

The **STANDARD BEARER**

— A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE —

The Lord is the Maker of heaven and earth. He is the Creator of all, our almighty God. From Him we may surely expect all our helpThis surely means, also as far as 1983 is concerned, that no situation can possibly arise with which He cannot cope, against which He cannot protect us; indeed, the entire wicked world He carries in the palm of His hand.

See "Our Expectation From the Hills"

— page 146

CONTENTS

Meditation—	
Our Expectation From the Hills	146
Editorial—	
MARS—A Monument to Heynsian Theology? ..	148
All Around Us—	
Christian Reformed delegates confront the	
Gereformeerde Kerk	150
The Union Question	151
Israel and Millennialism	151
Mormonism	152
Faith of Our Fathers—	
The Nicene Creed	152
Guest Article—	
An Exhortation Concerning Our Families	154
The Day of Shadows—	
Gathered Unto His People	156
Taking Heed to the Doctrine—	
God's Providence and Sin (2)	159
The Lord Gave the Word—	
The Place of the Individual Believer in	
Mission Work (1)	161
The Signs of the Times—	
The Days of Noah (2)	163
Bible Study Guide—	
I Thessalonians—Pastoral Care for an	
Infant Church (1)	166
News From Our Churches	168

THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Rev. Wayne Bekkering, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. Richard Flikkema, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Mr. David Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Kenneth Koole, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Rodney Miersma, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. James Slopesma, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman.

Editorial Office: Prof. H.C. Hoeksema
4975 Ivanrest Ave. S.W.
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Church News Editor: Mr. David Harbach
4930 Ivanrest Ave., Apt. B
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Reprint Policy: Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr. PH: (616) 243-2953
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer
c/o Protestant Reformed Fellowship
B. Van Herk, 66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$10.50 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

Advertising Policy: The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st or the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

MEDITATION

Our Expectation From the Hills

Rev. H. Veldman

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

Psalm 121:1-2

1983 — another calendar year. What shall we say?

We must say something. We cannot ignore that 1982 is past and that another year has begun. We know that time marches on. What will this new calendar year bring to us? Indeed, what shall we say?

Shall we join the world in its appraisal, in its earthy and carnal hopes? Have we expressed the wish that a happy New Year may be our lot, that good may come our way, namely earthly good, natural peace and prosperity, etc?

Or have we taken upon our lips, carrying it in

our hearts, the confession of the psalmist: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth"? We surely need help. We know not what lies before us. And we surely cannot walk this pathway alone. Need we emphasize that all carnal hopes and aspirations are utter foolishness? Is there any help except from the hills? Only Jehovah our God can help us.

Our help — for what?

This is surely the idea of this word of God. Some translations read the text as follows: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills. From whence cometh my help?" Our King James version reads: "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." There is, principally, no difference. We have in this a Hebraism a common Hebrew mannerism called a parallelism, in which two expressions simply explain each other. To say that we look to the hills from which cometh our help is explained by the latter half of the text: "My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth."

How desperately we need this help! Notice what we read in the verses 3a, 7 and 8. We need this help also surely in the year that lies before us, that we may continue enroute to the City that has foundations whose Builder and Maker is God. This is what it is all about. We are pilgrims and strangers in the earth. Here in this life we have no continuing city. 1982 belongs to the past, never to be recalled except in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is surely our calling to be enroute to that City. Always we must have that City before us. Never must we cleave to the things that are below; never must we conduct ourselves as if we have an abiding place here, setting our hearts and affections upon the things of this present time. Always we must walk as pilgrims, travelling in a tent, which implies that we are strangers in the midst of the world, far from home, enroute to that better land, the heavenly City that has foundations. Always all our activity, in the home and in the church and in the school, must be such as to impress upon our souls this pilgrimage. Doing what our hands find to do, but conducting ourselves antithetically, we must be a spiritually different people with the longing of our hearts and minds upon that which shall be in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Unto that end we look unto the hills from whence cometh our help. The Word of God here speaks of the hills. This, we understand, is symbolism. The Word of God is rich in symbolism. We cannot treat this symbolism in detail here. The sun and moon and stars, the world of colors, plants, numbers, animals, all speak a tremendously rich

symbolical language. All of creation was created by our God as a picture of the heavenly reality. That which eye cannot see and the ear cannot hear and which can never enter into the heart of man is held before us in an earthly language and picture which is adapted to our earthly senses. The ocean, too, speaks a tremendous language. The tempestuous, storm-tossed sea is a symbol of the wicked, as they are constantly tossed to and fro, never finding peace and rest. So also the quiet, deep sea, with its endless horizons and unfathomable depths, is a picture of the infinite, boundless, fathomless faithfulness and love of our God. Indeed, the heavens declare the glory of our God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Here we have the symbolism of the hills or mountains. Indeed, the cold, snow-topped mountains are also a symbol of the proud, the lifeless, and arrogant wicked. But the mountains are also a symbol of Jehovah — their vastness, greatness, age-long unchangeableness speak to us of the power, eternity, and unchangeableness of our God. Our God is the Rock, everlastingly the same. That this is specifically meant here by the Scriptural symbolism of the mountains is also evident from the fact that the psalmist here speaks of the Lord, Jehovah, and Jehovah is the I AM, eternally the same. Indeed, I will look to the hills.

Hence, I will expect my help from the hills. Of course, this does not mean that I will expect my help from these hills or mountains as such. It does mean that I will expect all my help from the Lord, Jehovah Who made the heavens and the earth. I will expect *all* my help, and then *all* my help from the living God, Jehovah, the Unchangeable Rock. I will not depend upon myself, my own strength. I will not strive to reach the City that has foundations in my own power, by mine own wisdom and ingenuity. All my expectation will be fixed upon the Lord. He will preserve me from all evil; He will keep my feet from slipping; He will preserve my soul; He will never suffer my foot to be moved; He will keep me in the way that leads me to my heavenly City; He will preserve me in all my earthly pilgrimage.

How we need this help!

Perhaps we do not need this aid? Perhaps we are not even enroute to Zion, the City of our God, the God of our salvation. Are we carnal, and do we love the things that are below? Then we are interested only in this world, how far we can advance and promote our own interests here below; then our eyes, of course, are not lifted up to the hills, and our help does not come from Jehovah Who made heaven and earth. This being the case, this word of God means nothing to us. Or perhaps we think that we can walk this way alone, in our own strength.

Oh, we may then be willing to concede that the Lord can help us, be of assistance to us. Perhaps we will acknowledge that the Lord is our Guide, that Jesus is our Example, that as our Teacher He may instruct us, show us how to conduct ourselves, if only it is left to us to adopt His teachings, to take hold of Him, and it is then left to us to be guided and led by Him. Or perhaps we may think that we are sufficiently strong in ourselves to ward off the attacks of the enemy, to endure all temptations, to wage successful warfare against all the evil powers that are confronting us. If such thoughts dwell in our souls, how terribly wrong and mistaken we are! Indeed, the history of the church of God is replete with the examples of those who would stand in their own strength and were wrecked enroute to the heavenly City; the sands of time are filled with these human wrecks.

Indeed, we will experience the need of this help, if only we understand the perils that confront us and if we understand ourselves.

Let us face these perils. On the one hand, our enemy is unalterably and unequivocally opposed to us. He hates the living God and His cause. He is at enmity against the Lord, has but one controlling interest and that is the destruction of His cause in the midst of the world. However beautiful and humanistic he may present himself, he has no rest until the cause we represent is completely and forever destroyed. It would be a fatal error on our part if we imagine we can in any way walk or cooperate with him. On the other hand, we should also note his power. His forces represent the powers of the air, the legions of these spirits under the direction of a very capable and brilliant genius, Beelzebub, the father of the lie. Among his forces are enrolled also countless millions of men, and they have access to all the riches and resources of this world. His powers are overwhelming. He goes about as a roaring lion or as an angel of light; he can attack you and destroy your body; or he will confront you with radio and television, and all the literature of this present evil world. Do we need this help?

And who are we? How small we are, numerical-

ly, and also in resources...! And we ourselves are so weak! We have the enemy of darkness in our own hearts and lives. We carry the enemy within the camp; the fifth columnist lurks in our own bosom. We have but a small principle of the new and heavenly obedience. We are weak, wholly impotent, without strength. And even if we could offer successful resistance, who can guarantee our safe arrival in the City that is above, even through death and the grave?

How blessed is this help!

First, because of His power.

The Lord is the Maker of heaven and earth. He is the Creator of all, our almighty God. From Him we may surely expect all our help. As the Creator of all He is surely above all things; He holds all things in the palm of His hand. This surely means, also as far as 1983 is concerned, that no situation can possibly arise with which He cannot cope, against which He cannot protect us; indeed, the entire wicked world He carries in the palm of His hand.

Secondly, He is unchangeably faithful. Notice: the Lord, Jehovah made heaven and earth. Jehovah is the I AM, the Rock, everlastingly the same. He is the I AM, eternally the same within Himself, and also in relation to His people. And He is the Creator. This does not merely mean that our covenant God is Creator. But it also means that He created all things as our covenant God. Hence, He made all things and this world with a view to the next, this earthly as a symbol of the heavenly.

From Him we may expect all our help. He will surely finish His work; He will never suffer our foot to be moved; He will surely preserve our soul; He will guide us safely through, cause all things to work together for our good.

This is Jehovah's promise to us.

To this we may and must hold.

Indeed, look to the hills, to the Lord, your covenant God, also in 1983.

EDITORIAL

MARS — A Monument to Heynsian Theology?

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

At long last we have been given a clear indication of the theological direction of the newly established Mid-American Reformed Seminary, the new

theological school established in northwest Iowa by Christian Reformed people as an alternative to Calvin Seminary for the training of ministers in the

Christian Reformed Church. This indication is given in the opening Convocation Address by the administrative dean, Dr. Peter Y. De Jong, an address published in *The Outlook*. Especially in the concluding part of this address (*The Outlook*, December, 1982, pp. 8-11) we are informed of this. The address is entitled "Toward a Distinctly Reformed Theology."

Frankly, I found that indication of the theological orientation of MARS to be a bit shocking.

Let me explain.

