

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . We still enter into physical death; but it cannot kill us We still enter into the grave; but it cannot hold us We shall be raised — strong, glorious, incorruptible, immortal, spiritual, heavenly!

See "Resurrection Victory"

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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 Slopsema, 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

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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

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MEDITATION

Resurrection Victory

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

He will swallow up death in victory.

Isaiah 25:8

Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust.

Isaiah 26:19

I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

Hosea 13:14

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 15:54-57

What a glorious light shines in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!

The prophet Isaiah saw it afar off, and he prophesied that the God of our salvation would swallow up death in victory. And he called upon those who dwell in the dust to awake and sing, because they shall arise from the dead and shall live.

The prophet Hosea, whose ministry was during one of the darkest and apparently most hopeless eras of the history of the old dispensation, was given to be the mouthpiece of Jehovah Himself, promising with a promise without repentance to ransom and redeem His people from death and the grave, and proclaiming centuries beforehand, in language which the apostle Paul must have had in mind later, (according to the corrected translation): "O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction?"

And the apostle Paul, having called attention to the fact that the resurrection of the body in the last day shall be the realization of the victory promised centuries before through Isaiah, concludes that glorious chapter on the resurrection of the body with the triumphant challenge, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

But all this glorious light of the sure promise of God and the triumphantly challenging shout of the apostle (and of the believers with him) concerning the glorious resurrection of the body in the last day, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality—does it not all radiate and shine forth in scintillating brilliance from that amazing, that astounding, that enemy-confounding wonder of the third day, when "death could not hold its prey," when "He tore the bars away," and "Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o'er His foes," and when the disciples greeted one another with joyful shout, "The Lord is risen indeed"? And did not that resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ become forever after the central thrust in the preaching of the apostles and of the church? And is that not the reason why the apostle—and we with him—conclude this triumphant challenge with, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory *through our Lord Jesus Christ*"? (italics added)

O death, where are thy plagues? O death, where is thy sting?

There is no fundamental difference in the meaning of these two questions. In both of them death is personified and takes on the appearance of a mighty and fierce monster. And in both of them death is addressed and challenged in question form.

Mighty enemy!

Death is the state resulting from our separation from God, the source of all life. It is a state of corruption. There are not various deaths, though we may distinguish various aspects of the one power of death: moral-spiritual death, physical-temporal death, and the everlasting death in the desolation of hell. And that one power of death operates in us from the beginning of our existence. In spiritual death we are born by nature; into physical corruption we are drawn down at the moment when we breathe our last; and the end of it all is everlasting desolation. And even as the Scripture here has in view the resurrection of the body, so it also has in view that physical aspect of death, the death of our body. That death is the complete dissolution of all our earthly existence; in death the organism of man's body collapses. All that a man is and all that he has is taken away from him, completely lost, and his very name and place perishes. He becomes exposed as corruptible, weak, inglorious, mortal. No, in death a man is not annihilated, as though his existence ends. *He* dies; *he* passes through the experience of physical death—even though we may not be able to form a conception of that existence which continues in and through death. That death is the absolute end of all our *present* existence. And the fearful, dreadful thing about that death is that it is the passage into eternal death. Man goes from death to death. Dying, he dies! And when he dies, it is only to await in Sheol the night of eternal desolation in hell, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

And the grave seals death; it signifies that there is no return. The grave represents destruction, and thus the victory of death. For in the grave the corruption and dissolution of the body are finished. A man becomes a heap of dust without form or meaning.

Mind you, that death is not a normal natural process! It is a violent intervention of God! Death is punishment; it is the wages of sin. It is the expression of God's wrath and justice. God kills us!

Such is death! Awful, formidable, implacable enemy!

The Scripture in Hosea speaks of death's *plagues*, in the plural. By this expression reference is made not only to the power of corruption and dissolution which takes over after the moment of physical death. But it refers to all the powers of death, all the various plagues, which lead me inevitably down to destruction. From the moment of my birth forward, death has its sword at my throat. I am born dying. And dying, I die—steadily, inevitably, from the cradle to the grave. Death with all its forces pursues me, surrounds me, plagues me, all my life

long, until finally I succumb and fall into the destruction of the grave.

In Corinthians reference is made to the very same idea essentially, but in the singular: the apostle speaks of death's *sting*. Death is a monstrous, poisonous beast with a poison sting, like that of a scorpion. That sting is the power to kill. Moreover, the principle of that sting, that power to kill, is defined: it is *sin*. Sin is the power which gives to death its poison and its plagues, which enables physical death to kill. Take sin away, and physical death certainly remains—and we must all pass through it—and it still looks to be the old dreadful enemy, corrupting us and being the gateway, through the grave, into hell and its everlasting desolation. But if sin is removed, the power of death to do any harm is gone! The reason lies partly in the fact that sin itself implies separation from God's favor; it is itself death. And partly the reason lies in the fact that sin is *legally* the sting of death. For death, remember, is *wages*, the wages of sin. We are surrendered to death's power according to the justice of God, because of our guilt. For the strength of sin is the law, the law of God. And by the law here is meant not merely the outward code of Ten Commandments, but the living expression of the righteous will of God. That law demands obedience: "Thou shalt love Me with all thy heart and mind and soul and strength." And that law promises life upon obedience; but it curses and surrenders to sin and corruption and death when we disobey. Hence, that law is sin's strength. That law assigns the sinner to the power of sin, so that he is a slave of sin and so that he can never be freed from that power of sin until he has met the righteous demand of God's law.

Mighty, fearful enemy!

I know that death's plagues shall overwhelm me, destroy my flesh, sweep me into the grave, and then into the darkness of hell. Whether I stand alone, or whether I call to my assistance all the armies of human might, death conquers! And I am afraid! Always in the midst of death, the fear of death holds me in bondage all my lifetime. And the monstrous, dreadful enemy mocks all my attempts to deny him and to escape him!

But hark!

All through the ages of the old dispensation the word of promise sounded forth from Jehovah, the faithful covenant God. "Death shall be swallowed up in victory!" "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will set them free from death!"

