notice that Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 speak of a perfect kingdom, be it then in Old Testament terminology. All the imperfections of the Old Testament Zion and Jerusalem shall be no more. Jerusalem shall never again be a mere lodge in a

cucumber patch, a besieged city. It will be a city where the gates are never closed; there shall be no night there. Thus it shall be in the "last days" in the dispensation of the fulness of time, times which are really the beginning of heaven on earth, where the church is raised with Christ from the dead and set with Him in heavenly places, from which all her blessings flow (Eph. 2:4-6; 1:3 ff). She is the "one new man" in Christ, as we showed from Scripture in our former chapter. In that kingdom there will be perfect peace, and there shall not enter therein "any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27). Here in this Kingdom will be the perfect peace which has been made by the great Prince of peace in the blood of the Cross, the blood of reconciliation and of propitiation (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20).

But let us study the texts in Isaiah 2:3-5 and in Micah 4:2-5.

We are confident that good, solid exegesis of these texts will indicate that the Kingdom of peace here is not an earthly "Messianic Kingdom" but is the Messianic Kingdom which is truly heavenly, even now in this present Dispensation. And principally it is also comprised of citizens who are, according to the calling of grace, a holy people, who, as far as the life of regeneration is concerned, cannot sin. It is a kingdom composed of elect saints, born again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead (I John 3:9; I Peter 1:2-5).

The texts speak of the "law going forth from Zion." And they both add "and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Is. 2:3b and Micah 4:2b). It is quite evident that the Scripture here gives the efficacious reason why multitudes will flow to Zion to serve the LORD in spirit and in truth, when that "hour cometh" (John 4:21), when men shall neither worship on the hill of Samaria, nor in the earthly mountain of Jerusalem. Then it shall be seen that the Father seeketh in sovereign grace such that they may worship Him in heavenly Zion above. And now in the New Testament Dispensation such are born in Zion and sing: all my fountains are in

Thee (Psalm 87).

What is this "law" which shall go forth from Zion?

According to the Hebrew parallelism this "law" is the "word of Jehovah" which goes forth from Jerusalem. Now this is very instructive. Negatively this means that it does not go forth from Mount Sinai. Really, in all the Old Testament the law went forth from Sinai, where the law was given to Moses by the angels whom God did send (Gal. 3:20, 21). This is a structural Gospel-truth which is not always understood. And, yet, shall we really lay low the claims of the Postmillennialists, we shall need to notice this fine point in the text. It is really a teaching which is blazoned across the pages of Scripture. And we must wield the sword of the Spirit here and rightly divide the Word of truth, lest we be a workman that falls on the sword of the erroneous interpreter of the Scripture. For only the word of truth can lay low and "bring in captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5). For if "law" goes out from Sinai, then the world must be made a better place by adhering to certain laws. That is what all modernism wants to maintain, to achieve the goal of making this world a better place to live in. And a christianized world does not fall under the preaching of the law from Zion, as the keypower of the Kingdom of heaven. Hence, it is vain to think that a world will be christianized in every sphere by the preaching of the Gospel. The true preaching of the Gospel goes forth from Zion, and is a savor of life unto life and a savor of death unto death! (II Cor. 2:16, 17).

How could the law in Isaiah go forth from Mount Sinai in the "last days"? Have we not come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than Abel? (Heb. 12:18-21).

It is from this heavenly Mount Zion that the "law goes forth" into all the world; it proceeds from the throne of grace. It is the Gospel which Christ came to preach to those who are far and near. Yes, this is the word which "first began to be spoken by our Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him, God also bearing them witness with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will" (Heb. 2:3, 4). It is the preaching of faith and repentance in the blood of Christ, beginning from Jerusalem. Howbeit, the starting point of this gospel-preaching, its power and glory do not proceed from earthly Jerusalem. When earthly Jerusalem is a "house left desolate," after the rending of the veil, the preaching has its historical starting point here. But the disciples receive the "empowering by the Spirit" from on high, from the risen and glorified

Christ, so that in this power they can go forth from earthly Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, even unto the uttermost parts of the world. When earthly Zion is really still a lodge in a cucumber patch, a besieged city to be destroyed (Matt. 24:15 ff; Luke 21:20, 21), then the Gospel shall go forth from heavenly Zion, the law shall go forth, the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

How does this Word of the Lord go forth?

It goes forth as the "law" from Zion, that is, it goes forth as the law which shall be written upon the tables of the hearts of all the elect of God, out of every tongue, tribe, people, and nation. That the law goes forth to be truly and really and indelibly written upon the hearts of the elect in distinction from the reprobate is a truth which is silenced by every writer of Postmillennial persuasion. Such cannot understand that there can be a preaching of power if the entire world is not laid before Christ in true obedience. It is really not teaching that the "elect have obtained it and the rest were hardened" as this is also true in the New Testament Dispensation (Rom. 11:7). Postmillennialism takes the position, at least some of its most outspoken representatives, that such a distinction was true in the Old Testament times, especially in the times of Jesus, but that really toward the end of time, in the "golden age," this shall no longer be true. But the truth is that, even in the New Testament, only as many as were ordained believed, even among the Gentiles. The Spirit is given to the New Testament church also as the fulfillment of the promise only to those who are called. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, even as we were elected in Christ from before the foundations of the earth (Eph. 1:3, 4).