In speaking of the right approach to the Bible which is demanded for a distinctly Reformed theology, Dr. De Jong states: "What this means for the Reformed believer and theologian is that all the preaching and teaching and work to which Christ Jesus has commissioned His church, therefore also its doing of theology, should in the nature of the case be covenantally-oriented. With this I come to the heart of the message which I leave for your reflection." He then proceeds to lay great stress on this need of being covenantally-oriented. Writes he: "That Scripture, both in the Old and the New Testaments, is covenantally-structured in content as well as form, cannot be rightly denied. Today theologians are again addressing themselves in depth to this subject of the covenantal structure of Scripture. Much of what they have done through their studies sheds a measure of new and fuller light on the truth which the Reformed churches have long confessed and cherished." And again: "This emphasis on God's covenant may well be considered the outstanding distinctive of the Reformed churches and therefore of their theological pursuits. Nowhere else has it been more enthusiastically discussed, believed and put into practice. Its importance for cultivating the godly life to God's praise cannot be overrated." And he claims for MARS the following: "How we will engage in theological pursuits from this covenantal understanding of Scripture is clearly discernible from our *Catalogue of studies*."

When I read all this, and more, I began to think to myself that MARS appears to be on the right track.

But the shock came when Dr. De Jong began to be more specific about this covenant orientation. For he explained:

This approach to theology was the strength and song of the Christian Reformed Church for many years. While many of its professors of theology could be mentioned as faithful representatives of this conviction, among them Vos and Berkhof and Bolveda, none stressed its propriety and fruitfulness so continually as a man whose life and labors in theological studies have been much too cavalierly ignored in recent decades.

He was Willem Wynand Heyns, called to teach at Calvin Seminary in 1902 after serving the churches as pastor for sixteen years. For twenty-five years he taught almost every minister and missionary who served the Christian Reformed Church. For years afterward he was remembered with love and respect.

Dr. De Jong then proceeds to praise the virtues of Heyn's theology at length, concluding as follows:

Heyns would be the last to expect us to endorse every word he spoke and wrote on God's covenant. We find some speculative elements with which few today would agree. But his approach to Reformed theology as biblically grounded and confessionally responsible deserves to be emulated because of its strong covenantal awareness. This gave life and breath and warmth to his teaching. This stirred ministers to preach the blessed message of God's grace in Christ at home and abroad. This taught congregations to engage in "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Cor. 7:1).

Now I will not quarrel with Dr. De Jong in his evaluation of Heyns as a theological professor, although to my mind, while Heyns was in many ways a good technician, he was by no means a great theologian.

My quarrel is with the characterization of Heyns's theology as being "biblically grounded and confessionally responsible" and as deserving "to be emulated because of its strong covenantal awareness."

Why?

In the first place, because it was Prof. Heyns who for years pumped into every Christian Reformed seminary student a view of the covenant which was thoroughly un-Reformed, which can be and has been characterized as nothing less than Arminianism applied to the covenant. For it was none other than Heyns who found the essence of the covenant to consist in a general, conditional promise to all children of believers, head for head and soul for soul. And it was Heyns who even taught a certain general covenant grace by which all children of believers were enabled either to accept or reject the promise, to meet or not to meet the condition.

In the second place, because of his views it may be said that Prof. Heyns more than any other was the father of the First Point in 1924 in its teaching of the general, well-meant offer of salvation to all who hear the preaching. In fact, one of the last words of Prof. Heyns was an extensive defense of the well-meant offer in *De Wachter* in 1932-'33.

If, therefore, MARS is to be devoted to Heynsian theology, its founders, professors, and students may from the outset forget about the possibility of "a distinctly Reformed theology."

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

Christian Reformed delegates confront the Gereformeerde Kerk

Rev. C. Boomsma, chairman of the C.R.C. Inter-church Relations Committee, addressed the Gereformeerde Kerk in the Netherlands concerning growing differences between the denominations. Some of the same questions which have been disturbing the church in the Netherlands have also been troubling the C.R.C.—but not to the degree and intensity as found in the Netherlands. Rev. Boomsma admitted some of this as he addressed that church:

It is not that we have refused to acknowledge the changing world. I say this, because we are aware that there are those among you who see the Christian Reformed Church as hopelessly bound to tradition and isolated from the trends, concerns and vital issues of late 20th-century society. A review of our church's activity over the past years will show that we have addressed numerous issues of current significance: marriage and divorce, racism, ecumenicity, capital punishment, nuclear war, the nature and extent of biblical authority, homosexuality, world hunger and world poverty, women in ecclesiastical office and so on. We continue to wrestle with questions such as the role of women in office, and the proper interpretation of Scripture in the light of biblical criticism and the findings and hypotheses of science. In fact, our agenda of issues is not so different from that which has occupied you in the past twenty-five years....

We know somewhat of these mentioned struggles in the C.R.C. and the disagreement which has arisen concerning these matters. The differing views have created considerable unrest in the C.R.C. But in the Gereformeerde Kerk of the Netherlands, these questions have received answers obviously un-Reformed and un-Scriptural. Rev. C. Boomsma addresses two of the most troubling problems: homosexuality and the role of the Bible.

This serious divergence between us has come to clear focus in the issue of homosexuality. Let me briefly summarize our criticisms of the way by which you come to your position in your report. First of all, we hold that you have too easily accepted a psychological appraisal of homosexuality that has been popularized by the gay rights movement....

Secondly, a careful reading of your exegesis leaves us with the distinct impression that you have ap-

proached the texts with preconceived conclusions. As a result your interpretations seem strained, speculative and implausible. We wonder, too, why you failed to deal with relevant Scripture teaching about sexuality, such as in Genesis one and two, which we hold has a strong bearing on the problem.

Finally, we are troubled by the treatment you give to the relationship of love and law in chapter four. If the meaning of love is not shaped by the revelation of God's will for man's life as set forth in the law, what does determine the content of love? And, we ask, how was it possible to write the entire chapter with no consideration, not even a reference to the Sermon on the Mount?....

But in and of itself, the homosexuality issue is not creating the crisis in our relations as churches. It is rather *how* you have been and are dealing with this problem that arouses deep concern about the movement and shift among you. We fear it is a movement in which your distinctiveness as a Reformed Church is blurred, in which the place of the Bible seems to be increasingly ambivalent among you, in which we observe you too readily acquiescing to the current climate of our times.

The Rev. C. Boomsma continues by pointing out some of the statements made in the report of the G.K. which was entitled: *God Met Ons*. The reason for deep concern is obvious. The G.K. of the Netherlands has gone far down the road of apostasy. And the C.R.C. has still close ties with that denomination—though the C.R.C. does not use the term "sister church" anymore. As Boomsma points out, many of these same "problems" have arisen in the C.R.C. The influence of the G.K.N. on the C.R.C. is evident. It remains to be seen whether or not the C.R.C. will take a strong stand against the present position of the G.K.N. (The above quotes were from *Calvinist Contact*, October 29, 1982.)

*Take time to
read and study the
Standard Bearer*

The Union Question

The *Calvinist Contact*, October 22, 1982, records an incident where eight York University professors refused to belong to a faculty union and refused to pay union dues. The question is not settled there yet and has been appealed to the Ontario Supreme Court. Of interest is the argumentation of one of these professors, Walter Beringer. According to the report:

Walter Beringer, member of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Lutheran Church in Willowdale, has been in opposition to union membership since 1975. "The union's preoccupation with money is not right," he said. "We could do our job better if we were less concerned with feathering our own bed and more interested in instruction and the wellbeing of the University.

"I felt strengthened by the necessity of speaking up for my conscience. My conscience is based on my belief, my upbringing, education, the memory of my parents—my whole being. It represents my whole set

of values."

Professor of economics, William Jordan stated his reasons for opposing membership in the union. "I oppose compulsion and favour voluntary association and actions. I don't accept the adversarial but the co-operative mode of relating. The union applies physical, mental or emotional violence against individuals. What right do we have to withhold student marks in a dispute with the University?

"I find support for my position in the Bible. I cannot change the union by joining them anymore than I could change the Ku Klux Klan by joining them."

Thus others also recognize the wrongness of union membership and themselves refuse to belong to such union. It is a sad state of affairs when one, for conscience' sake, refuses to belong to the union, yet is compelled to do so—or lose his job. Religious liberty and freedom, it seems, does not apply under certain circumstances.

Israel and Millennialism

Christian News, November 15, 1982, contains an editorial which speaks of the position of the millennialist towards Israel and its prime minister. There is a moral and spiritual question involved: can believers welcome and approve the action of unbelievers? Can there be fellowship between these? Some seem to think so. The editorial states:

Sincere but sadly misguided Christians for Israel have invited Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who has been responsible for tremendous bloodshed and suffering, to speak at a mass rally at First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas on November 16.

Dr. W. Criswell, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention is a past president of the SBC. Dr. Criswell recently rightly protested against liberal professors in Southern Baptists' seminaries and colleges who reject the inerrancy of the Bible and attack other doctrines of Christianity.

However, Dr. Criswell, along with many of his Israel supporting friends is a millennialist. They contend that the Jews today are still God's chosen people and that Israel has a divine right to take over all of Palestine and throw out the Palestinians who have been living there for centuries. Note what Pastor Paul Burgdorf says about this entire matter in this issue of CN. The views of these Israel-First millennialists could lead to great havoc throughout the world.

How can any Christian side with such a terrorist as Begin? Yet Fundamentalists like Jerry Falwell, Dr. Criswell, Dr. Olson, formerly head of the National Association of Evangelicals, are among Begin's chief supporters. They make all sorts of excuses to cover up for the murders for which Begin has been responsible.

They should read the large sections in *The Christian News Encyclopedia* on the Jews, Israel, and Millennialism. Many of these millennialists are like Billy Graham who maintain that the sincere Jews today can get to heaven without Christ and that a Jew like Begin actually worships the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Begin's god and the god of anyone else who doesn't accept Christ as his Savior from sin is a pagan idol who doesn't exist. These millennialists should let their friend Begin know that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven and forget about meddling in politics....

So do those, otherwise noted as "fundamental" and "conservative," run into difficulty when it comes to their millennialism. Note especially how that some have even made Begin to be "God-fearing" apart from Christ and salvation through the cross.