And in the fulness of time that word of promise was realized, actualized, in Him Who is the Word

made flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Realized it was through the death of Christ. His death was the death of death, because it took the guilt of sin away. Death may kill only those who are guilty. But the Son of God was born under the law in order that He might fully obey the law and might redeem them—all His own—that were under the law. The debt of guilt has been removed for all His people: for He bore the punishment of sin in the love of God in their stead!

And the victory was gained in His resurrection! He was raised for our justification. And when He was raised, He arose—as the representative and organic Head of all His own—in glory, in strength, in incorruptibleness, in immortality—with life that is victorious, life that is forever beyond the reach and the touch of death!

What glorious light shines in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ! God hath spoken unto us in these last days by His Son!

And we have heard, and believed!

For that resurrection-life is already ours, having been applied to us by and through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have received a new life, the beginning of the resurrection-life of Christ. And that life is victorious! Death may touch all that is of the earth and of this corruptible, but it cannot possibly touch that new life in us! Moreover, we are begotten again unto a living hope, so that we look forward to the glory of the day when the trumpet of God shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

We have the victory! We still enter into physical death; but it cannot kill us; we pass right on into glory. We still enter into the grave; but it cannot hold us; in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ that grave will be deprived of its victory. We shall be raised — strong, glorious, incorruptible, immortal, spiritual, heavenly!

The saying that was written centuries ago shall come to pass: "Death is swallowed up in victory!"

And so, in the light of Christ's resurrection we shout triumphantly, as more than conquerors: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Thanks be unto God! That can only be the end of it all.

For He giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

It is all of Him. He gave the Victor, the Lord from heaven. He accomplished the victory: God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. He gave us to the Victor: in eternity by sovereign and

free election, and in time through the gift of saving faith.

Thanks now, O God of our salvation!

Thanks to endless ages of glorious resurrection-life!

[Note. Our brother, the Rev. M. Schipper, is still

unable to write for us. Since I last reported, it has been learned that Rev. Schipper must undergo multiple by-pass surgery before the previously planned surgery for an aneurysm can even be considered. As of this writing, the by-pass surgery is planned for March 23, D.V. We commend the brother and his loved ones to the loving care of our heavenly Father. HCH]

EDITORIAL

Protestant Reformed Higher Education

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Recently there was distributed in my home church—and, I assume, in other Protestant Reformed Churches as well—what I consider to be a significant newsletter. It concerns the aims and activities of a group which calls itself the "Conference on Reformed Higher Education." The letter went out over the name of the group's chairman, brother Marcel A. Straayer, of our Edmonton, Alberta, Canada congregation. So that all our readers may understand the subject under discussion, I here reproduce the newsletter in its entirety:

In the past year a group of laymen from our churches in the U.S. and Canada have met several times in South Holland, Illinois, and Grand Rapids, Michigan, to discuss the possibility of establishing a Protestant Reformed Teachers' College based firmly on the Reformed Faith as set forth in the Three Forms of Unity, and educating prospective teachers in our schools in harmony with those principles. The group agreed that this is a need since many Christian Colleges attended by our teachers compromise the Reformed tradition by the theories of common grace, theistic evolution, "higher criticism" of Holy Scripture, socialism, the philosophy of A. A. C. S. and that we have a calling, if it is possible, to work out Reformed doctrine as held by the Protestant Reformed Circles in higher education.

Although the possibility of forming a full liberal arts college was discussed and still is a goal, the practical problems inherent in such a vision were candidly addressed. Recent meetings dealt with the more short-term goals of organizing a society and the offering of a few college level courses in the area of education perhaps taught in the summer by qualified Protestant Reformed instructors. There was also consideration of hiring a full-time qualified person to teach and develop appropriate courses. Various committees have been formed to study society organization, constitution, financing, accreditation, and curriculum. The

Teacher Education Development (T.E.D.) Committee of the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Boards has been contacted to solicit their help and advice in implementing some of these short-term goals.

We are convinced that truly Reformed higher education is a noble calling and as important a concern today as it was in 1559 when John Calvin first opened the famous Academy at Geneva with only a meager number of students and faculty. The Conference sees as its mandate the preliminary study of these goals and we intend, in the near future, to publicize our conclusions with a view to possible organization and involvement of our people. We appreciate your thoughts and prayers as we struggle with the inception of an idea we trust will improve the higher education of our children and grandchildren.

Personally, I am glad, first of all, that this "Conference" has at last "gone public." I had been aware of the existence of such a group. And although I did not know—and still do not know—all of its constituency, I knew of a few names associated with it. I was also aware of the fact that the group met from time to time, and I even heard some rumors concerning its activities and goals. And I was interested in the cause, as well as inquisitive concerning its activities. But it is difficult to be interested in a work which remains mysterious; and it surely is risky, if not downright dangerous, to promote something about which one has no facts. Hence, I am happy about this newsletter.

Furthermore, to promote this cause is my desire and aim.

In the first place, I firmly believe that Protestant Reformed higher education is something which is long overdue, particularly in the area of teacher training. Many years ago, when I was editor of the department *In His Fear* and when our Protestant

Reformed school movement was still in its infancy, I called attention to this need. Again, when the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies was formed, I participated in formulating its constitution, which from the very beginning stated as one of the purposes of the Federation the promotion of Protestant Reformed teacher training. And a few years ago, when I addressed our Prot. Ref. Teachers' Convention, I stressed this need and called attention to the inconsistency of expecting to have Protestant Reformed teachers who receive all their training to be teachers in one or another non-Protestant Reformed institution.