When the law goes forth from Zion, as the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem which is above, it is ever with the upward calling; it is ever a high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14), and is indeed such that it makes those called partakers of the heavenly calling. This could never be the case if the law went forth from Sinai once more. That would be the death-knell of all coming of the nations to Zion. The people come with joy and gladness in their soul to Jerusalem because the Word of the Lord, the Gospel of reconciliation, comes to them in the blessed ministry of grace. The waters of grace flow from the temple and from the throne of God for the healing of the nations (Ezek. 47:1-12; Zach. 13:1; Rev. 22:1-2). These are the waters of grace which the glorified Christ gives, and unto which He calls the nations, and assures them that rivers of waters shall flow from their bowels (John 7:38). This is for everyone that believes in Jesus with a true faith, which is the gift of God.

Small wonder that these called say to one

another, "come ye, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths," as our text teaches.

No more then shall Jerusalem be in desolation again, nor surrounded by the armies and hordes of

the heathen who rage against the LORD and against His anointed Son. For then we shall see the Kingdom of glory established in His church glorified. And Zion shall indeed be exalted above the mountains, and God shall be all in all, when the tabernacle of God is with man (Rev. 21:1-4).

GUEST ARTICLE

Examining Church Membership (2)

Rev. James Slopsema

In a previous article under this title the importance of church membership was established. The church as an organization is the mother of God's people. This is true from the viewpoint that through her ministry God brings His people to salvation in Jesus Christ and sustains them in that salvation. The ministries that God has given to the church are essentially three: the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline. These three labors of the church are indispensable for our faith and salvation. Hence, there is the necessity of church membership.

If this is clear to us, then we will also understand the importance of belonging to a church which is faithful to her ministry. The principle here is that to the degree that a church fails in her calling to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, and exercise Christian discipline, to that degree she fails to be a useful tool in the hand of God to bring salvation to her members.

This is easily demonstrated for example with the preaching, which is the chief means of grace to the salvation of God's people. In Galatians 1 the Apostle Paul speaks of those who were preaching a gospel which was no gospel. This was a gospel which was a perversion of the gospel of Christ brought to the Galatian churches by the Apostle. It was a gospel filled with false doctrine, which misrepresented God and His work of salvation in Jesus Christ. It was therefore a gospel which set forth not the truth but a lie. There is that kind of preaching. That kind of preaching was to be found not only in the Apostle's day but also today. To the degree that this characterizes the preaching, to that degree it is not used by God to work faith and salvation in the hearts of His people. This only stands to reason. Do you expect the living God to work salvation through a gospel that misrepresents Him, that speaks a lie about Him? God uses only the preach-

ing of the truth to work His salvation.

The same principle applies equally to the sacraments. The sacraments are subordinate to and directly connected with the preaching. The salvation of God proclaimed in the preaching is visibly represented in the sacraments. Consequently, when false doctrine finds its way into the preaching, this usually results in a corruption of the sacraments. And again, to the degree that the sacraments are corrupted, to that degree they are ineffective to strengthen the faith of God's people. If the church teaches a wrong conception of the sacraments, if the sacraments are administered indiscriminately or in some other way than the way God intended, they are then rendered ineffectual as a means of grace. The sacraments are powerful to strengthen the faith of God's people only when properly administered.

Finally, the same principle holds true for the exercise of Christian discipline. God uses the exercise of Christian discipline by the elders or rulers of the church to keep His people faithful to His Word with respect to both their confession and walk of life. But should the church be lax in Christian discipline, allowing her members to confess and live in a way contrary to God's Word, then the people of God suffer. God's people need that faithful discipline of the rulers of the church. And when that discipline is wanting, the sheep of God are prone to wander and stray to their own hurt.

Hence, it is of utmost importance that we belong to a church which is faithful to her calling before God as church. The spiritual wellbeing of us and our children depend on membership in a church which preaches the gospel of salvation in purity, which administers the sacraments properly, and which exercises Christian discipline faithfully.

Many churches today are not faithful to the calling God has given them. We must not be blind

to this. The tendency today among Christians is to accept without criticism and scrutiny anything that goes under the name "Christian" or "church." To do this is to fail to reckon with reality and the Word of God.

The Word of God tells us to expect unfaithfulness in the church of the New Dispensation. Thus, for example, in Matthew 24:5 and 6 where Christ tells His disciples of the signs of His coming and what they may expect in the future we read, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying I am Christ; and shall deceive many." And again in verse 24 we read, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." Thus, according to the word of Christ, we must expect to find today false Christs and false prophets who proclaim not the gospel of God but the false gospel of these false Christs. They will also be deceptive in their work. They will try to mask their false gospel to make it appear as the gospel of truth. We must not ignore this prophecy of Christ. We must not hide our heads in the sand and pretend that all that goes by the name "Christian" today is good and acceptable. According to Christ's prophecy there are many false prophets today preaching the doctrine of Satan and hell, masking it as the gospel of light.

And where do we find these false prophets? We find them in the church. This is made plain for us in II Peter 2:1 and 2, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies...and many shall follow their pernicious ways." Notice, even as there were false prophets among the people of Israel in the Old Dispensation (cf. the preceding chapter), so also shall there be false teachers among "you." That "you" refers to the church of the New Dispensation which is addressed in this epistle. Hence, you will find these false prophets in the church. Into the church they will bring their damnable heresies. From the pulpits they will proclaim these heresies. And many shall follow their pernicious ways. To ignore this prophecy and blindly follow the teachings of anyone who appears on the pulpit proclaiming "Lord, Lord," is to invite disaster.