Incidentally, this same issue of *Christian News* contains a full reprint of the article of Rev. Robert Harbach, "A Minister-Rabbi Conversation" which appeared a few issues back in the *Standard Bearer*.

Mormonism

Various reports have appeared in the press about a change recently announced in the "Mormon" organization. I quote one from *Clarion*, November 19, 1982. It indicates the attempt of that group to make their organization to be "Christian" and less objectionable in the eyes of the observer.

Concerned that their church is often viewed as un-Christian, Mormon leaders announced that a new sub-title is being added to the Book of Mormon proclaiming it to be "Another Testament of Jesus Christ."

The change, which will appear in all future printings of the book, was announced here at the 152nd general conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-Day Saints (Mormon).

While Mormons say that they "believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ," it is not a standard Trinitarian affirmation. They hold that God and Jesus Christ are separate entities who have progressed to a divine state, and that individual human beings may also become gods and goddesses and creators of world. Unlike Christians, who believe there is one God, Mormons believe the masculine God has a feminine counterpart.

All this indicates the deceptive nature of the sects—seeking to come in the name of Christ while denying the fundamental doctrines of Scripture. This is not Christian.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

The Nicene Creed

Rev. James Slopsema

The Apostles' Creed which very closely resembles the Nicene Creed is commonly divided into 12 articles. This is done, for example, by the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 7, where the Apostles' Creed is called the "articles of our catholic undoubted christian faith." In like manner it is also possible to divide the Nicene Creed into 12 articles. This is done, for example, by Philip Schaff in his *The Creeds of Christendom* (cf. Vol. 1 pages 27, 28). For the sake of convenience and reference we too will so divide the Nicene Creed into 12 articles. If we do so, the creed is divided in the following manner:

1. I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
2. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by Whom all things were made;
3. Who, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnated by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man;
4. And was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; and suffered and was buried;
5. And the third day He rose again, according to the Scripture;
6. And ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father;

7. And He shall come again, with glory to judge the quick and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.
8. And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; Who spake by the prophets.
9. And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church;
10. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins;
11. And I look for the resurrection of the dead;
12. And the life of the world to come. Amen.

Having the Nicene Creed once more before us we notice especially three things in general about its composition. First, the Nicene Creed is based on the baptism formula. Just prior to His ascension into heaven, Christ instructed the Apostles to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). It is around this formula for baptism that the Nicene Creed has been constructed. The main line that runs through the whole creed is, "I believe in one God, the Father (Art. 1)... and in one Lord Jesus Christ (Art. 2)... and in the Holy Ghost (Art. 8)." Everything else stated in this creed only serves to explain that main thought. And this is in harmony with the purpose of the creed. It was formulated to set forth the truth of the Trinity over against the error of Arianism. What better way is

there to do this than by constructing a creed around the very baptism formula which sets forth the truth of the Trinity?

Secondly, we notice that the Nicene Creed in its development of the truth follows the general chronological order of history. It begins with God the Father and the creation of all things. Next it proceeds to speak of our Lord Jesus Christ: His birth, His suffering and death, His burial, His resurrection, His ascension, His sitting at God's right hand, and finally His return in judgment. Then it speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit in the one holy catholic and apostolic church. This is all concluded with the final resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Finally, we notice about the Nicene Creed in general that it sets forth essentially the whole truth of God in a very brief and concise form. What the Heidelberg Catechism says in Lord's Day 7 about the Apostles' Creed also applies to the Nicene Creed: it briefly teaches all things promised us in the gospel. A quick analysis of the Nicene Creed will reveal that basically all the doctrines of Scripture are touched. Yet they are simply stated and not developed to any degree. Often the very words or phrases of Scripture are simply set forth without any further explanation. This in turn makes the Nicene Creed along with the Apostles' Creed especially fit for use in the liturgy of the worship of the church.

This brings us to the question of our approach to the Nicene Creed. More than one approach is possible. It is possible for example to develop quite extensively each doctrine mentioned in the creed. This is what the Heidelberg Catechism does with the Apostles' Creed in Lord's Day 8-22. It gives a positive development of each truth or doctrine which is only stated in the Apostles' Creed. This would be possible to do also with the Nicene Creed. But, because the Nicene Creed so closely resembles the Apostles' Creed, to take such an approach would merely be to duplicate the Heidelberg Catechism and what has been written explaining the Heidelberg Catechism. This is not our intention.

Our intention is rather to approach the Nicene Creed from an historical viewpoint. We want to consider for example what this creed meant to the early Christian church. To what specifically was she giving expression when she formulated this creed? What was her understanding of the various elements in this creed? Furthermore we want to view this creed in light of the errors that the church faced. The early church lived in a society that was predominantly pagan. Idolatry in its most crude and vulgar form prevailed. Besides, many errors had crept into the church itself. We have seen brief-

ly the errors of Arianism and Semi-Arianism. There were other errors that plagued the church as well at this time. It was these errors, both within and without, that the early church sought to combat through the Nicene Creed. What were these errors which the church faced? And how did she seek to maintain the truth over against these errors in her creeds? This is the approach we want to take.

This kind of approach is very worthwhile. The value of this approach is especially twofold. First, to study the ancient creeds in this way gives us an opportunity to study the battle of faith as it was fought by the early Christian church. The Nicene Creed was the product of the battle of faith. It marked a victory. It was a victory for the truth over against the lie, a victory for Christ over against the Devil. The creed of Nicea however was not THE victory; it was only A victory. The final victory of Christ and the truth over against the lie and all the powers of darkness awaits the coming of Christ from heaven. And so the battle continued to rage after Nicea and rages even to this day. The battle which the church is presently fighting is therefore the same battle as fought by the early church. Time and circumstances have changed; but the battle is essentially the same. The enemy is the same; his weapons and tactics are the same; the key to the church's victory is the same. Consequently, it is of great value to study the struggles and warfare of the church of the past. Many important and necessary lessons are to be learned in this way which are invaluable for the church of the present as she continues in the same battle.

The second value of approaching the Nicene Creed from an historical viewpoint is that it will aid us in coming to a better understanding and appreciation of our own Reformed creeds. As pointed out in an earlier article the ancient ecumenical creeds of the church are the root out of which have grown our own Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dordt. The development of the truth over the ages must be viewed organically. The truth has grown and developed much like a tree or a plant grows. The early Christian church had essentially the whole truth of God; only she had it in seed form. Through the work of the Spirit, however, that seed of the truth grew and developed so that now it is a plant or a tree. What the church has today in her Reformed creeds is nothing new or different from what the early church had in her creeds. What we have today is simply further developed. But here we see the value of approaching the ancient creeds and the Nicene Creed in particular from an historical viewpoint. By studying the truth as the early church possessed it and confessed it will help us to understand and appreciate the same truth as it is more fully set forth in our own creeds.

GUEST ARTICLE

An Exhortation Concerning Our Families

Rev. R. G. Moore

AN INTRODUCTION

Just as I finished preparing this article, I received and read the article by Rev. Miersma on a companion text to that of mine. And although there may be some close similarities between the two articles, I believe there are enough differences between them to merit submitting this article for you to read. Besides, the repetition of God's truth can never hurt one, but can only strengthen. We take Colossians 3:20-21 as the basis for this article which will be submitted in two installments. Further, I encourage our adult readers to have their children or grandchildren also read this article for their mutual edification.

"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." Col. 3:20-21.

It is obvious from the Scriptures that we live in the midst of this world as pilgrims and strangers. It is obvious, too, that while we are in this pilgrimage, passing through this life, we do so as the children of the living God looking for the life that is above, prepared for us in the heavens. Doing this, we pass through a life and time which is one that is filled with spiritual pitfalls and troubles along the way. Through this passage God will lead us safely unto our heavenly home. He does so by powerfully working in us by the precious Spirit of Christ, as He applies the Word to our hearts. It is such a word of His saving grace that we consider together in this article, an exhortation to lead us in the right spiritual pathway in our relationships in the covenant home. The Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit, comes to us in exhortation concerning our families.

This Scripture passage says to the covenant youth and children of the church, "Obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord." The Word speaks to children; it says obey, obey your parents.

The Lord our God has established various spheres of authority through which He is pleased to rule His church, until the day in which He makes

complete the work of salvation by ushering in the new heavens and earth. When the Lord addresses us in the Scripture, and especially now as He addresses our children, it becomes immediately evident that our children, from the youngest to the oldest, are to be considered as part of the church. They are to be considered heirs of righteousness, partakers of the promise of our God. We believe this wholeheartedly as children of faith, believers in the Word of God. This is a basic tenant of the Reformed faith, that is, not only that God saves adults, but that His church is made up of children as well. This is emphasized in the Bible throughout. Already is this included in the promise to our parents recorded in Genesis 3:15. There we have the promise of salvation in Christ, for it is in the seed of the woman that the promise is fulfilled. That seed is principally Christ, but in Christ the seed are all those who are conceived and born in Christ. Therefore, the promise when it was given to the church was always given to believers and their seed (children). Literally this is true, as that promise is recorded for us in Genesis 17:7, Acts 3:39, etc.

It is for the above reason that we therefore must at the outset of this article understand the children of the church to be heirs with us of righteousness. The reason, of course, is that salvation is determined by God's eternal and unchangeable will, not dependent upon our work or walk. It is not dependent either upon who or what we are. And because it is God's eternal will that decides salvation, and because He is pleased to gather His seed in the line of continuing generations, we find the children of the church addressed, beloved in the Lord, with their parents. So, children, does this address of our text come unto you.

Now Christ says unto our children, "Obey your parents." It is evident from the Scripture that the fundamental calling of the children of the church is to obey their parents. Children, this is one of the basic callings you have as children of God. Before the eyes of Christ you have a particular place in His church, as children. And this refers to the young children, as well as to you who are nearing adulthood. The particular place you have in the church

is one of obedience to your parents. This is not only the teaching of our text, but the teaching of God's Word throughout. It is in the way of obedience to covenant parents, that God is well pleased to instruct you, and to bless you. In this way He is pleased to lead you as His child through this life and to bring you home, even to salvation!

This is the teaching of a companion text found in Ephesians 6:1-3. Take time to read it. Further, the Proverbs speak this same language. Proverbs 13:1 says, "A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke." First we note that, according to this proverb, your father's instruction is often in the form of rebuke. Secondly, the child who hears that rebuke or instruction is a wise son. But one who hears not is a scorner, and a scorner is an abomination not to parents only, but unto God.