There is, of course, a gross inconsistency in our present system. In our Protestant Reformed Churches there is only one area of education in which it is possible, for the most part, to obtain a completely Protestant Reformed education: that is the area of preparation for the ministry. Today it is possible to obtain a Protestant Reformed elementary education and a Protestant Reformed high school education, and then to go on to a Protestant Reformed pre-seminary education (albeit on a limited scale) and, finally, a complete Protestant Reformed seminary education. Moreover, for years already—thanks to the foresight of our fathers—not only have we had our own Protestant Reformed pre-seminary and seminary training, but we have had our own instructional materials. Already in the early years of our Theological School our professors began to prepare our own Protestant Reformed instructional materials as much as possible. Now none of us would expect to obtain Protestant Reformed ministers of the gospel from a Christian Reformed or Reformed or Presbyterian seminary; that would be the height of inconsistency. And the reason is simple: the teachings of those other seminaries are inimical to our distinctive Protestant Reformed theology. Yet—and here is the gross inconsistency—what we would not think of doing in the area of the ministry we do not hesitate to do in the area of teacher training. When our school boards employ teachers, they expect those teachers to be Protestant Reformed teachers. You understand, I am not referring to their being Protestant Reformed church members, but to their being Protestant Reformed *as teachers*, imbued with Protestant Reformed principles of education, Protestant Reformed principles of discipline, with a Protestant Reformed understanding and approach in their subject materials, etc. This is what Protestant Reformed education is all about, is it not? And yet all our teachers, without exception, receive their teacher-training at schools such as Calvin, Hope, Dordt, and even state colleges and universities. And as far as being Protestant Reformed educators is concerned, our teachers have been largely on

their own. I say again: what we would not think of doing in the area of the ministry, we do not hesitate to do in the area of education.

I do not hesitate to say that our schools can only suffer from this situation. In fact, eventually this can only prove to be highly detrimental, if not fatal. Eventually, the danger is not imaginary that Protestant Reformed grade schools and high schools become institutions which are Protestant Reformed in name, but not in fact. Eventually, they could become schools which are schools *with* a Bible, rather than schools *based on* the Bible. For it stands to reason: just as a stream cannot rise higher than its source, so the education in our schools, from the point of view of its Protestant Reformed principles, cannot rise higher than its source.

Hence, I am glad that something is at last being attempted to remedy the situation. I am well aware, as the brethren involved must also be, that this is no small undertaking. It will require much planning, much hard work, much prayer, and much sacrifice, financial and otherwise. There will be many pitfalls along the way, not the least of which will be to compromise at one point or another when it comes to Protestant Reformed principles. It will require Protestant Reformed *educators*, men and women who are willing to work dedicatedly and hard at developing and applying Protestant Reformed principles in the area of education. Make no mistake: the task is large. But it is by no means impossible!

It is my hope, therefore, that there will be general support for this movement among our people. If it gets off on the right foot, it can only be beneficial for our school movement.

However, I wish to sound one note of caution to this "Conference."

You have "gone public" with this newsletter.

Now you should go completely public.

Let me explain.

I get the impression that this group has already done considerable work, judging from what is stated in the second paragraph of the newsletter. Study is under way in the important areas of "society organization, constitution, financing, accreditation, and curriculum." And in the third paragraph it is stated that "The Conference sees as its mandate the preliminary study of these goals and we intend, in the near future, to publicize our conclusions with a view to possible organization and involvement of our people."

There is a danger, it seems to me, that when it comes to the point of possible organization and involvement of our people, our people will be con-

fronted by a *fait accompli*, an accomplished fact, which they may then accept or not accept, support or not support. To my mind, this is not the proper course to follow if you wish to form a parental organization—and I trust that this is the goal. Up to this point the "Conference" is a self-initiated and self-authenticating group who have formulated their own "mandate." If the purpose is to ask our people to share in and to support this work, then you must invite our people to participate immediately. They must be in on the ground floor, so to speak. Otherwise, I fear, you will leave the impression of trying to ram something down their throats. And you know the old saying, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." Besides, if this is to be a movement of our people, then let it truly be such. To my mind the work of the "Conference" should be strictly preliminary, not

preparatory of all the ground-work of a future organization. And by preliminary I mean strictly work in the direction of motivating our people, presenting the cause, and calling together an organizational gathering which will then itself take steps to study matters which are apparently already under study.

My motivation in this criticism is not negative, but positive. Without full and free parental participation you simply cannot succeed in having a genuinely parental organization. My own experience has taught me this. Our present school societies originated in this fashion. And I have observed more than one instance in which the initial exclusion of the people at large led only to bad feelings and bad results.

The newsletter said, "We appreciate your thoughts...." Here are some of mine.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

"As It Began to Dawn"

Rev. H. Veldman

How the world hates and would destroy the truth of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ! Of course! The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ seals the victory of this Jesus of Nazareth. But it also seals the condemnation of the world. How terrible it is for the world, unspeakably terrible, that the Jesus they hated and sought to destroy by nailing Him to a cross, is raised from the dead, is seated at the right hand of God, and has been given all power to reign also over all the powers of evil and darkness! Indeed, the event of *this* first day of the week is of catastrophic significance as far as the wicked are concerned. But for the church of God? Fear not ye, but rejoice.

How the world strives to destroy this fundamental truth of Holy Writ! To be sure, also in and throughout the ages of the Old Dispensation the devil attempted to prevent the birth of this Seed of the Woman. We read of this in Revelation 12:1-5. It is not our purpose now to call attention to this in this article. The truth of the resurrection of our Lord must be destroyed. There is the story of the soldiers who kept watch at His tomb that His disciples stole His body while they slept. They were bribed by the Jewish leaders to tell this absurd tale. And what an absurd tale it is! On the one hand, should not a watch who sleep at their post be exe-

cuted at sunrise? And, on the other hand, the disciples stole His body while they slept? How could they know? Did they sleep with one eye open? And then we read in Matthew 28:15 that this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day, until about A.D. 150. Then, there is the story that the disciples narrated the resurrection of our Lord because they were the victims of hallucinations. They imagined it. What nonsense this is! This is exactly what they did not imagine. Fact is, these disciples did not even believe the resurrection of the Lord when it was told them, and they regarded it as an idle tale. We will come back to this later. Finally, there is also the modernistic view of the resurrection of our Lord. They deny Jesus' physical resurrection. This means that they simply deny His resurrection. To them, Jesus remained in the grave. The malicious wickedness of these modernists is that they use Scriptural terms but ascribe a significance to them which is directly contrary to the Scriptures. They speak of His birth and of His resurrection but do not understand these wondrous events according to the meaning of Holy Writ. Jesus is alive in the same sense that a Washington or a Lincoln is alive, in the same sense that the soul of Washington or Lincoln "goes marching on." The modernist speaks of a Jesus who was alive and is

dead. We, however, believe in a Jesus Who was dead and is alive even forevermore. Indeed, "He is not here; come, see the place where the Lord lay."