In harmony with the appearance of false prophets in the church of the New Dispensation is what may be called the rise of the false church. As a result of these false prophets who bring their damnable heresies into the church, many churches will drift further and further away from the truth. At first these departures may not seem so significant. This is in harmony with the deceitful way in which the false prophet operates. Should the first

departure from the truth be too noticeable, it would be cast out by the faithful. Hence, *the false teacher* starts small with a view to greater things to come. And these great departures *do* come. For the truth is one; and an "insignificant" departure soon works as a leaven so that soon the whole truth of God's Word is corrupted and overthrown. As a result of these false teachers therefore, a church once having departed will drift further and further away from the truth of God's Word until finally it has absolutely no gospel left and becomes a false and apostate church.

And, according to the Scriptures, this apostasy will characterize the vast majority of the church world in the last days before the coming of Christ. This is evident for example from II Thessalonians 2. Here Paul speaks of the man of sin, the son of perdition that will be revealed in the last days (vs. 3). This man of sin is the Antichrist, the false christ of which our Lord spoke in Matthew 24. For according to II Thessalonians 2 his "coming" is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (vs. 9). He furthermore "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped" (vs. 4). And where will this Antichrist be found? He will be found, according to verse 4, in the temple of God, in the church. He will set himself up as God in the church, which certainly indicates that he will dominate and control the church. This is God's Word. This is what we may expect in the last days. Before Christ comes again the church as a whole will fall away and become false and apostate.

We see this sort of thing happening right before our eyes, if we have our eyes open. There are many churches today which have completely apostatized. These are churches which historically stood foursquare upon the Word of God. But now the Word of God is gone. In these churches the Bible is viewed as being merely a human book, no more reliable than any other historical writing. The theology propounded is the theology of the social gospel. Jesus Christ is not the Son of God come in the flesh. He was merely a man, a good and worthy example for us to follow. The reconciliation He accomplished at the cross is not the reconciliation between God and man, but between man and man. The goal of these churches is to make this world a better place in which to live, a heaven on earth. In effect, they have taken the Christ of the gospel and excommunicated Him.

Other churches there are that are at various stages of apostasy. They have not completely lost the gospel of Christ but are drifting further and further away. The preaching is to one degree or another adulterated with false doctrine. Neither is Christian discipline faithfully exercised. These

churches are on the way down. If they do not and will not turn from their apostatizing ways it is only a matter of time before they too will become completely false. Such is the ecclesiastical situation today.

What then is our calling as God's people? Should we find ourselves in an apostate or apostatizing church (and there are many who recognize their church as such) our calling is to call our church to repentance in the proper ecclesiastical way. And, this failing, it is our calling to separate from that institution and join ourselves to a church where the Word of God is honored and preached and maintained in Christian discipline. This is not easy; yet it is necessary and important. To continue with an

apostatizing church is injurious to our spiritual health. We will suffer spiritually as we are fed stones for bread. And our children, and future generations, should we stay with such a church, will die with that church. Leave your children on a sinking ship and they will sink with it.

Should we however find ourselves in a church faithful to her calling, our calling as God's people is to stay with that church. Certainly we may not leave her to join ourselves to a church which is departing. Our calling is to continue in such a church and as members seek to keep her faithful to God's Word that we and our children may continue to enjoy the riches of God's blessing and salvation.

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

As Others See Us

The Protestant Reformed Churches have been presented recently in a little magazine entitled, *The Covenanter Witness*, Sept. 1981. The magazine is produced by churches of Scotland and Ireland: the Reformed Presbyterian Churches — two sister denominations in these two countries. These churches are commonly known as "Covenanters." A sister denomination is also found in this country. The Contact Committee of our Synod has had contact, howbeit somewhat informally, with this church in Ireland. One of their ministers, Rev. Tom Reid, wrote the report, part of which states:

Besides the six home mission fields, this small denomination supports the following activities: (1) A Theological School in Grand Rapids, Michigan, which includes a four year "pre-seminary" department as well as the three year ministerial course. Fourteen students were trained last year by the three full-time professors in the School's own purpose-built facility, supported by two part-time administrators; (2) Ten parent-controlled Christian primary and one secondary school (with two more primary and one more secondary in the planning stages), with about 1,000 students and sixty teachers; (3) Four periodicals: *The Standard Bearer*, which prints over 500 pages in 21 issues each year; *The Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*, distributed free to pastors and others twice per year; *Beacon Lights*, a monthly for young people; and *Perspectives in Covenant Education*, which appears twice yearly for the advancement of Christian schools; (4) Sabbath School materials for all ages; (5)

The Reformed Free Publishing Association, which lists in its present catalogue eleven hard-cover books and ten paper-backs with a total of 7,929 pages, not to mention 32 pamphlets available free; (6) Foreign missions work in Singapore, and relief work in Jamaica. Here is an active Church!

The Rev. T. Reid says other nice things as well. When stated as above, this does make a rather impressive list of labors! Our concern is, however, not to boast, but to pray the grace of God to be able to labor faithfully in the future with the means and opportunities given us that God's Name may be glorified and His people gathered and strengthened.

We had the opportunity of meeting Rev. Reid recently when he with his wife and young daughter passed through the Grand Rapids area. He stayed a few days at the home of Prof. and Mrs. H. Hanko. Rev. T. Reid is a citizen of the U.S., was born and raised near Chicago, came from a liberal United Presbyterian Church, attended Westminster Seminary, studied for an advanced degree in France, and recently became a pastor in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. His wife is French; Tom met and married her while attending school in France. Their daughter was born in Northern Ireland and can claim citizenship in any of the three countries. We hope to hear more of Rev. Reid, perhaps if he writes about his churches in our *Standard Bearer*.