In Proverbs 1:8 we read, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." Our parents give to us instruction and law. We, as children, are to hear that. We are to hear that, too, because not only do we believe that we are covenant children, but we also believe that we have covenant parents—covenant parents who fear the Name of God, and who, by grace, set before us the law which is in harmony with God's Word. It is a law that has its source, basically and primarily, in God Himself. Then indeed, as covenant children, we ought to hear it. Thus we have the testimony of Scripture speak throughout its pages. There is no question that God through His Beloved Son, our Lord, calls children to be in obedience to their parents.

Mind you, this is love, too! Christ teaches us that. Christ says, "He who loveth Me, keepeth My commandments." One of His commandments is that as children we obey our parents. For when children walk in obedience to their parents they grow in knowledge. That is one of the blessings of this Christian walk. They grow up in the Lord. They are equipped as children of God in faith. This is a wondrous promise of our God to us.

When the opposite is true, the Scripture is just as clear to point out that children become fools—fools when they hear and obey not their parents. They are a shame not only to their parents, but also a shame to their living God. The fruit of such a walk of disobedience, if not followed by repentance, is that one becomes a scorner and invokes the wrath of God. Such a one becomes a misery to himself and to the church, and he becomes the object of an eternal wrath. Indeed, this too is the antithetical teaching of the Proverbs and the whole of the Scriptures.

Hence, we see that the lack of obedience of any

child is grievous sin. It is a sin against which, in the strength of grace, we must fight. On the other hand, to allow disobedience in our children is also a grievous sin on the part of parents. And, again by the grace of God, we must also flee that sin.

When our text calls us as children unto obedience, we understand that obedience is an outward activity, the activity of doing what our parents tell us. Our text goes even deeper than this, in that it uses a term for obedience that indicates submission. The Lord Jesus Christ says to you children to place yourselves willingly under your parents. And you are to do this, not with eyeservice as unto men, but for your Lord's sake. This means that you don't obey your parents merely to get on the good side of them, or merely because of some natural affection for them. (Although none of these things in themselves are wrong.) But the principle is that, as servants of Christ, you do their will from the heart. To obey, then, is to submit unto the will of your parents from the heart, and so to submit as to the Lord. Because we love Christ, because Christ's faith abides in our hearts, and because we would do the will of our Father in heaven, we will obey our parents. And this becomes manifest in our obedient activity before them.

Of course, from this principle it follows that we are to obey our parents whether they are mean to us or not, whether they are even froward to us or not (cf. I Pet. 2). Even if we were to have evil parents we are to obey them, we are to submit to them! We may thank our God when we have parents who love us in the Lord. Not that they always walk perfectly before us. They don't. They sin, too, but principally they love us in Christ, and in all things we are to obey them for Christ's sake.

There is only one time when we may not obey our parents. And that is if our parents would require of us, or instruct us, to disobey God. Then we must, in a submissive way, in a way of humility, in the way even of bearing punishment, not striking back, not being mean to them with our eyes or killing them with our tongues, but in submission bearing the punishment, say no, I must obey God!

It is good to emphasize the meaning of our obedience as given us by the Word. The calling of Christ to you children is that you seek your parents' will. Children, that means that you must talk to your parents. For it is needful to know your parents' will. You must ask your parents what their will is. Your parents must instruct you, they must teach you. And they must make it clear what their will is for you. On your part you are to talk to your parents—not only to your mothers. Maybe that would be easier for you as a daughter; but you are to talk to your fathers as well. And you must let them know what you are concerned with, and what the

difficulties are which you face. And then ask them as a covenant child how you are to behave in a particular situation that you find yourself in. The question is, "What is your view as a parent, as a godly parent, as a parent placed over me by the living God. What is your will in these matters for me?"

Then, beloved children, desire that will, and see that will as precious, as the will of God-given parents! Then, too, we will seek to fulfill that will. This means that we shall pray often, that we will turn to the Word of God for strength to be obedient, strength to hear, and to be humble, for strength to stand, not in pride, but in grace, in those ways well-pleasing to my God.

Of course, the question may arise just exactly how you can obey as a child of Jesus Christ. Children, beloved of God, Jesus obeyed His Father perfectly in your stead. By nature you and I will not obey. But we have a Lord. We count ourselves part of the body of Christ. And Jesus Christ in our stead, in our behalf, walked in obedience throughout His life. When all the enemies of darkness came against Him He said, "not My will, but Thine be done." He walked in that obedience even to the cross, and in obedience He poured out His life's blood, giving Himself up to the accursed death of the cross. He walked in this obedience unto the Father that He

might cover the sins of God's children, and that He might strengthen them by His Spirit. You, as the children of the covenant, in the strength of Christ alone, can and will obey. Again, we pray for grace that we may live out of Christ, and out of that new life which He sheds forth in our hearts.

There has been given to us a divine motive for hearing this word of God. Our text says that this is well pleasing unto our God. Those walking in obedience to their parents become the objects of God's rich blessing. That is His promise to His children. It is right, according to Paul in Ephesians 6:1, to obey. It is just—just in God's eyes—that is why we obey. It is certainly the desire of God's children, then, to obey, to be right before God. For the child of God from the heart says, "I desire with all my heart to walk in a way that is right with Him."

Thus, beloved children, it is good to listen, and not to teach, to obey, and not to lead. It is our place as children. It is a place that pictures the whole of the church, as they are the children under God. This is our calling. It is our place to hear and to be instructed and to be led by our Lord!

Therefore, by the power of the living God that abides in your hearts, hear this word, and seek it.

(to be continued)

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Gathered Unto His People

Rev. John A. Heys

Each and every one of us has a divinely allotted number of heartbeats; and beyond that definite number we can never go. No one can receive one less or one more. In God's eternal counsel it is all planned. And from the moment, before birth, when our heart beats for the first time, till that last beat, there is a constant countdown.

While Jacob was blessing his sons the countdown was rapidly reaching that last few dozen. And having blessed his sons and given instructions about his burial, with less than a dozen heart beats left, he gathered the one foot up into the bed, gathered the other foot up into the bed, straightened his body out, and his heart beat for the last time. Jacob died. His soul left the body to enter into heavenly joys with the redeemed who had gone on before him.

Jacob's work was finished. That too was eternal-

ly determined, and there was no way in which he could do one bit more of work. Just so many works, just so many deeds, are given us. There are just so many thoughts and so many desires, so many words and so many works, so many actions and so many reactions, designed for each and every one of us. When they have all transpired and become facts of history, the tongue is silenced, the heart and mind form no wishes and thoughts, the hand is still, and the foot will carry us no further over the surface of this earth. And for Jacob there was no further speech to his children. There is not even recorded any firm handshake, embrace, or tender kiss exchanged between Jacob and his sons. He did the work for which God called him. Up till that moment his heart had continued to beat, and his tongue could pronounce the blessing of God. But once all that God had planned for him is executed, his life and his work come to an end. He died serv-

ing God. He called his sons to his deathbed in order to do the work which he knew was his calling. And then he saw his children no more, but opened his eyes to see his God and Saviour. There was no more earthly work for him to do; and so God gave him no more earthly life.

It was surely a peaceful death. We read of no struggle on his part either consciously or unconsciously. The body does fight for life, and often a shudder runs through the body when the soul leaves and the body experiences defeat by the hand of that last enemy which is death. We do not read of such a shudder in Jacob's death. What is more important is that we read of no conscious struggle to prolong life. And this is quite amazing in light of all we know about Jacob's earlier days. How often did he try to "help" God, Who never needs any help! How often did he think that God's cause depended on his muscular power or on the craftiness of his mind! How often did he not resort to trickery and deception to get that which God had promised him! Not one trace of this do you find on his deathbed.

There was no attempt made or cry raised for a few more minutes of life to be able to tell the sons how to succeed in the world, how to make good investments that would bring back high interest and returns upon them. He had blessed them in God's name. He had called them to walk by faith and to bury him in the land of promise. He had reminded them of God's promise to them and their seed; and so without a struggle he closes his eyes as that last beat of his heart pushes his blood a short distance through his arteries and veins, and then the whole process of life ceases completely. It was a peaceful death.

Jacob died in hope. He had strong expectations of the fulfillment of all that which he had prophesied concerning his children and their children. There can be no question about it that for Jacob the highlight of it all was what he might say in God's name about Judah and his seed. The Shiloh would come. In Judah's line would come the Messiah, and that Messiah would bring blessings to the whole spiritual seed that would be born to his sons. Out of Judah but in Christ all of Jacob's spiritual seed will be blessed. How Joseph would have liked to prophesy this of Joseph, his most beloved son! But no, he is submissive, wholly caught up by the Spirit as he is given to speak in God's stead, and as His mouthpiece to say what God intended to do with his sons.

Knowing all this which he predicted about his sons, Jacob can close his eyes in the sleep of death. No need to call the paramedics or Rescue Squad. Jacob sees the salvation of his children, even of

those who have sinned so greatly and had their sins brought to their attention by God through him. That prophecy of Shiloh in Judah's seed will take care of these sins. And, though Jacob could not see that, we today can see how Levi, though scattered among his brethren, was scattered in a blessed way so that all his descendants become priests and assistants to the priests in God's tabernacle, and later on in His temple, with high offices and honour among the people. And what is true of Levi's spiritual seed is true of Reuben's, Simeon's, and in fact of all his twelve children's children. The cross of Christ will take care of all these sins and blot them out forever. The exalted Christ will raise up and deliver all His people and bring them the peace and relaxation of His glorious kingdom in the heavenly land of Canaan. Because of Shiloh there will be a blessing for all the elect children of Jacob, and for all our elect children. No sin can keep them from it. We are saved by grace, not by works. And sinful works cannot frustrate or prevent God's grace.

Knowing all this, Jacob leaves this life with the assurance that God will keep His covenant promises, and that he will now enter into life, though he dies. The unbelieving world had a slogan some years ago that "Life begins at forty." That would, as far as they are concerned, have to be changed now to "Life begins at sixty-two or sixty-five, when retirement age and the age of Social Security benefits begin." Then men can begin to "enjoy life," have time for the pleasures denied them in their working years, and, living off the interest of investments, can now do what was denied them in the past.