We now return, briefly, to the wicked allegation that the disciples narrated the story of the resurrection as they imagined it. We have already noted that, according to Scripture, these disciples did not even believe that their Master had risen from the dead when they were told of it. They regarded it as an idle tale. However, we would maintain that the disciples could not possibly conceive of the resurrection of our Lord as it actually occurred, and that they could not possibly have recorded it as we read of it in the Scriptures if they were the victims of hallucinations. Mind you, these disciples were witnesses, witnesses of the risen Lord. Would these witnesses, if they had imagined things, report this incident without reporting their seeing Him leave the tomb? Fact is, the resurrection itself is not stated anywhere in these gospel narratives. Nowhere do we read: "And Jesus comes forth out of the grave." Of course, no earthly eye could possibly see this. This explains its omission from the gospel narratives. But, the point now is: if these witnesses were imagining things, would they not also imagine seeing Him leave the tomb? But there is more. How reliable are these witnesses? Do they not declare that they did not believe in His resurrection? Was not this the "unbelief" of Thomas who could not believe it? And Thomas was not alone in this respect. The only reason why Thomas did not believe until a week later was simply that Jesus did not reveal Himself to him until a week after He revealed Himself to the other disciples. Thirdly, had the disciples been victims of their own hallucinations, reported the resurrection as they imagined it, they could never have reported it as it is recorded in Holy Writ. Had they imagined Jesus' resurrection (and this is exactly what they did not imagine), they would have reported an earthly resurrection of their Lord. Of course! They were earthly. Incidentally, this also explains the quandary of Thomas. It is not that Thomas could not believe Jesus' resurrection as such. Others had been raised from the dead, such as Lazarus, etc. Why should not Jesus also be raised from the dead? But the problem of Thomas lay exactly here that the resurrection of Jesus would be pointless. Why should He be raised from the dead? He, Who had been killed once, could surely be killed again. What Thomas therefore did not understand was the cross. However, be all this as it may, had the disciples imagined things, they could never have imagined this event as recorded in Holy Writ. Two truths are emphasized in connection with Jesus' resurrection as recorded in the Scriptures: that He is really risen from the dead, and, secondly, that He is *risen*, that He is absolutely

different. This the disciples could not possibly imagine. They were earthly. They could not possibly conceive of a heavenly resurrection. How could they, for example, conceive of the wondrous sign of the linen clothes, that these linen clothes had not been disturbed in the slightest sense of the word, that these clothes lay there as if the body of Jesus were still in them. Did not John and Peter stare at this sign and believe, because, we read, as yet they understood not the Scriptures which had spoken of the resurrection of the Lord? This wondrous sign declared to them that Jesus was truly *risen*, was not as He had been before His suffering and death. But is it not plain that, had the disciples imagined things, they could never have imagined Christ's resurrection as it actually occurred?

One can view the resurrection of our Lord from many points of view. Our Heidelberg Catechism looks at it in Lord's Day 17 from the viewpoint of our profit. Of course, the resurrection of Christ is also God's revelation to us of what He eternally willed in His sovereign and inscrutable counsel, His eternal will to call life out of death and to realize His covenant, through sin and death, into heavenly life and glory and immortality. Let us look at it as our Heidelberg Catechism views it. And, let us look at the first profit mentioned here in Lord's Day 17. The resurrection of Christ is indeed the divine seal of our righteousness and justification.

How wonderful is the truth of our justification! There is undoubtedly nothing more wonderful to the child of God than this truth of the Word of God. Justification refers to the verdict of the Most High, the Judge of all the earth, that there is now no condemnation for him as he is in Christ Jesus. How Luther strove to attain unto this blessed consciousness that he was justified before the living God, that his sins would never be held against him, that he was an heir of everlasting life and glory. The Judge of all the earth declares us righteous, righteous forever! How wonderful! Fact is, we remain sinners as long as we continue in this earthly house of our tabernacle. And sin is guilt, the obligation to pay. And now we are declared righteous. By God! And God is holy. He sees and knows all our sins and trespasses. And He declares us righteous! Does the Lord, then, declare something to be true what is not true? Besides, this is the judgment of the Judge of all the earth! And this judgment cannot be changed. There is no higher appeal. God is for us and He is the Most High, the supreme Judge of all the earth. The elect sinner, knowing his sin, the sin which he commits daily, always, experiences the blessed truth that the Lord sees him as if he never committed any sin, that he is forever free of all guilt, that life and glory everlasting and immortal await him, in God's fellowship forever.

Of course, there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. And of this blessed truth the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is the divine seal. To understand this we must, of course, understand the true nature of the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died atoningly. He died only for the elect given Him of the Father. He did not suffer and die merely as an example of the love of God. Such an example could not possibly save us. We are by nature haters of God. And no example of the love of God could possibly induce us to love Him. Neither is it true that Jesus died for everybody. The Arminian proudly boasts that his Christ is much richer than the Christ of the Reformed man. He asserts proudly that his Christ died for everybody whereas the Christ of the Reformed man died only for a few. His Christ is therefore so much richer than our Christ. How wrong he is! The choice does not lie between a Christ for some and a Christ for all. The choice lies between a Christ for some and a Christ for none. The Christ of the Arminian died for everybody, also therefore for those who perish. Hence, this Christ really died for nobody. He died for all and therefore never paid for sin. Had He died atoningly for everybody, then everybody would surely be saved. How terribly poor is the view of the Arminian! Indeed, Christ died only for the elect given Him of the Father. He took all their sins upon Himself. He bore the eternal and infinite wrath of God upon them. He suffered and died, in full and perfect consciousness, in perfect obedience to the will of His God. He made Himself of no reputation,

emptied Himself, destroyed Himself, entered into an eternal nothingness, suffered the infinite wrath of God, whereof the cross is but the slightest symbol. And having suffered the infinite agonies of hell, He cried out upon the cross: It is finished! What an amazing word! Finished is the bearing of God's wrath, finished is the payment for all our sins and guilt, finished is the shedding of blood whereof we read throughout the Old Dispensation. And finished is the meriting of everlasting life and glory for all these elect.