Robert Schuller on "Success"

Christian News, Dec. 7, 1981, presents a quote from *Omni*, a secular magazine which often attacks historic Christianity. *Omni* conducted an interview with Dr. Robert Schuller, pastor of the Crystal Cathedral of the Reformed Church in America. *Christian News* writes:

While Dr. Robert Schuller has always frankly disavowed the Christian doctrine of original sin, refused to clearly affirm the deity of Christ, said on the Phil Donahue show last year that the way to get to heaven is "Turn to God and He will tell you how to get to heaven," and admittedly tells his audiences only what they want to hear, his ministry is supported by many American evangelicals, including Billy Graham and Harold Lindsell. Dr. Schuller is on the advisory board of *Christianity Today Leadership* magazine and heads the Robert H. Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership.

...Reston writes of Dr. Schuller:

Pastor of the Crystal Cathedral, in Garden Grove, California, and creator of the television program *Hour of Power*, which is seen by three million viewers in the United States and Australia, Dr. Robert Schuller claims that he is the most widely known churchman in America.

...Religion at present, particularly evangelical Protestantism, he believes, rests upon embarrassing the sinner by fostering shame and fear as the lash of redemption. He means to accent the positive.

"Self-esteem is the central verity, the north star, the

central mark of the emotionally healthy person. That is why I talk against failure so much. Failure is an ego blowout in heavy traffic in the public eye."

Health, not sin, is the standard to gauge the upright life.... He agrees with William Sloane Coffin that the church should be involved in the dissolution, as well as in the making, of marriage. He has even conducted a church divorce....

High over Orange County, Schuller knows he's effective. He is excited about "what I have going here." After 30 years of preaching, he says, "I have my act together."

"If there's one thing I hear over and over in the United States and Australia, it is, 'Dr. Schuller, you saved my life.' It's always the same words. We're trying to give hurting people a look, a word, a touch, a healing touch that makes them think, 'Maybe I'm lovable after all.' So that's why I use my little phrase, 'God loves you. So do I.'"

"It must be hard to be humble," I say.

"Oh no," he replies. "It's the easiest thing in the world."

What a difference between this man and the apostle Paul! Said Paul, "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). I would dare say that Dr. Schuller would neither have his Crystal Cathedral nor his "Hour of Power" long if he presented only that same message.

United Schools for Government Support

Calvinist Contact, December 18, 1981, writes of the attempt of various schools in Canada to gain support from the government:

What do Jews, Christians and Catholics have in common? Very little, we would think. Yet when 80 men and women from this range of religious beliefs came together for a two-day meeting, they were able to agree on an impressive set of educational principles.

You see, they were united in a common cause: government funding for alternative and independent schools. The Ontario government wanted some concrete proposals about government funding and the Ontario Association of Alternative and Independent Schools (OAAIS) was determined to give the government something concrete.

On November 23 and 24 about 80 representatives from Christian, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Seventh Day Adventist, Montessori and Waldorf schools locked horns, determined to agree. They came up with "Principles of public rights and public responsibilities."

The article continues by explaining how this group intends to try to gain funds for the *child* rather than for the schools. It seems strange, however, that a group like this can have a common cause. One would be inclined to think that a Jew, Catholic, and Christian would have nothing in common. Surely II Corinthians 6:14 applies: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?"

And though one sympathizes with the argument that all pay taxes for the education of children, but parents who send their children to Christian schools must pay a second time, yet to gain governmental assistance seems likely to mark the end of

distinctive Christian education. In what enterprise has the government ever become engaged that it has not also sought control? If these schools gain their objective, they may soon rue the day that this occurred.

The Horrors of Abortion

Many writers have pointed out the terrible sin of murdering the unborn. The *Banner of Truth*, December, 1981, quotes from an article which points out some of this:

Basil the Great (c. 330-379 A.D.) was an influential "Church Father," which is to say, a leading scholar of the Post-apostolic Period. Ecclesiastes 1:9 tells us "there is no new thing under the sun." The problem of abortion has been a matter of deep concern at various times in Christian history. Hear Basil on the subject: "A woman who deliberately destroys a fetus is answerable for murder. And any fine distinction as to its being completely formed or unformed is not admissible." Simply put, but unmistakable: A baby at any stage of its development is a baby....

...In the old heathen days, people offered their children (to idols) with tears and lamentations. Today, the baby's life is sacrificed, sometimes with emotional trauma to its mother, but without any idea of making a valuable offering to a god. In the old days, the baby's life was regarded as a sacrifice of ultimate worth. Today, the baby has absolutely NO value and NO rights — until it reaches that magic state of development when a "product of conception" MUST be recognized as a little human being — a BABY.

The above serves again as a reminder of the terrible sin committed in the land. Let it be heard loudly and clearly: we condemn this act of murder and could well consider it, as the above article did, as worse than idol sacrifice.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

Dear Timothy,

February 1, 1982

I am including in this letter a letter which was written by an old minister to his fellow ministers just before the Lord took him to heaven. The minister who wrote this letter was Rev. J. H. A. Ploos Van Amstel. He was a highly esteemed and dearly loved minister during the Reformation of 1886 under the leadership of Dr. A. Kuyper. Many of our forefathers knew him or knew of him. He served in the ministry from 1863 until his death in 1895. This letter is meant as a farewell to his colleagues. Thanks to Rev. C. Hanko for translating it.

The letter follows. I thought it as pertinent now as the time when Rev. Amstel wrote it, and that you too could benefit by it.

Beloved Brethren in the ministry of the Word:

When you receive this letter I will no longer be among you, but above with the Lord, Who has

saved me, a very miserable sinner in myself, by His own free grace; and has washed me in Christ's blood and clothed me with His righteousness, even as Christ was given to me as my Surety and Mediator.