But the child of God says "Life begins at death." In effect, that is what Paul wrote to the Philippians when he knew that the countdown of his own life had progressed to the point where not many days were left for him. He wrote, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." A bit later he writes, "For I am in a strait betwixt the two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" (Philippians 1:21-23). Yes, for the child of God, life begins at death. Because Shiloh will come—and indeed now has come and gone through death and the grave for us to be exalted at God's right hand—death is gain. Jacob could gather his feet onto the bed without fearing loss. Though there were only a few numbers left of the countdown of his heartbeats, he knew that there was also a countdown of his soul's swift soaring to heavenly bliss and joy. He could tell his sons that he would be gathered unto his people.

Take note a moment of that strong faith in God's promises. Jacob speaks of being gathered unto his people. That statement speaks of his strong faith in God's promises. He is sure that he will be gathered. God will do that gathering, and therefore he is sure

of arriving. He boasts of no ability to bring himself into glory. Another power will gather him; and that power is none other than God's in Whose name he had blessed his twelve sons. He is sure that though God will soon cease to give him heartbeats, He will cease to do so in order that He may give him everlasting blessedness. God takes away in order to bless. He never takes away in order to rob His people of a single blessing. And that is true also when He takes one of our loved ones away by leading them to that last heartbeat. On the basis of what He said through Paul, that to die is gain, we may always say that God blesses us with death.

But note also that Jacob speaks of an exclusive blessedness. He will not be gathered with all who have died before that day. He will be gathered unto his people. He may never have heard of the words elect and reprobate. But he knew that God had a people distinct from the rest of humanity. He knew that there was a seed of the woman and a seed of the serpent. And he knew that he belonged to that seed of the woman. That also explains why he tells his children about Abraham's being buried in a particular land, and about Isaac being buried there together with both their wives, and that he buried Leah there. He knew that there is a covenant people of God and that when they die they are united into blessed covenant fellowship before God's face.

They do not lie unconscious in their graves, waiting till the end of time. They are not in a realm of conscious glory as an host of disorganized souls in an independent life. No, they are a people, an organized whole, gathered by God's wisdom at the right time, to be added to those who have gone before, in such a way that they serve with them in a common purpose and with a common life as one body. I am going, Jacob told his sons, to where God has assembled His people since the death of Abel. And, because I believe this, bury me with those of that people that I know and whose burying place I know. For they are in the promised land which is a picture of that land where all this people will live together when the last heartbeat of the last of these people has taken place, and the new heavens and new earth appear.

And so ends an amazing chapter in the history of God's church. There is in Genesis yet a bit of history about burying Jacob and about Joseph's brother's fear that now he will seek revenge; and there is yet recorded the death and embalming of Joseph. But with the death of Jacob we come to the end of that period of history in God's church wherein those three patriarchs, who are so often mentioned together, namely, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, lived. To all practical purpose we come to the end of Genesis, the book of beginnings which

tells us not only of the beginning of this earth and of all creation but also of the beginning of God's church.

Many wish to claim that the church had its birth at Pentecost. But an honest dealing with the Scripture forbids this. Adam and Eve belonged to the church. And all the believers since them were members of the one holy catholic church. If we believe, and we must, that Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and that the writers did not follow cunningly devised fables, then we must say with God that there was His church in the Old Testament dispensation. Stephen, in Acts 7:38, speaks of "the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai." Some try to translate congregation here, but the word is church, the same word that appears seven times in the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor. Then, too, Paul demolishes completely that idea that the Jews were the kingdom and the Gentiles the church when in Ephesians 2:12-19 he, speaking of the Gentiles in Ephesus who were "afar off, outside of Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers of the covenant," declares that they in Christ are no more "strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Note that the Gentiles belong to the kingdom as *fellow-citizens* with the Jews, and the Jews in the Old Testament are called the church in Acts 7:38. If we confess to believe—and we must confess that—an holy catholic (universal) church, we must believe one that is in all *ages* as well as in all *nations*, and one to which Adam, Seth, and Noah belonged. Where will we put them? They are not Abraham's seed. And to be universal that church must include the nation of Israel. A church in all nations, tongues, and tribes must include Abraham's seed and not exclude it.

CORRECTION

Mistake in *The Standard Bearer*
Vol LIX, No. 5, Dec. 1, 1982

Arminianism and the Atonement
by Rev. Steven Houck

Page 109, 2nd col., 2nd full par., line 11—"No one will ever go to hell because he rejects Christ" should read, "No one will ever go to hell because of any sin he has committed, nor because of original sin. He will go to hell only because he rejects Christ."

*Know the standard
and follow it.*

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

God's Providence and Sin (2)

Rev. H. Veldman

Calling attention in this rubric, "Taking Heed To The Doctrine," to the problem of God's Providence and Sin, we concluded our first article by calling attention to the fact that this truth is confessional. We quoted from Lord's Days 9 and 10 of our Heidelberg Catechism and from our Confession of Faith, Article 13.

It has been contended recently that all evils do not come to us out of God's fatherly hand. This would, of course, imply either that the devil is responsible for them or that they come upon us by change. It is plain from our confessions that our reformed fathers wanted nothing to do with this view. In Lord's Day 9, Answer 26, we read very plainly that "He will make whatever evils He sends upon me, in this valley of tears, turn out to my advantage." This is plain language. Mind you, of these evils we read that it is the Lord Who sends them upon me. And in Article 13 of our Confession of Faith we read that our Father so restrains (holds in check; and this does not refer to an inner checking of sin as our mother church, the Christian Reformed Church, would have us believe) the devil and all our enemies, that without His will and permission they cannot hurt us. And in Answer 28 of Lord's Day 10 we read that all creatures are so in His hand that without His will they cannot so much as move. Indeed, the Scriptural narrative of Job surely verifies this. And there are other passages in Holy Writ which teach us this truth. Psalm 73 surely emphasizes that the Lord is good only to Israel, never to the wicked, that these wicked are always perishing, being set upon slippery places, and that the Lord always holds His people by their right hand, causing all things to work together for their good. What a comforting truth this is! All things are in His hand. And this also includes the devil and all his host. Our God, our covenant God, rules over all. He also rules over all the powers of sin. It is to this truth that we are calling attention in this and subsequent articles.

We must, first of all, of course, have the issue clearly before us. What is meant by the providence of God? The providence of God is not merely the Lord's preservation of all things. The term "providence," as applied to God, is not Scriptural. The

word occurs only once, I believe, in the Word of God, in Acts 24:2; and in this passage it occurs as applied to Felix, a Roman governor. Of course, that the term, "providence" does not occur in the Scriptures does not necessarily condemn the use of it. The word "Trinity" is not found in the Scriptures either. More serious, however, is an objection that can be lodged against this expression. The word, "providence" means literally: to see before. This could mean, therefore, that the Lord simply saw beforehand what would happen and then acted accordingly. The Arminian view, for example, of election and reprobation is that the Lord saw beforehand who would believe and who would refuse to believe, elected the former and reprobated the latter. This is the Arminian conception of God's election and reprobation, based upon foreseen faith and unbelief. It is against this Arminian view that our fathers drew up the Canons of Dordt. Now we understand, of course, that God did not simply know beforehand, and that He was not simply influenced by these circumstances of which He had this previous knowledge. However, when we speak of the providence of God we speak of His divinely sovereign control over all things. This providence of the Lord is not merely His preservation of all things. Of course, this is also implied. Speaking, then, of the Lord's preservation of all things, we refer to that almighty and omnipresent power of God, whereby the Lord, from moment unto moment, sustains and upholds the entire creation and every creature in harmony with its being. The Lord preserves the horse as horse, the plant as plant, man as man, etc. This operation of the Lord must be understood in the absolute sense of the word. It does not merely control and direct the so-called greater events of life, those incidents which, from our viewpoint, cause a sudden and tremendous change in the course of the world's history and, therefore, sharply draw our attention. We understand, of course, that the distinction between more and less significant events is not to be applied to the Lord. But God's providence also governs the so-called minor things. Every hair upon our heads is counted by the Lord. Every sparrow is sustained by Jehovah from moment unto moment. No sparrow falls off a housetop except by the will of the Lord. Every worm that creeps, creeps alone by the power of

God. What an awe-inspiring thought! Surely we must be overwhelmed by the tremendous thought that God, the terrible and eternal God, so great and highly exalted, incomprehensibly eternal in Himself, the Wholly Other, Who lives eternally in an inaccessible light, Who needeth no man to add unto His glory, Who is everlastingly the all-sufficient One, should concern Himself with the most insignificant worm from moment to moment. Is it not true to a certain extent what has been said: a man's greatness is not determined by the great things of life but by the minor, less important ones? That the president of our country cannot concern himself with every person's difficulty and problem is not because of the greatness of the man but because of his smallness. He simply is not able to concern himself with everybody's problem. And the congregation or church of the living God is called to live this truth. It is indeed proper that the attention of God's people be directed to this wonderful preservation of the Lord. I do not know of a truth that is better known and yet lived or practiced less than this truth of God's providence. How well we know that all things are in God's hand! And, yet, how little this lives in our consciousness, especially when we are in danger or when catastrophes strike us! But too often we live from the "principle" of chance, and then we speak of our "luck." Oh, we surely know better. This word ought never to appear in our vocabulary. So often we proceed from the thought that the providence of God is that act of the Lord whereby He now and then takes a part in the affairs of men, and that we only then must ask Jehovah for help and guidance. If a stone drops immediately behind us, we ascribe it to the providence of God. However, had that stone crushed our head, it would also have been of the providence of the Lord. If we arrive too late at the depot to board a train or at an airport to board a plane, and this train or plane should be wrecked or destroyed with all lives lost, we attribute this to God's providence. Had it occurred, however, that we would have been among those who lost their lives, this, too, would have been the providence of the living God. And the people of the Lord are surely called to live from the principle that God sustains us and directs our lives from moment unto moment.