And now God raised Him from the dead. The resurrection of Christ is God's answer to the sixth crossword. It is the public verdict of the Most High that His suffering and death were not in vain. It is the verdict of the Most High to His Servant: Well done, Thou good and faithful servant, enter Thou into the joy of Thy Lord. What a terrible moment is this resurrection of the Lord for the wicked! Well may they fear. The Christ they hated and slew by wicked hands is Lord of lords and King of kings. He will indeed return to judge the quick and the dead. But, as far as God's people are concerned: fear not ye. The angel proclaims unto us Jesus Who was crucified, crucified for me, crucified that I might live. My sins are paid and everlasting life and glory are not merited for me. We believe in Christ crucified and raised from the dead. He, Who was delivered because of our offences, has been raised because of our justification. This is our blessedness: Jesus is risen from the dead, and we therefore live and shall live forevermore.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Missionary Methods (15)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

As I sit at my typewriter in the comfortable study of my home in the Beckwith Hills subdivision of Northeast Grand Rapids to write these articles on Missionary Methods I often feel rather uneasy. To write about the principles of missions as these may be gleaned from Holy Scripture is not difficult. But to write about how these principles ought to be implemented on the mission fields both here in North America and abroad is not so easy. There are problems and difficulties, for example, which Christians in Singapore face which are unknown to Christians in America; and the opposite is also true. As we

stated before, however, we are convinced that Scripture teaches both the principles and the proper methods of missions. The Gospel, after all, transcends racial, cultural, economic differences and every other difference which exists among the nations of the earth. The gracious power of the Gospel makes us all one in Christ Jesus. In the multitude which no man can number (Revelation 7) there will be saints out of every nation. That conviction has guided us in writing thus far, and out of that conviction we shall proceed.

With this article we return to our study of Dr. John L. Nevius' book, *Planting and Development of Missionary Churches*. In chapter four of this book Nevius deals with this question: "What is the best mode of organization for native converts in new stations?" In other words, along which lines ought the native church to be organized? The author points out that when missionaries first arrive upon a foreign field this question scarcely enters their minds. The answer appears self-evident to them. If the missionary is an Anglican he simply assumes the native church ought to have the episcopal form of church government. If the missionary is Presbyterian he aims to organize the church under the Presbyterian and Reformed system of church government. Missionaries simply naturally fall into this without asking questions. They are anxious to put into practice as soon as possible the form of church government with which they are the most familiar and which they are convinced is biblical.

But, writes Nevius, "When the missionary, associated with co-laborers of different nationalities and church connections, looks at the question of organization from the stand-point of mission work on heathen ground, it assumes new aspects, and a few years' experience and observation will probably effect a considerable modification of views. He soon finds that missionaries of different denominations ignore in a measure for the time being their several systems and, in the first stage of their work, agree in the main in a new plan which all have adopted under the force of circumstances. He sees companies of Christians placed under the care of unofficial religious teachers, and native evangelists preaching in unevangelized districts, while there are as yet no organized churches, and perhaps no bishops, elders, or deacons, nor even candidates for the ministry; only missionaries, and native preachers having the names of 'helpers,' 'catechists,' 'native assistants,' ...In places where stations have reached a more advanced stage of development, requiring some sort of organization, missionaries are sometimes led by personal proclivities and local circumstances to the adoption of methods quite aside from their previous antecedents. Not long since in a conference at Chefoo of missionaries from different parts of China, it was discovered that an Independent was carrying on his work on Presbyterian principles, 'because they best suited his field'; in the methods of another Independent from a different province the prelatical element predominated, while a Presbyterian was found working on a plan which had very little of Presbyterianism in it, but a singular blending of Methodism, Independency, and Prelacy" (pp. 55, 56).

From these facts, according to Nevius, we are to learn "that practical experience seems to point to

the conclusion that present forms of church organization in the West are not to be, at least without some modification, our guides in the founding of infant churches in a heathen land" (p. 56). The only guide for the founding of mission churches is Holy Scripture. Does this mean that the existing forms of church government in the West are unscriptural? The answer, says Nevius, is no. He explains: "A plan of organization in England or America may be very different from one adopted in China, and both though different may be equally Scriptural; and one of them may be suited to the home church and one to a mission station, just because they are different" (p. 56). The all important question is, Nevius contends, (and we certainly agree this is the all important question) what do the Scriptures teach concerning church government and organization? Does Scripture lay down certain fixed and unchanging and rigid rules of church government to be followed at all times and under all circumstances? Or does Scripture give us a system based on general principles: "...purposely flexible and readily adapting itself, under the guidance of God's Spirit and providence and common sense, to all the conditions in which the Church can be placed?" (p. 56). Nevius answers: "I believe the latter is the true supposition" (p. 56).

Nevius, however, does believe that the main principles which form the basis of church organization and government in the West are Scriptural. In this connection he mentions the emphasis in Scripture on the office of believer, the appointment of elders as rulers in the churches, and the office of deacon. Nevius also speaks of "superintendents or overseers, having the charge and care of many associated churches with their elders and deacons" in the early history of the church (p. 57). To what or whom Nevius refers is unclear. If he means the Apostles he is correct. The apostle Paul, for example, speaks of the daily burden of the care of all the churches which was upon him (cf. II Corinthians 11:28ff.). But, it must be remembered, the office of Apostle was unique and limited to the first century A.D., the age of revelation.

In support of his position, and this is a crucial part of his argument, Nevius points to "...diversity and gradual progression in the application of these principles...distinctly traceable in the New Testament" (p. 57). The Gospels and the early part of the Acts indicate a very simple form of government while the latter part of Acts and the Epistles reveal a more complete system of government developed from "previously established germinal principles" (p. 57). There can be no doubt about this. The office of Deacon arose in just this fashion out of a specific need in the early church. Nevius also points to the fact that there has been change and development

through the entire course of the history of the church from apostolic times to the present. This too is true, although some and even perhaps much of the change has not been for the good of the church. Out of all this Nevius raises "...the general question as to whether the present forms of church government are not severally characterized by the special development of some one element to the exclusion of others which should supplement and modify it, presenting abnormal and disproportionate growths, each Scriptural in its dominating idea, but unscriptural in its human narrowness?" (p. 58). The answer of Nevius would obviously be affirmative.