In Him my soul found rest. He drew me to Himself and kept me in His care in spite of my constant wanderings and doubts with which I had to contend all my life.

By grace alone I am what I am.

My soul waits upon the Lord and, especially at times, longs to be delivered out of this present Meshech (This was a very common expression among the Dutch. The reference is to Ps. 120:5, 6 and describes the life of the child of God in this world as suffering among his enemies. H.H.) of my pilgrimage to be taken up to Him, Who is the only sufficiency for my heart, the only fountain of all true joy.

Receive this word as a farewell from your beloved brother, who feels so strongly the bond that unites him to all the brothers and sisters in the Lord. Yes, the entire church in heaven and on earth is one in our precious Mediator and exalted Head Jesus Christ, Who has purchased us with His precious blood to be His private possession, in order that the entire church may soon be completely united with Him in perfection, to know, to love, to praise and to glorify Him.

I write this word from the necessity of my heart, spurred on by love; a word, the truth and power of which I have somewhat learned to understand even though I am very weak and miserable in myself.

O beloved brethren especially let us have a deep impression of the MAJESTY of the Lord and our own unworthiness. We are servants of the Lord, who must stand before His holy face, before Whom the whole world must bow even though only the church of the Lord has learned this by His grace. In the exaltation of His majesty lies the power of our ministry.

The Lord speaks to us and we are ambassadors of Christ. Let us by all means be attentive and carefully take note of that which the Lord declares to us.

Let us faithfully and accurately proclaim the Word of the Lord, without any admixture of ourselves, never falsifying the Word to appeal to people, but always presenting exactly what the Lord says.

Let us spend much time before the face of the Lord, and in the earnest searching of the Lord's Word, and in constant fellowship with the Lord, our glorious Head in heaven, in order that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith and we may be rooted and grounded in love. May we surrender ourselves to the Spirit of the Lord, and in the midst of the passing things, which frequently are so unpleasant for us, ask always and ever what the Lord is saying to our souls, and how we must deal with every problem and situation in a manner that may be pleasing to the Lord. Our sinful self, our old man must die even as this has already died in Christ. The influence of the old man in our lives can make life so bitter and our ministry so far from attractive and glorious. May that which is reality in Christ be also reality in us. Let us walk in the light of the Lord and in the joy of the liberty of the children of God. In order that we may preach with joy and with complete conviction of heart, and we may be able to say somewhat as the apostle declared, "I have believed, therefore have I spoken."

In the ministry of the Word we must take particular notice of one matter with which the Lord

has confronted me many years ago. We find this in Philippians 2:1-11, something which the Lord also declares elsewhere when He says, "I am not come to be served, but to serve." Read again carefully, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, etc." What did the Lord do? He made Himself of no reputation (emptied Himself), became like unto us in the form of a servant.

Behold here the glorious mystery of the gospel.

The Lord came down to earth, descended in the deepest depths of our hearts, thereupon doing all that was and is necessary for our salvation. He is a God of our complete salvation.

Too readily we exalt man to a position he does not hold, and fail to descend down to the real needs of the human soul. We want someone to read well, while he does not even know the alphabet. The result is that we readily become disgusted when others do not understand us. That is not right. Christ became like unto us, only sin excepted, and we must present this Mediator Who humbled Himself and became like unto us as He is, keeping before us the needs of the congregation. The little lambs He will gently lead, not harshly, not as if they were full-grown sheep.

Do we have patience with the weaknesses of the little ones, and do we carry them in love, looking to the Lord, considering how much patience He has, also with our weaknesses? For had He dealt with us according to our sins and wanderings, we would no longer exist. The deeper we can enter into the circumstances of others and may proclaim to them the Christ in all the fulness of His mediatorial grace, the more hearts will be humbled under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Only grace can melt our hard hearts. May we give a glorious impression of the Lord, proclaim Him in the fulness of His love and in the glory of His righteousness.

Our ever-blessed Triune covenant God cannot be presented too emphatically in the splendor of His glory. We must be like Joshua and Caleb, who were not evil but good reporters of that which was good, and who thereby honored and glorified God. God was angry with the evil spies, or reporters. And they were the occasion that the people did not dare to enter the land of Canaan. The Lord is good and most merciful. He has no pleasure in our death, but in our life.

I would point you to one more thing, my dear brethren. It is sometimes so natural for us to make this or that complaint about the congregation. Let us not do that, but have patience with the weaknesses of others. Maybe it is the result of our foolishness or lack that those weaknesses are there. In any case, let us not complain except on account of

our sins. And let us not clamor for change. If the Lord wants to transfer us to another place in His vineyard, good and well. But in that other place there are also miserable people whose faults we see more clearly as we learn to know them better. We have soon seen enough of the attraction of people and places. Nothing is actually beautiful except the Lord. And what is most blessed is to have a satisfied conscience, made satisfied by the blood and righteousness of Christ in the way of truth, uprightness, and complete self-surrender.

Nothing must stand between God and our soul.

That is often the case, yet that may not be. The Lord says, Walk before My countenance and be upright. May the Lord be our only joy. And may we

expect no happiness except that which proceeds from the Lord.

And now, beloved brethren, I commit you to God and to the Word of His grace, to Him Who is mighty to keep you from stumbling and to give you an inheritance among all the saints.

The Lord bless you and may He make you a blessing.

Solely by grace, until by and by.

Farewell, dear brethren, receive the farewell greetings in remembrance of your brother in Christ who loves you.