However, the providence of God must also be understood as the divine government of all things. When speaking of God's providence, we also call attention to the element of cooperation. But now we would mention the Lord's divine government. In His sovereign good pleasure Jehovah has willed the heavenly glorification of His Name. This He has willed in the antithetical sense, in the way of sin and grace, and in the heavenly renewal of all things in heaven and in hell. God's providence, in the sense of government, is the Lord's rule whereby He

realizes that purpose, and does this through all things. And when we speak of cooperation as a third element in God's providence, we do not mean that man cooperates, works along with God and helps Him, but that he, through the sovereign and almighty operation of God, takes part in that government of Jehovah as a moral, rational, responsible being. To this, however, we will call attention more specifically in subsequent articles.

This, in brief, is the providence of God. To have the issue clearly before us, we must also call attention to the reality of sin. This fact of sin as such we surely cannot deny. We remarked in our first article that the Pelagian cannot possibly explain the universal character of the phenomenon of sin. The Pelagian, setting forth that the will of the sinner is inherently and essentially good, has no explanation for this universal phenomenon. He denies the organic connection between the reality of sin and the sin of Adam. Why should all men, if the sinner's will be essentially good, choose for sin? Why is it that there is not one who chooses for the good? Why is it that all men have gone astray, and why is it that there is none that seeks the glory of God? Besides, let the Pelagian explain why all men are conceived and born dead in sin and in trespasses. Indeed, this universal phenomenon can be explained only in the light of the headship of Adam and that, by the curse of the living God, death has passed on to all the children of men. To be sure, no man can deny the reality of sin. Even the most optimistic of humans must acknowledge the reality of sin. One may refuse to glorify God and have no consciousness of sin in the spiritual, Scriptural sense of the word. Yet, who would have the courage, the brazen effrontery to dare to lay claim to perfection? Such a one must surely be viewed as beside himself. The daily murders, the ever-increasing rumours of war, speak but too emphatically of the jealousy and hatred governing the children of men. Besides, anyone who is somewhat acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, and these Scriptures are the light upon our pathway and the lamp before our feet, is surely aware of the terrible reality of sin. And what shall he say who has learned by the power of God's grace what it means to be a sinner, who spiritually understands the fact of sin and iniquity. What a tremendous phenomenon is this reality of evil! At the dawn of creation, when all the handiwork of God united in singing praises unto the Lord, when not a single defect marred the entire creation, sin entered this world and caused all things to break away from the Lord and become subject unto the curse of the Almighty. Death and destruction it left in its wake. Sickness, misery, care, and sorrow are our lot. And all this misery and sorrow is universal in the absolute sense of the word. Moreover, there is the fact of sin itself. Yes, we are all conceived and born in

sin. What an iniquity abounds upon the face of the earth! Scripture and also our own experience impress us with the reality that the powers of hell and darkness are constantly attempting to subdue this earth unto themselves. And to this we may add that it seems that they may continue unmolested who mock at God and His Christ and make of the church of God a plaything throughout the ages. Does it not seem to Asaph, the writer of Psalm 73,

that there is no knowledge with the Most High, or that He does not concern Himself with all these wicked activities of these powers of sin and darkness? Indeed, we must surely reckon with the phenomenon of sin. We simply cannot possibly ignore it. This is our comfort: we can face this reality of sin as knowing that God, our God, the God of our salvation, is in absolute control.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

The Place of the Individual Believer in Mission Work (1)

Rev. Ronald Van Overloop

Thanks must go to Kalamazoo and to their committee for arranging and conducting this mission's conference. Such a day is vital and good for the church; and all who were present experienced that blessing. Such conferences should be held more often, not only to detail facts of the specific fields, but to talk about methods and about the work God has given to us to do. Also they serve as specific occasions to discuss the blessed gospel which is the inspiration and motivation to preaching in our established congregations as well as on the mission fields.

This message is divided into three parts: introductory remarks and observations; the primary responsibility of the individual believer; and the secondary responsibilities which flow from the reality of salvation. In this issue we will consider the first two.

Of the introductory observations there are three.

The first is that every true believer is concerned with and desirous for the growth of the church of Jesus Christ. Obvious though this might be it is necessary to note. The reason is that the Reformed believer finds himself reacting to the concept of church growth in the church world today. That concept coincides with the ungodly American fascination with size and success, namely, that a successful church is a large one.

The correctness of this reaction to such a concept of church growth is seen in two biblical ideas. The first is that size is not one of the marks of the true church. "Fear not, *little* flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). "The LORD did not set His love upon you,

nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the *fewest* of all people" (Deut. 7:7). Secondly, Scripture warns against any fascination with large numbers by recording the sad history of David's numbering the people (cf. II Samuel 24).

Nevertheless, the Reformed believer does look for, pray for, and delight in the growth of the church of Jesus Christ. The growth of the church is not something carnal, but highly spiritual. My love for the Lord and for the salvation of His people, makes me value highly church growth. Therefore, pray for, delight in, and look forward to healthy growth of the church of Jesus Christ.

Our second introductory observation is that the activity and role of the individual believer on the mission field is no different from that of the believer in an established congregation. First of all, both experience the same sovereign and complete salvation in Jesus Christ. Secondly, both have the ability and desire to love God and their neighbor. That love of the neighbor is seeking his highest good which is the eternal salvation of his soul. Thirdly, the religion of the believer, whether in the mission field or in the established congregation, is not compartmentalized, affecting only certain days of the week or specific minutes of a day, but it touches and affects the whole of his life: day and night, seven days a week. Finally, and most importantly, every believer knows the same sense of gratitude for his deliverance from the power of sin. If members of an established congregation give as an excuse for less involvement that believers on the mission field have their first love, then repent and seek that first love, for you are in serious danger of

loosing your candlestick. Do not make excuses like that! The believers in both cases have been delivered from the same depth of total depravity, have been brought to the same blessed salvation, and therefore should have the same sense of the eternal debt of gratitude. If there is any difference between the believer on the mission field and the believer in the established congregation it might be a heightened consciousness on the part of the believer in the mission field for the need to reach those outside, so that the group might grow, in order that it might be organized into a congregation. Our second introductory remark is that the role of the believer is the same, regardless of his presence in an established congregation or on the mission field.

This brings us to our third introductory remark. The individual, true believer, along with the faithful preacher is conscious of the sovereign power of the Lord Jesus Christ in the growth of any congregation. According to Acts 2:47 it is the Lord Who adds to the church and makes it grow. This Lord is Jesus Christ, according to Acts 2:36. People do not add themselves to the church. Nor are people added to the church by any other human being, whether that be an apostle or a high-powered evangelist. All the glory for church growth must go to and belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Lord crucified, risen, exalted and Who pours forth His Spirit on the church, Who adds. The heart of Peter's message on Pentecost, and of the Reformed churches, is that the Lord adds.

It is both fitting and necessary that the Lord Jesus Christ does the adding to the church. First, that is because only the Lord knows who "should be saved" and thus added to the church. Not everyone belongs to the church, but only the elect and redeemed, cf. John 17:2. Only Jesus knows who belong; and He adds "such as should be saved." Secondly, it is fitting and necessary that Jesus adds to the church because He is the Lord of the church and her Head. The church is His property, His wife and His body. As such only the Lord Jesus Christ has the right to add and make the church to grow. Thirdly, Acts 2:47 teaches that this addition to the church takes place in the way of their being saved. Only the Lord has the power to save and thus to add to the church. Only the Lord by the Spirit's power and sovereign Word enlightens and softens, Ezekiel 36:26, 27.

So much for our introductory remarks and observations. We have noted, by way of review, that every true believer is concerned with and desirous for the growth of the church of Jesus Christ. Our second observation is that the activity and role of the individual believers on the mission field is basically no different from that of the believer in an

established congregation. The third remark we made by way of introduction is that, no matter our responsibilities to give witness of our faith, we are very conscious that it is by the sovereign power of our Lord Jesus Christ that the church grows, cf. Acts 2:47.

* * * * *

Now we face the question, What is the primary responsibility of the individual believer in mission work? We find the answer to that question by answering another: How does the Lord Jesus Christ cause the church to grow? That is seen from the context of Acts 2:47. Through the wonders which accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost a crowd of thousands were gathered. This providential gathering together was for the purpose that they might hear the preaching of the apostles, Acts 2:11 & 14ff. The Lord adds to the church by saving and the Lord brings men to the consciousness of salvation through the preaching of the Word (Romans 10:13-17).

In Acts 2 we see that Jesus added to the church in the way of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit with the preaching of the gospel. Peter preached concerning Jesus of Nazareth, approved of God, crucified by wicked men, raised from the dead, exalted to God's right hand, and returning with His Spirit. This preaching of the Gospel "pricked" 3000 hearts, bringing repentance and faith (Acts 2:37, 41).

That Jesus Himself adds to the church does not make the church inactive or passive. The Lord adds through the life and activity of the members of the church. The church is active in this Word because the Lord has the Gospel preached by and through and in the church. The church has the responsibility of preaching the gospel and praying that the Spirit will bind that preached Word on hearts, beginning with themselves.

Usually any talk about the believer's responsibility in mission work deals with going door to door, attending special classes to learn the special methods of witnessing. The distinct impression which this leaves is that witnessing is something special; it is another category or aspect of our lives. Rather we would say that the primary responsibility of the individual believer in the growth of the church is this: out of the experience of the salvation of his soul, he supports and delights in the preaching of Christ crucified. Out of the consciousness of what God has done for you, you pray for the preaching of the gospel that it might fall as seed upon well-prepared souls. This is exactly what the soul of the redeemed saint craves and delights in. His life is centered in the Word of God in which he reads, of which he speaks, and on which he medi-

tates. Thus the individual believer lives within the sphere of the Word preached. Therefore, he supports the pure preaching of the Gospel in every possible way. This is true for every believer, as he hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

Therefore, because the Lord Jesus Christ adds to the church the ones being saved through the means of the preaching of the Gospel, the primary responsibility of the individual believer towards mission work is to support the preaching. This will be a most natural activity of one who is brought to the consciousness of salvation through that preaching and who maintains that delightful consciousness while sitting under that same preaching. With the preaching at the very center of the life of the church, in the sphere of which the believer thrives, there are other, closely related elements of a healthy, spiritual church-life. Such was the case of the church at Jerusalem to which the Lord added daily the ones being saved. Let us enumerate those elements of a congregation's life which are so closely related to the preaching of the Word.