Nevius continues with a plea for unity in these matters among the various missionaries and denominations represented on the China mission field. The missionaries ought "avoid as much as possible in the future the divergences which impair the unity and efficiency of the Church at home, retaining and perpetuating a degree of uniformity and co-operation which in Western lands seems impracticable....Would it not have a decided influence for good on the home churches?" (p. 58).

Nevius concludes: "On the supposition that pres-

ent forms of church organization are adapted to secure the best spiritual interests of the Church in the West, the presumption is that in certain respects they are for that very reason not adapted to the wants of mission churches in China. What circumstances could differ more widely than those of churches which are the development of centuries or a millennium of Christian culture, and those just emerging from heathenism?" (p. 58).

The author continues by applying these ideas to the needs of the mission in China where he labored. To this we shall direct our attention in the next issue. Let it be noted, however, that these questions are not merely some interesting, abstract matters of Church Polity and Missiology. They are questions which concern principles of Scripture and, therefore, they are critical for the well-being of the church of Jesus Christ in every nation under heaven. In essence our churches faced the basic issue involved when they refused to organize the Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore on any other basis than the Three Forms of Unity. May the Lord continue to guide His church in the way of the truth also in its mission labors.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

I Timothy — Advice for Office Bearers (Concluded)

Rev. J. Kortering

Paul wrote this letter to Timothy after he had left him in Ephesus and went on to Macedonia. You will recall that this took place between the two imprisonments of Paul at Rome. The occasion was the special needs that Timothy had while he continued to minister to the church at Ephesus. That congregation had been the object of much labor on the part of the apostle Paul. During his third missionary journey, Paul had labored there for some three years. On his way to Jerusalem, he bid farewell to the elders of Ephesus and told them that they would see his face no more. From prison he wrote Ephesians, his letter to the church, exhorting them to be one in Christ and to live according to the unity of the Spirit. Paul was released from prison, so he was able to visit the church at Ephesus and see for himself the progress made there. All during this time, the church continued to grow. Even persecution did not hinder the work of the Spirit in the

gathering of the church. Since they did not have a church building, the formal life of the church was limited. The congregation was made up of many groups that met in members' homes. This required leadership; the office bearers who functioned in these groups needed to know what their duties were and how to conduct themselves. Paul recognized this need when he visited the church. Since Timothy was responsible to give the congregation this leadership, Paul wrote this letter to Timothy, and through him gave instruction to the whole church. The results are beneficial for us as we study this letter.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF THIS LETTER

1. Salutation and blessing (1:1, 2). He identifies himself as the author and addresses Timothy as "my own son." He bestows upon him the usual apostolic blessing.

2. Paul explains that the occasion for Timothy remaining behind was the presence of false teachers (1:3-11). It was necessary because Timothy had to deal with those who had given heed to fables, endless genealogies, rather than to godly edifying (1:3, 4). These false teachers pretended to be teachers of the law, but did so wrongfully. They taught work righteousness rather than using the law for the knowledge of sin and seeing the need for righteousness in Christ (1:5-11).

3. Paul expresses to Timothy and the church his thanksgiving for being called as an apostle (1:12-17). He is humble in confessing his unworthiness, a persecutor, yet one who received mercy (1:12-14). He leads the church in acknowledging that Christ came to save sinners of whom he is chief (1:15). The purpose was to give encouragement to all sinners who follow Him (1:16). He gives glory to God for this (1:17).

4. Paul charges Timothy to be faithful (1:18-20). He is to war a good warfare (1:18). He's to be faithful and not act as Hymenaeus and Alexander whom the Apostle delivered unto Satan (1:19, 20).

5. Rules governing public worship (2:1-15). Prayers are important in worship. These prayers are to be for those in all walks of life, especially for rulers, to the end that the people may live a quiet life (2:1, 2). There is another reason, however, for our prayers must be directed to God with a view to the salvation of the church in Christ Jesus. He will have all men to be saved, men from all walks of life, even rulers, (2:3-6). Once again he emphasizes his ordination which gives him authority to teach. That instruction now is that men everywhere lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting (2:7, 8). When the women come to church they must be properly dressed in clothes that reveal godliness (2:9, 10). In the church they must not assume to themselves authority, but be in subjection to the men and learn in silence. The reason is twofold. First, Adam was created first, Eve was created after; and secondly, Eve was deceived just because she did not live in subjection to Adam. There is hope for the woman: she shall be saved in childbearing (2:11-15).

6. Instruction given concerning the office of elder (3:1-7). It is a good thing to desire the office of elder (3:1). The qualifications for this office are listed: blameless, husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of money, patient, not a brawler, not covetous, rules his family well, not a novice (newly converted, one not tested in faith), and one who is of good report from the community (3:2-7).

7. The qualification for deacons is given (3:8-13). These include gravity, not double-tongued, not

given to much wine, not greedy of money, holding the mystery of faith in good conscience, first tested (not a novice), the husband of one wife, ruling his family well, his wife grave and not a slanderer (3:8-12). There is spiritual benefit for the office bearers themselves, for they purchase to themselves boldness in faith (3:13).

8. Paul interjects a personal note to Timothy (3:14-16). He reminds him that this letter is to help him know how to behave in the church (3:14). The church is the pillar and ground of the truth (3:15). The mystery of godliness is manifest in the fruits of the gospel by the saving of souls (3:16).

9. Warning concerning apostasy and heresy (4:1-5). This heresy also assumed a form of asceticism, to abstain from marriage and certain foods. Paul designates this a doctrine of devils which denies God's people the use of good things which God intends to be used with thanksgiving (4:1-5).