J.H.A. Ploos Van Amstel
Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

A Rift in the Clouds

Rev. John A. Heys

Joseph had his reason for putting and keeping Simeon in prison and demanding that the other nine brothers bring Benjamin along when they would return for food. He knew that they would return in the near future since the famine had been in the land only two of the seven years that God revealed to him the famine would prevail. And he is insistent that when they return they give undeniable evidence of a radical and complete change as far as their spiritual lives are concerned.

They had sold him into Egypt as a slave because of their envy and hatred towards him. But they had also robbed their father of the fellowship of this his most beloved son and brought him untold grief. Now that deep affection their father had transferred to Benjamin, who was the other of the two sons, and the younger one, of Jacob's most beloved wife. What Joseph is determined to find out now is whether these brothers would again subject their father to the grief of losing a most beloved son, or whether they would do all in their power to spare him more grief and sorrow. They must show whether they are envious of this youngest and most beloved son, and hate him because his father treats him with such tender love and favour. Will they, and do they, not bow before his choice — whether he is right in it or not — and walk in love with this favoured son, and with their father? This is the question in Joseph's mind. And behind it all is that basic question: Do these brothers love God?

And, of course, it was God Who put all this in Joseph's mind and Who intends through this trial to show Joseph whether a radical and complete change has come over his brothers. Joseph was amazingly wise and showed tremendous skill in conducting this whole trial. But all this he has only because God gave it to him for the purpose of restoring these brothers from their erring ways. When considering the events in *The Day of Shadows* we must be sure to see the Almighty and All-wise God behind all that which takes place in history. We have here no mere historical event. These incidents are not written to entertain us. Always the hand of God must be seen and His purpose in that which takes place must be discovered. Always we must see how these events relate to and serve our salvation. God's purpose and work in Christ must become plain to us, or we do not understand the incident and the purpose for its inclusion in the Scriptures.

Even the unbeliever has to reckon with the fact that central in history is Christ and His cross. God does not leave Himself without a witness, and so the whole world must and does reckon time by B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (In the year of our Lord). All history leads up to that birth and cross of Christ, and all that follows His resurrection and ascension takes place because He is Lord, and all power is given Him in heaven and on earth to prepare the way for His glorious return. All

happens in order that He may be born and die for our sins, rise the third day, and become Lord of all lords and King of all kings. And all that happens after His coronation is in order that He may return with full salvation for all His people. In this hour of the day of shadows we are dealing with the salvation of covenant children, the seed of Abraham who had erred so greatly. Seeing the hand of God in their salvation we are led to see His hand in our own salvation.

Now thus far, in what he observed of his brothers, Joseph learned two facts. He had heard his brothers confess that they were guilty of selling him into Egypt and were being punished by God now for that deed. This was a revelation that was in their favour and did show the beginning of a radical and spiritual change in them. The joy of finding this out caused Joseph to weep after leaving the room. But there was another fact revealed that did not positively give evidence of a change toward their father, or a lack of envy for their youngest brother. It is true, as Judah revealed, when they stood before Joseph on their second visit, that they had said to Joseph, "The lad cannot leave his father; for if he should leave his father, his father would die" (Genesis 44:22). It is also true that they spoke of a distress that came upon them because of their guilt in selling him as a slave. Yet these are not definite, conclusive evidences of love for Benjamin or for their father Jacob. Their own lives were in danger. They were in a desperate situation, accused of being spies, and thus of deserving death, and told that the only thing that will save them from death is that Simeon be held as hostage, and that they bring Benjamin along next time. In such a situation men will resort to whatever stratagem for survival comes to their minds. Instead of showing true love for their younger brother and father, it could, as far as Joseph could detect, be nothing more than love for life and a play upon his emotions, as a father, to get themselves free.

In fact their quickness to agree — after saying that it would kill their father to have Benjamin come along next time — to do as Joseph suggested did not speak well for them. They admitted guilt, but not to him — only in his hearing, thinking that he did not understand their language. They did not admit any guilt over against their father. And they did promise to bring Benjamin along. Joseph had said, "This do" and "they did so," that is, they agreed (Genesis 42:18 and 20). It all could mean that they were willing to risk his life in order to save their own. Their father shows favoritism. This is not their full brother. And is he any better than they? If their lives are in danger, should they die at the hand of him who accused them of being spies just to spare the life of a step-brother, when there is

that possibility that bringing him could save their lives?

The stage is all set for Joseph to find out just what their attitude is towards this younger brother, and toward their father who is showing to him the same partiality that he, Joseph, had enjoyed and had made the brothers envious. The brothers are completely unaware of the test to which they are being subjected. In their minds it is only a case of proving that they are not spies, but true men who are not worthy of death.

Even then it was with heavy steps that they approached Joseph this second time. That money which they found in their sacks was on their minds, and at the earliest moment they try to explain it to the steward of Joseph's house. Yet before they can explain, and to their consternation, they are brought to Joseph's house! And we read that this made them afraid and that they consider the inclusion of their money in their sacks as seeking an occasion to fall on them and make them bondmen.