First, the church at Jerusalem to which souls were added was characterized by steadfast continuance in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). This is most fundamental to the spiritual life of a congregation; they must know and live in the Word of God. The activity of continuing in the apostles' doctrine must be "steadfast," i.e., not departing from or allowing it to be corrupted, but holding it in confession, in the preaching, and in the life of the congregation. The whole congregation has a lively interest in the Word of God. They came together eagerly and expectantly. When the believer considers the tremendous work of God in sending His only-begotten and beloved Son for worthless sinners like himself, then he seeks to immerse himself in the

whole concept of Jesus approved of God, crucified and risen. He feels that he cannot get enough of that. Throughout the week he reads the Word of God, talks of it, and meditates upon it. He lives in it, as the sphere of his whole life.

Secondly, the church at Jerusalem was characterized by the fellowship of the members among themselves. This fellowship was expressed by being gathered often in worship, prayer, and the Lord's Supper. Also they expressed their fellowship by helping those members who lacked the necessities of life (Acts 2:42-45).

If there is not steadfast continuance in the Word, then from a human viewpoint you cannot expect an outsider to pay attention to your confession. If they see that your personal and your church's profession is mere formality and that the Word is not primary, why would they want to join from a human viewpoint? If they see no true fellowship and love, then from a human viewpoint you cannot expect them to join.

The Lord adds daily to the church where the individual believers strive mightily, out of the consciousness of gratitude to God for what He has done for them, to delight in and to immerse themselves in the preaching of Jesus Christ crucified, the God of their salvation. And the believer cannot get enough of it, so he lives in it every day of the week. That is where the Lord adds daily. Therefore the individual believer's primary responsibility is to support and delight in the life of the church, in which the preaching of Christ crucified holds a central place.

(to be continued)

**(Text of an address by Pastor Van Overloop at Mission Emphasis Day last May in Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church)*

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Days of Noah (2)

Rev. Wilbur G. Bruinsma

During the life of Noah the spiritual wall between God's people and the wicked world had broken down. There formed an unholy alliance between the daughters of men and the sons of God. Little difference could be found between the children of the covenant line and those of the wicked world. The sons of God were attracted to the wicked ways of the world. The culture, the enter-

tainment, the industry, and the trends of the wicked world appealed to them, and they were drawn to the world as iron is drawn to a magnet. It was because of this that the children of the covenant line, being attracted by the outward beauty and sex-appeal of the wicked, took them wives of, and gave themselves as wives to, whomever they pleased. These unequally yoked marriages then

produced offspring which became great men and women of the world, steeped in the wisdom and ways of this world.

Now, the point we established in our last installment was this: the days of Noah are a type of the days in which we find ourselves at present. We called our attention to that all-important passage in Matthew 24:37-39. There Jesus tells us, "But as the days of Noe were, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

In light of what Jesus says in this passage we concluded the last article with the question, "What is happening today?" Are the events of Noah's day unfolding also in our day? Is there today too a breakdown of that spiritual separation between those who confess to be the church and those of the wicked world?

To answer this in the negative would not only deny the word of Christ in Matthew 24, but would also clearly reveal that we ourselves have become spiritually insensitive, in fact spiritually blind, to what is developing all around us today! Certainly there is widespread amalgamation between many who wish to cling tenaciously to the name "Christian" and yet indulge in and enjoy to the fullest the pleasures of this wicked world. No doubt Satan is laboring very diligently in this respect. How clearly Paul points this out to Timothy in II Timothy 3. In verses one through five of this chapter Paul describes what will characterize in the last days those who call themselves Christians but who remain so only in name. They will be "lovers of their own selves. . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." How true all this is! There are many today—and we need not look very far to find them—that, although they are covered with an outward sugar-coating of godliness, nevertheless have desires which are earthly, sensual, and devilish! They go through the outward motions of faith yet no longer live out of the longing for the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting! That is exactly what had happened in Noah's day!

How true the apostle Paul's words ring in our ears: men shall be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." Today too — and again we need not look too far—we find a mad dash after the entertainment and pleasures this world has to offer. Oh, perhaps one may avoid the most shockingly evil places of entertainment, but nevertheless the "fun" of this world has taken its hold. Many have begun to live for pleasure, for having a good time. If some-

thing is not entertaining then it is not worth one's while. Certainly such a craze has found deep inroads into the church of Jesus Christ. A life in the service of God has been replaced by a life in the service of pleasure. Can we deny that? This is the most successful method devised by Satan to lure into his clutches all the world, including those who call themselves "sons of God." It is little wonder that the apostle Peter warns us with these words; "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (I Peter 4:7). How easy it can be to become swallowed up in the riches and pleasures, the artistry and industry, the fashions and trends of this wicked world! Do we not experience from day to day the powerful pull that all these things have upon our own sinful natures? Surely the child of God can be thankful and filled with joy that the work of grace in his life inspires him to do battle with sin and Satan. By that grace he remains faithful and continues to desire fellowship with God rather than fellowship with the workers of iniquity. But as time progresses, remember, these true "sons of God" become fewer and fewer. The church world, slowly at first, and more rapidly as time goes on, becomes infiltrated with those possessing a form of godliness but who deny the power of it.

Because these so-called Christians now seek and enjoy the same pleasures as the ungodly world they also begin more and more to have pleasure in them that do them. In other words, they begin to desire the outward beauty, the sex-appeal, of the wicked men and women of this world. As a result, because there is no essential difference between them and the wicked they take them wives of, and give themselves as wives to, all which they choose. Oh yes, intermarriage between those in the church and those of the world is a phenomenon which is becoming common in our day. And of a truth this becomes the very groundwork for the development of the Antichrist. The offspring of such marriages will become men of renown. They will appeal both to the world and to nominal Christendom and will become the stabilizing force which unites them into one kingdom.

And what is happening to the true Church of Jesus Christ? It grows smaller and smaller. It is there, no doubt; it will always be there. But now God gathers His people from all nations, tongues, and tribes, only in small numbers. How tiny the church of Christ is today! And if we were able to separate the true Christian from those who only call themselves Christian, how much smaller it truly would prove to be. "But as the days of Noe were, so shall the coming of the Son of man be." Surely that reveals itself in the synthesis between the church and the world today.

There is also another way the days of Noah are a type of the days in which we live. Again in our last installment we considered that the children of these "mixed marriages" became the mighty and the noble of this world, men who developed this creation in the service of sin and Satan. We consider this now in more detail. In the days prior to the Flood the world had developed greatly in her technology and industry. It had reached the zenith of its glory and power, the very height of its development. That this took place in Noah's day is revealed in the Scripture account of Lamech and his three sons. In Genesis 4:19-22 we read, "And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron." Now, perhaps at first glance these words of Scripture do not really seem to tell us much about the world of Noah's day. Remember, however, that all that is included in Scripture is of significance and God Himself included this account in Sacred Writ to speak to us who live in the last days.

Let us take note, therefore, of the teaching of this passage.

In the first place, we notice that these three sons of the evil Lamech represented all those whose ambition in life was to develop this good creation of God in such a way that it would serve their own interests rather than God's. It was their aim and goal to make this world useful for themselves, to make it as pleasant as possible for themselves, and to use it to fulfill their own passions and lusts. We cannot fail to notice that these three men of renown were born in the reprobate line of Cain. Therefore, all their work was done in the service of sin and Satan. These men were the mighty and noble of this world who were not (as were God's children) interested in a heavenly kingdom and fellowship with the Most High. These men and all the worldly wise that followed them were intent on developing an earthly kingdom in which man was king, a kingdom which had no room for God.

In the second place, this passage clearly indicates that the days before the Flood were days of great development in riches and industry. Often we are under the impression that the men and women that lived prior to the Flood were uncivilized cave men who walked about with clubs and long, unkempt hair. Not so! The world at that time was highly civilized! It had to be! Just think of the age of many of these men prior to the Flood. They lived to be well over 500 years old. If we were to consider, for a

moment, the amount of knowledge we acquire in 70 years of life, how much more the knowledge prediluvian man must have acquired in his life. Was the world as developed then as it is today? Probably not. But that does not mean man was uncivilized. The world at that time had reached the very peak of civilization.

Jabal was but *the father* of those that dwelt in tents and had much cattle. That means that those who followed him became rich and famous landholders. They possessed the riches of this world and were powerful and influential men whose aim was to gain this world. Jubal was but *the father* of all such as handle the harp and organ. That means that his descendants developed many musical instruments, as well as the song. And since this was done in the service of sin we can be sure that all these instruments and these songs were used to reveal the inner lusts and evil desires of their hearts. The world had become highly developed in its wicked music. Finally, Tubalcain was but *the instructor* of every artificer in brass and iron. That means that those who were taught by him became the geniuses of industry and technology. Once again, although we cannot become speculative as to just how developed prediluvian man was in this respect, we can be sure that society had become highly civilized.

In the third place, we take note that these men of renown were not men of the church. We directed our attention to this earlier. But it is important to emphasize this. God's people are, according to the standards of this world, the base, weak, and beggarly elements of this world. They never are those who are wise in the ways of this world. That was true of Noah also. When it comes to industry, riches, and fame the descendants of Seth are not even mentioned at this point in Scripture.

When we put all these facts together we can but conclude that in the days prior to the Flood the wicked world had almost reached its Utopia, or, so it seemed in the eyes of the wicked. The church of God was about gone, and, with that, all mention of God had disappeared. It seemed to the wicked, that they had succeeded in disposing of God Himself. Besides this, they had all the industry, entertainment, and riches they needed to live life to its fullest. They were able to fulfill all the desires of their flesh as they lived in luxury. And all of this without God. Then the Flood came....

Next installment, the Lord willing, we will again consider the last days in which we live in light of these days of Noah.

Read The Standard Bearer

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

I Thessalonians — Pastoral Care for an Infant Church (1)

Rev. J. Kortering

In attempting to summarize the single message of this epistle, we encounter difficulty. This letter is a good example of Paul as pastor, instructing the rather young church of Thessalonica how to deal with specific problems that arose in her midst.