10. Paul instructs Timothy in how to deal with various needs of the members of the Ephesian church (4:6-6:19).

a. As a minister, he is to look after himself first, he must exercise unto godliness, and nourish himself in faith and doctrine in order to impart this to the congregation (4:6-11). He must let no man despise his youth, but be an example in word and conversation (4:12). This requires reading, study, and meditation (4:13, 15). He must gladly use the gifts God gave him and thus save himself and the church (4:14, 16).

b. In dealing with older men and women who err, Timothy must deal with them as he would his own father and mother. Likewise the younger women of the church he must approach as he would his sister (5:1, 2).

c. Care of widows. They must be provided for by their children and relatives (if the latter can but won't they are worse than unbelievers).

d. Advice regarding women who assist in the church (5:9-16). There were widows in the church who were wealthy and had money and time to help others. No widow younger than sixty years should be included in this group. The reason is that God wills that the younger ones marry and fulfill their calling in the home. Besides, younger widows will not be satisfied and instead give in to their sinful inclinations to gossip and cause strife (5:9, 11-15). The widows who qualify should be God-fearing, have experience in hospitality, and be humble, full of good works (5:10).

e. Advice concerning elders (5:17-20). The church should be instructed to honor them for their works' sake—even double honor, once for the office and once for the work they do in the office

(5:17). This includes paying a minister proper income (5:18). They may not receive a charge against them without two witnesses (5:19). If any fail in this they should be publicly rebuked so others learn (5:20).

f. More words for Timothy (5:21-25). He must not show partiality to members (5:21), not install anyone into office carelessly (5:22), consider drinking wine for his health (5:23), and be a good judge of human nature (5:24, 25).

g. Timothy must instruct the servants (6:1, 2). They must respect masters. If they have believing masters, they must not claim that unity in Christ forbids their servitude, nor must they give their unbelieving masters a hard time.

h. How to deal with controversy over riches (6:4-19). Timothy must be able to evaluate the true spiritual character of any enemy of the truth—he is destitute of the truth as he argues that gain is godliness (6:3-5). Paul says that true godliness with contentment is gain (6:6-8). Love of money is the root of all evil (6:9, 10). As a minister, he is to warn them and be an example of godliness (6:11-19).

11. Concluding salutation (6:20, 21). A final exhortation to keep the word entrusted to him and to avoid foolish argument, "Grace be with thee. Amen."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Explain why I Timothy, II Timothy, and Titus are called "Pastoral Epistles." Give an example from I Timothy why this is a good name for them.

2. Discuss the evidence there is in I Timothy that the journey referred to cannot be one of Paul's journeys recorded in Acts, but must refer to the one he took between the two imprisonments in Rome.

3. What do we know about Timothy as a young preacher? Refer to the evidence the Bible gives us about his life.

4. What do we learn from this epistle about the church at Ephesus?

5. How does Paul use himself as an example to Timothy concerning how to deal with the church of God?

6. Are the prayers for those in authority (2:1-6) limited to their salvation or does it include praying for their work as well?

7. Reflect upon the role of women in the church as discussed in this letter (2:9-15; 5:3-16).

8. How are the qualifications of office bearers important for the church today (3:1-14; 4:6-16)?

9. Consider why it is that children and relatives who fail to care for the financial needs of parents are worse than heathen (5:8, 16).

10. Why do verses 24, 25 of chapter 5 deal with judging character?

11. Reflect upon godliness with contentment (6:6) and explain why the love of money is the opposite. Why is it wrong to want to be rich and try to become rich (6:9)? What are the hazards of being rich?

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

The Christian Reformed Church — after 125 years

The *Outlook*, March 4, 1983, presents the address of Rev. A. Besteman given at the Holland-Zeeland Chapter of the Reformed Fellowship on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the Christian Reformed Church. He comments about the remarkable growth and the manifold labors of that denomination:

That church which had its beginning in 1857 when four small congregations broke away from the Reformed Church in America now numbers 756 congregations. Thea Van Halsema in her book, "I WILL

BUILD MY CHURCH" estimates that there were probably 250 adult members in the newly founded denomination. That number has grown to 180,000 professing members, who along with the baptized members bring the membership of the Christian Reformed Church to nearly 300,000.

The church which had its beginning here in the colony now has a mission outreach into 18 countries. The two mission efforts which we support in Nigeria, and with which we have been concerned for over 40 years have a total of 350,000 church attenders, a number larger than our own church membership.

The home mission outreach extends throughout the United States and Canada with 2,400 families worshipping in Home Mission Churches each Sunday.

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee plans to disburse over six and a half million dollars in programs of material and physical relief during the next 12 months.

The Back to God Hour, the radio voice of the Christian Reformed Church is carried on some two hundred stations throughout our land. The message of the Back to God Hour also goes forth in Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Indonesian, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian languages.

We could also talk about the system of Christian education on elementary, high school and college levels founded and supported by the Christian Reformed people. And it would not be idle boasting to say that this system, in academic excellence, is second to none.

We may also refer to Christian agencies and institutions of mercy which have been established and which are generously supported by the people called Christian Reformed....

Rev. Besteman continues by quoting the concerns of Elder Haan who was largely responsible for the break from the Reformed Church as stated by Dr. D.H. Kromminga in his book, *THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED TRADITION*:

"He had found many pastors and elders of the Reformed Church who made no secret of their membership in the lodge. He had seen a minister and an elder of the Reformed Church take part in a Methodist communion service. He had noticed that a collection of hymns was displacing the Psalms in public worship and that choir singing was silencing congregational singing. He had observed the displacement of catechetical instruction by the Sunday School and of indoctrination by instruction in Bible History and he clearly forecast the disastrous results.... Haan evidently had a remarkably correct picture of the leveling influence of American interdenominational fellowship."

But Besteman continues by pointing out that the very things which Haan was concerned about in the Reformed Church 125 years ago, are things of concern in the Christian Reformed Church today.

He points out that, despite the Synodical decision against lodge membership, there are churches who have lodge members at the communion table. He refers to ecumenical services between Christian Reformed and Roman Catholics as well as joint daily vacation Bible Schools. He shows how hymns have displaced Psalm singing. He reminds us of what is happening to catechism instruction.

There are more troubling incidents: the denial of the historicity of Genesis 3 by Dr. Verhey in 1976; the question of denial of the historicity of Adam and Eve by Prof. John Stek of Calvin Seminary; the charge by Mr. Liboldt, who was himself refused candidacy in the C.R.C. by the Synod, that Calvin Seminary professors "play games with the word 'Historical' " when they publicly state that they believe in the "historical Adam." He points too to the "women in office" issue—indicating that some churches are "commissioning" women as "adjunct elders" and churches continue to install women as deacons—all this, in spite of Synodical decisions which forbid this.