A bit of respite comes their way. The steward assures them that he has their money and that they have no reason to fear about that matter. He speaks words of peace and performs a deed of peace. For he brings Simeon to them from out of the prison. They were given water to drink, and water to wash their feet. There is even provender given to their asses. Things are looking up once again. However the apprehension returns and, already uncomfortable in Joseph's house, they get a very eerie feeling when they are all seated according to their ages. Now Joseph had promised them that if they brought their youngest brother, he would restore Simeon to them — a promise already kept — and that they would be free to traffic in the land. But to be guests in his house, to enjoy a meal with this most powerful man in Egypt, whom the brothers in Genesis 44:18 say is "even as Pharaoh," is wholly unexpected and perplexing. The kind, friendly attitude and look on the face of this "man" who had spoken so roughly to them on their first trip likewise makes them uneasy. But since the clouds have parted and the sun has broken through, they find it possible to relax. In fact we even read that "they drank, and were merry with him" (Genesis 43:34). Ill prepared are these brothers for the events of the following day. Apparently they got away with their evil deed of selling Joseph as a slave into Egypt. They could go home with Simeon, and, more important, with Benjamin. They had given proof that they were not spies, and their distress has come to an end. Simeon is with them. Benjamin they may take home with them to their anxious father. They have food to bring home; and they have the money that they brought back and found in their sacks.

Little do they realize that tomorrow the distress that they had on that first visit was as nothing compared to what they will experience before the day is more than a few hours old. The thought that the drinking cup of this ruler in Egypt would be found in Benjamin's sack is far from their thoughts. They had told Joseph that they were true men, and not only did they think that they had proved this point to him, but they convinced themselves that they were true men. Indeed, they had admitted guilt in regard to their brother Joseph. But that sin was ten to fifteen years ago; and since that day they had walked uprightly. Had they not obeyed their father when he sent them to Egypt for food? And now they had not under cover of dark and with stealth taken Benjamin to Egypt so that they would have food and would prove to this "man" that they were not spies.

That one evil deed performed so long ago must not be held against them anymore, must it? Did they not suffer enough? And did not Joseph's steward tell them, "Your God, and the God of your father, hath given you treasure in your sacks"? Maybe God had visited them with that distress; but He was now blessing them, was He not? And to tell their father what had happened to Joseph would not take away his grief now. They could not restore him. Better leave the secret a secret. All things are working together now for their good. With what light feet and happy hearts they leave Egypt to show their father that they have both Simeon and Benjamin with them! All eleven sons will appear before their father. How greatly God is blessing them! Surely He is a merciful God to prosper their way so wonderfully and to forgive the evil they did

to Joseph and to their father! What a God of love He is!

This is a mistake that men often make. When all goes well, when they have success, and prosperity is their lot, men will call it all a blessing from God Himself. How often do we not hear men speak of how greatly God is blessing us here in America?

But we do well to wait until God's work is finished. Genesis 44 does follow Genesis 42 and 43. The whole story has not yet been told. And the lull in the storm, the breaking through of a little sunshine, this apparent success which the ten brothers have had does not mean that fiercer storms cannot come tomorrow.

Let us today realize and live in the consciousness that there is a judgment day coming; and the apparent limited removal of the curse from off the earth by all our labour — saving devices, advances in medicine, inventions of men, and high standard of living — in our land the highest that man has ever known — is to be followed by a day of accounting for what *we did* with what God gave us. Let us wait until then to see whether these were really blessings or whether America had been better off without them, and without the added woe in the lake of fire because America misused them.

Better for these brothers is what happens next than the relief they now are enjoying. In God's next work they will be brought to repentance, which is a blessing and a treasure that goes along into the new Jerusalem. The psalmist said it, and we wisely repeat and confess his words in Psalm 119:71, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted: that I might learn Thy statutes."

Book Reviews

THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE (Locus 2 of *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae*); Francis Turretin; Edited & Translated by John W. Beardslee III; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 234 pp., \$7.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema)

This is a most welcome little volume. Francis Turretin was a giant among Reformed theologians. For many years the use of Turretin's dogmatics, his *Institutes*, was standard in Presbyterian seminaries, in spite of the fact that students had to struggle with his seventeenth century Latin. When knowledge of the Latin language became a thing of the past, Turretin was lost to most students and theologians. This was indeed a loss! Agreement with Turretin on

all matters is neither possible nor necessary. But that many students and theologians can profit from his instruction far more than from many a modern theologian cannot be debated.

This book arrived in my mail just when I was making a study of the matter treated in my editorial. It was therefore doubly welcome. In fact, I found it so fascinating that I could not put it down. The style is typically that of Reformed scholasticism, but this is no hindrance. Beardslee's translation is smooth-flowing and easy to read.

Every minister and student, plus a good many others, should add this volume to their libraries.

Highly recommended.

J. GRESHAM MACHEN, A SILHOUETTE, by Henry W. Coray; Kregel Publications, 1981; 128 pages, \$4.95 (paper); (Reviewed by Prof. R.D. Decker)

Dr. Machen was a valiant fighter for the truth over against unbelief and liberalism in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. in the 1920s. This cost him his position as Professor of New Testament at Princeton Seminary. Subsequently Machen became one of the founders of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and one of the early leaders of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Henry Coray, a former student of Dr. Machen, attempts to bring "forward certain features of Dr. Machen's life and character perhaps not known to many of the present generation. It is particularly

slanted toward young people" (from the Preface). Coray has succeeded in his purpose admirably. The book is full of both amusing and serious anecdotes and quotations from Machen's preaching, teaching, and writings. The book is a delight to read. Coray is a good writer. He has "a way with words."

The memory of such giants in the church ought not be forgotten by us and our children. The battles which Machen and his contemporaries fought are still being fought today. We must learn from the past and follow the example of men such as Machen who were indeed "valiant for truth." Interestingly enough the foreword is written by David Otis Fuller, D.D., recently retired pastor of Wealthy Street Baptist Church in Grand Rapids. Fuller was also a student of Machen at Princeton.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On January 18, 1982, our parents, MR. & MRS. THYS FEENSTRA celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary.