THE CHURCH AT THESSALONICA

Paul visited Thessalonica for the first time during his second missionary journey. The city had already had an illustrious history. Its name was chosen by Cassander in 315 B.C. and named after his wife, Thessalonica, daughter of Philip II, step-sister of Alexander the Great. It was made the capital of Macedonia in 146 B.C. by the Romans. In the struggle within the Roman republic, Thessalonica sided with Antony and Octavian, 42 B.C., and subsequently was made a free city. Its main attraction was its harbor on the Aegean Sea and it served as a station on the East-West highway from the Far East to the Adriatic Sea. It prospered with business and shipping, numbering about 200,000 citizens when Paul arrived.

From Acts 17 and this letter to the Thessalonians, we learn something about Paul's missionary labors there and how the church was organized. Leaving Philippi, Paul and his traveling companions passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica. There he visited the Jewish synagogue for three Sabbaths (Acts 17:2). We should take note of the fact that Thessalonica was a "free city," hence the Jews sought residence there and were able to engage in business and have their own synagogue. This was in contrast to Philippi, a Roman military town. Paul showed the Jews that the Christ he preached was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, the promised Messiah (Acts 17:3, 4). Some of these Jews believed in Christ. Along with them were a goodly number of Greeks and proselytes, including some of the women of social standing. Some of the men converts mentioned later included Aristarchus, Secundus, and probably Gaius (Acts 20:4, Acts 19:29).

Paul's labors were cut short when there was an uprising among the people. The Jews were jealous of the fact that they were outnumbered by the God-fearing Greeks. With the help of some of the most

vile citizens, the Jews organized an attack upon Paul. They surrounded the house of Jason, intending to take Paul and his companions. However, they were not there. According to Acts 17, the Jews took Jason and certain of the brethren of the congregation to the authorities and laid charge against them. They accused them of consorting with men who caused public unrest and defied Roman law by claiming that Jesus was king. They had no proof, so the authorities required of Jason and the brethren "security" (Acts 17:9), evidently including a pledge that they would send Paul away in order to prevent any further public strife.

How long had Paul labored in Thessalonica? Some scholars conclude that the reference to "three Sabbaths" means that they were there for only three weeks. This would not coincide, however, with other facts that we learn. According to I Thessalonians 1:9, Gentiles were added to the church. For them to be converted from heathen idolatry to the Christian faith would involve more than Paul preaching in a Jewish synagogue for three Sabbaths. In addition to this, Paul makes mention of his laboring, in all likelihood in tentmaking, in order to earn his own way lest he be accused of making money by preaching (II Thess. 3:8). The most convincing proof of a longer stay is found in Philippians 4:16 in which he tells the Philippians that they sent money to him twice while he labored in Thessalonica. All of this leads us to conclude that Paul labored there at least for months. Ramsey is quoted in I.S.B.E. as suggesting that Paul was there from December A.D. 50 until May A.D. 51.

What do we know about the congregation at Thessalonica? From this letter it is apparent that the church was composed mainly of Gentile converts, who at one time practiced idolatry. "Ye turned unto God from idols" (I Thess. 1:9). They were dear to the heart of Paul, for he mentions how he wanted to come unto them more than once, but Satan hindered him (I Thess. 2:18, 3:10, 11). He makes special mention of their devotion to God and how the truth was spoken by them to others in Macedonia and Achaia. As a result of this, they have a reputation of being strong in their faith (I Thess.

1:8). This is remarkable when we consider that they were converted from heathendom only a few months earlier. Even the problems Paul deals with in this letter indicate that they struggled to be faithful, and Paul sought to help them as a young pastor would seek the good of his flock.

AUTHOR-OCCASION-DATE

As usual, Paul identifies himself as the author. "Paul and Silvanus (Silas) and Timotheus, unto the church of Thessalonica" (1:1). No one has questioned this except more recent schools of higher criticism which have questioned everything in the Bible. There is no substance to their opposition.

From Acts 17 we learn that Paul, Timothy, and Silas all fled from Thessalonica by night. They went to Berea, where the Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they did not reject the Word offhand, but searched the Old Testament Scriptures to determine whether Paul taught the truth or not. Word soon reached Thessalonica that this was true. So hostile were the Jews there, that they sent a delegation to Berea to try to stir up the people there as well. They succeeded in driving Paul out of the city. Timothy and Silas, however, remained behind. Paul went to Athens where he preached on Mars' Hill and labored briefly. No church was established there. Paul sent for Timothy and Silas and asked them to come down to Athens. After they rejoined Paul, all went their separate ways for a time: Timothy went to Thessalonica (I Thess. 3:2), Silas probably went to Philippi, and Paul went to Corinth. Still later, they rejoined Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5).

The spiritual condition of the church at Thessalonica is evident in this letter which was sent by Paul to them after he received this report from Timothy. In the main, the report was favorable. Yet he mentioned certain areas of concern that needed immediate attention. A list of them is given in Harrison's *Introduction to the New Testament*. "First, persecution had broken out, for which Paul may have felt in a measure responsible, since its first outbreak came during his ministry in Thessalonica. At any rate, he undertook to bring encouragement to his readers, commending them for fidelity in their trials (2:14; 3:1-4). Second, there was a current of criticism against Paul, probably set in motion by Jewish opposition, which not only found fault with the conduct of his ministry in Thessalonica, but also, it seems, ventured to call in question his motives. This elicited from Paul a defense of his conduct (2:1-12). Third, the Christian standard of holiness required reiteration for the benefit of those who had so recently come out of Paganism, where moral ideals were low (4:1-8). Fourth, the death of certain members of the congregation created con-

cern for their welfare by loved ones and raised questions concerning their participation in the final salvation to be attained at the coming of the Lord. Paul sought to give instruction and comfort suitable to this situation (4:13-18). Fifth, a tendency to restlessness and inattention to the daily tasks, which may have been due to an unhealthy attitude toward the return of Christ, needed rebuke (4:11). Sixth, there was some failure to understand the place of spiritual gifts and even a tendency to repress them (5:19)."

Taking into consideration that Paul wrote this letter from Corinth, while he labored there on his second missionary journey, we can fix the date as the year A.D. 51 or thereabout.

This can also be confirmed by secular history. We know Paul labored in Corinth during the rule of Gallio, deputy of Achaia (Acts 18:12). There is an inscription called the Delphi Inscription, which contains a letter from Emperor Claudius to Gallio, the date of which corresponds to A.D. 52. In all likelihood he arrived at his position in the summer of A.D. 51. Paul's labor in Corinth was for eighteen months, which began in the summer of A.D. 50. This letter then was more than likely written during the year A.D. 51.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

One conclusion we are able to draw from the date of composition is that this letter is the earliest of Paul's writing and also the earliest of the New Testament Scripture. Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians about 22 years after Christ died, arose, and ascended into heaven. Also we can determine that Paul was converted about fourteen years before he wrote the letter. This tells us that the content of this letter reflects the earliest view of the gospel current in the New Testament church. Prior to his conversion, Paul had been instructed in the best Jewish schools, and after his conversion the Holy Spirit gave him understanding in all things of the truth. We can get an inside picture of that gospel by careful study of this letter.

Considering now that Paul was acting as pastor of this church at Thessalonica, two important lessons may be learned. First, in dealing with opposition to the gospel, he avoids being personal. Even when enemies insinuated that he was traveling for money, Paul does not lash out; rather he reminds them that in their persecution of him they please not God (II Thess. 2:15). One cannot help but see, when reading this epistle, on how high a plane the apostle deals with opposition. He will not needlessly stir up the church for personal vindication; rather he sets the record straight and shows that their opposition was against *the gospel*!

Second, it is good for one to read this letter and

learn about pastoral care. Chapter two especially is full of warmth and love for the church. He carefully analyzes the important needs of the church and

what difficulty they have and forthrightly answers them. In one word, spiritual honesty shines upon every page of this letter.

News From Our Churches

December 15, 1982

An excellent way to make sure that many of our people know about our publications is to display them. In early August, First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan put up a new display rack in the hall. Their bulletin reads, "The Evangelism Committee has placed a display of RFPA publications as well as many pamphlets in this rack in order that the congregation and those who visit us have easy access to these excellent publications." The display of books was made possible because there was someone in the church who was willing to handle the purchasing of books. An added advantage is that our publications are seen by the youth of our churches who will later on be forming families of their own.

A Bible study group at Hope Protestant Reformed Church has recently begun studying the history of our churches. They meet every Monday night and are led by Prof. H. Hanko. The first lesson studied the background of the common grace controversy, beginning with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, 1834, and proceeding up to the Christian Reformed Church in 1924. Their second lesson will be on the first point of common grace. It is good to see that many of our young adults are keenly interested in knowing not only our doctrines but also the history surrounding some of these doctrines.

Our Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California is celebrating their 50th Anniversary a year late. Hope Church was organized in 1932 with thirty-five families. There are presently forty-two families. The reason for this seemingly unexplainable event is that their new church building will be finished in 1983 and they thought it a good idea to combine the celebrations into one event. If you are over in the Redlands area in either the end of May or the beginning of September you will have the privilege of being a part of their celebration. I also understand that they had a good re-

sponse in regards to the solicitation of loans for the new building. These are good evidences that God maintains a spirit of unity in our churches.

At the end of the last issue, I briefly remarked about the progress Covenant Protestant Reformed Church has made towards a new building. I have an up-to-date report for you. "We are happy to be able to report (that) the electrician has finished his work except for the final installation of light fixtures....we have had one contractor at the building to bid on the heating and duct-work." They are also investigating the possibility of holding regular worship services in the new building before the parking lot is paved. May God grant that possibility to our brethren in New Jersey.

As you know, First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids has been working hard to sell their church property. At their recent congregational meeting they made the following decision: "The extension of time for the closing of the sale of our church property was granted."

There is another church building item that has come to my attention from Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church's bulletin. "One additional proposal the consistory presents for this meeting: the installation of ceiling fans in the auditorium and fellowship hall." This was approved. Not only do the ceiling fans provide better air circulation but also the "savings in fuel costs would equal the cost of the fans within four years." I must admit that some of our churches do get stuffy in the winter and hot in the summer.

A group of people from Kalamazoo and the Grand Rapids area are working together under the leadership of Rev. Woudenberg to lay tentative plans for a "Child Development Day." So far the group has met twice and plans on this special event taking place in the spring. You will want to keep your ears open for further developments.

DH