We, their children are deeply grateful to our heavenly Father that He has seen fit to bless us with these God-fearing parents, who have instructed us in His ways. We pray that God will always be near them and bless them in the years to come.

"For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting and His truth endureth to all generations." (Ps. 100:5)

Bill and Shirley Feenstra
Everett and Audrey Van Voorthuysen
Wacy and Margie Armstrong
John and Beverly Feenstra
Gerald and Celia Feenstra
Donald and Janice Feenstra
Marvin Feenstra
25 grandchildren
18 great grandchildren

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Faith Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to Deacon Irvan Velthouse in the passing of his father, MR. HENRY VELTHOUSE, whom the Lord took unto Himself on December 25, 1981.

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Psalm 84:11)

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, Pres.
Mr. Gerald Kuiper, Clerk

NOTICE!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Randolph, Wisconsin on Wednesday, March 3, 1982, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. Material for the Agenda must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk thirty days before Classis convenes. Delegates in need of lodging or of transportation from the airport should inform the Clerk of the Randolph Consistory of their need.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Men's Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan were saddened in the loss of their fellow-member, MR. HENRY VELTHOUSE. We express our sympathy to his family.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." (Romans 8:37)

Hope Men's Society
Mr. D. Engelsma, President
Mr. John J. Dykstra, Secretary

NOTICE!!

Covenant Christian High School will be in need of a teacher for the 1982-1983 school year. Certification in one or more of the following areas is desirable: English, Social Studies, Business Education, Physical Education. Apply by writing to:

Mr. David Ondersma
0-6761 Brockwood Drive
Grandville, Michigan 49418

News From Our Churches

By the time you read this column 1982 will already be one month old. Nevertheless, I don't think it's too late to reflect on the new year as did the people of our Loveland, Colorado, congregation when they read the message from their pastor, Rev. Kortering, on their December 27 bulletin. Following is a part of that exhortation:

Now we turn our attention to the greeting of a new year. With the passage of time we are aware of change in our lives. It will be good for each one to reflect upon the changes we have experienced in this past year. This will help us to be spiritually minded, we are pilgrims and strangers here below, we have no abiding place. We must needs go forward by

faith. What the future holds we do not know. Will we know sickness, heartache, death of loved ones, economic difficulty, war and unrest among the nations, struggles in the church? Or does the Lord have a way of health, prosperity, peace, and pleasant experiences? We need not know, for whatever the Lord has for us, He will supply the grace to endure unto the end. Let us begin the new year in trust, for He said, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end" (Matt. 28:20).

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Though our churches are one in doctrine, there is considerable diversity when it comes to Christmas programs rendered by the children of the congregations. From the bulletins it appears that most of our churches *have* Christmas programs; it's just the *when* they have them that is diverse. This year throughout our churches there were programs presented on the Sunday before Christmas (December 20) after the morning worship service, the Sunday before Christmas after the evening worship service, on Monday evening (December 21), and after the worship service on Christmas morning.

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We have a considerable amount of news concerning new building projects and building maintenance activities in which our churches have been and/or still are involved.

Back in August of 1981 there was reference to the installation of a gas furnace in the Randolph, Wisconsin parsonage.

In September Kalamazoo, Michigan bulletins solicited members, "To work on the yard of the church and plant grass seed."

The latest we have from Wyckoff, New Jersey, concerning the building of their new church, is "...the carpenters have now finished their part of the work by putting up the partitions in the basement (July 12, 1981)." Also, "...the underground electrical and telephone lines are finally installed to the building (November 15, 1981)." The main thing that is slowing down the progress on this building project is the lack of funds, thus we notice in their November, December, and January bulletins special notes of appreciation for gifts they have recently received from brothers in Victoria,

Australia, and South Holland, Illinois, and our Hope congregation of Walker, Michigan.

There is continued progress on the new church building of our congregation of Redlands, California. You may recall from earlier news columns that the members of Redlands are taking part in the actual construction of their new church edifice under the direction of Mr. George Joostens. An announcement in December from their Building Committee indicates that at that time they were near to setting the auditorium roof beams. In that same report the Building Committee wrote: "1982 is our 50th year of existence in Redlands. Wouldn't you be thrilled to combine the anniversary and the building dedication into one grand occasion?"

At their annual congregational meetings South Holland, Illinois approved the installation of ceiling fans for their church auditorium; First's (Grand Rapids) "...proposal to install a chairlift for handicapped persons was approved"; and Hull, Iowa voted to purchase a new public address system for their church.

Bulletins from two of our churches, Redlands and Hope, Michigan reveal a change in custodial personnel. In this connection Hope's (Michigan) December 27 bulletin read: "Upon his request, Mr. Jacob Kuiper, Sr. is now retiring after twenty-six years as janitor. In the name of the congregation we express our thanks and appreciation for his faithful service for so many years." Though I have never been a church custodian, I've had contact with enough of them to know the kinds of headaches they face. One would be hardpressed, I think, to find a more difficult job: How does one go about keeping everyone happy? The floors are either in need of waxing or they are too slippery. The auditorium is either too hot or too cold (sometime both at the same time depending on the individual). Then there's the constant war on graffiti on the tables in the catechism rooms, the constant damage to Bibles and *Psalters*, the need for tables to be set up, just so, for this and that occasion, and on, and on,...and on! Too bad it's impossible for the members of *all* our churches to take turns with the church cleaning the way they do it in our Kalamazoo Church. Maybe then we would understand and even appreciate the work of our church custodians.