Besteman points to three things which can be done. First, there must be earnest prayer for the church and its spiritual welfare. Secondly, the elders must take more seriously their calling to supervise congregation and fellow office-bearers. Thirdly, the members of the C.R.C. should rejoice in the establishment of, and support, the Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

One can sympathize with the deep concern of Besteman and the Reformed Fellowship because of the present condition of the C.R.C. There is reason for concern! Still—the presentation leaves the distinct impression that the situation is now even more serious than it was in the Reformed Church 125 years ago—when separation became necessary. If separation was necessary then, what of today? If separation is not necessary today, why was it so 125 years ago? It seems to me that these must be some troubling questions in the minds of many in the C.R.C.

The Banner vs. The Presbyterian Journal on Guatemala

Several months ago, editor Andrew Kuyvenhoven wrote a scathing editorial addressed to Efrain Rios Montt, leader of Guatemala. The rebuke came because of the treatment accorded a C.R.C. mis-

sionary there, Rev. James Dekker. Among other things, Kuyvenhoven wrote:

"You are allowing army groups to massacre whole Indian villages. Your government's effort to blame all

violence on the guerrillas won't work when murderers come in army vehicles and shoot from government helicopters.... Seek justice, correct oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. And if you do not wish to listen to this word, please do not mention the name of Jesus anymore."

One would conclude that the editor was justified in his strong language. Though the church is not to be involved in political intrigue, and surely not in a foreign land, still—when a government abuses the church's missionaries, strong language might be justified.

But in the *Presbyterian Journal*, Feb. 23, 1983, a large measure of doubt is cast on Kuyvenhoven's account. The editor of the *Presbyterian Journal* at least strongly intimates that missionary Dekker was engaged in more than mission work. Doubt is cast on the *Banner* presentation. The editor writes:

...Most infuriating of all, in the process of trying to "sort out" truth from fiction in Central America, are the conflicting reports from religious sources—representatives of the churches from whom we expect to get only the unvarnished truth. Surely churchmen—ministers and missionaries—can be counted on to provide testimonies that will reliably neutralize the barrage of lies from opposing sides in various conflicts....

But it is not only committed Marxists who distort the facts to suit their own unworthy ends. Sometimes from right here in the U.S. well-meaning friends of liberty and justice inadvertently climb on the wrong bandwagon—to the detriment of what might be done for true liberty and justice....

This editor continues by telling how he spent some three months trying to sort out the truth in the whole account. He claims that from unimpeachable sources he received a far different story than the *Banner* editor gave. His "sources," however, are unidentified. His claim is that missionary Dekker gave the appearance, at least, of working against the government there.

Mr. Dekker professes no commitment to Liberation Theology. But in Guatemala, one's associations inevitably come under close scrutiny. One of these associates is now in exile in Costa Rica. He works for Alfalit, and got transferred to San Jose when it got too hot for him in Guatemala....

If connections attributed to Mr. Dekker are not true, he did a poor job of avoiding the appearances—for example, he was the last person to be seen with two Kekchi pastors who disappeared immediately after the Synod meeting. The liberals in the church accused the government of capturing them and that rumor was widely spread, but it soon became known that they had obtained blank checks from the Kekchi Presbytery, which they filled in for several thousand dollars from CRC relief funds and have not been heard from since....

Sometime in the next few months, James Dekker

made a trip to Europe without telling responsible church officials in Guatemala that he was leaving the country. Best estimate at the purpose of the trip is that it was a "courier job." When knowledgeable people from Guatemala visited Europe hard on the heels of Mr. Dekker's visit and went to some of the places he visited, they were bombarded with stories of the "terrible conditions in Guatemala."

The editor presents much more. He points out too that statements as "overwhelming evidence of a ruthless counteroffensive against insurgency" and "murderers in army vehicles and helicopters" could be traced to one source only and that proof for such charges is utterly lacking. Fact is, the editor implies that not the government was responsible for many of the "murders," but the insurgents. The editor states in a separate editorial: "Columnist George F. Will said it in words that ought to be chiseled into stone: 'This is axiomatic: Clergy become vocal about headline-grabbing controversies of social policy when they lose confidence in their ability to speak convincingly about such untrendy subjects as sin and salvation.' And again: 'What Dean William Inge said cannot be said too often: Christianity is good news, not good advice.'"

"The trouble with too many clergy—and too many churches—today is that from them we get neither good news nor good advice: We get doubtful news and bad advice."

The account is troubling. Which editor is correct? Which judgment concerning Guatemala is right? And, to what extent may a church become involved in the politics and injustices of the nation in which mission work is done? At the very least, editor Kuyvenhoven has the heavy responsibility to repudiate with proof the *Presbyterian Journal*—or apologize for some very terrible charges made. In the meantime, we ought to remember ever the mandate of the church to preach Christ crucified—for the cross is alone the power and wisdom of God.

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

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The End of the Beginning

Rev. John A. Heys

Genesis, the book of the beginning, comes in chapter 50:26 to its end. Significantly enough the book begins with the word "In the beginning...." And although it does not end with the words "at the end," or "now at the end," or a similar expression, its last verse does speak of the end of Joseph's life together with the embalming and placing of it in a coffin in Egypt.

This fiftieth chapter, which brings the book to its end, contains a statement that in a beautiful way explains all that is recorded in the book. And the setting of these words, designed in inscrutable, divine wisdom, serves to set forth great comfort to the church in all ages and situations. Let us note that.

Joseph's brothers were filled with fear when their father died. They not only saw his death coming, but they were on edge for some time in the fear of what Joseph might do to them. Having guilty consciences, and not understanding how Joseph could brush aside all that which they had done to him, they expected the worst now that their father was dead. They believed that it was their father that kept Joseph from seeking revenge. Now that he was dead they feared that Joseph would get even with them; and they knew that he was in a position to do that. Well, no, we never seek to get even with others who have done to us what we do not like. We always want to inflict a bit more misery on them and to hurt them a degree more than the pain they gave us. We like to give it back with interest. The loss of a few pennies will move us to take away dollars. Physical injury will be visited with murder. A nasty name will move us to seek a nastier name; one vile word will be visited with a string of vile words. And Joseph's brothers fear what he may now do to them from his high position in the kingdom. They know that their father, whom they had just buried, cannot speak a word or lift a finger in their defence.

The brothers, therefore, send a messenger to Joseph with what they claim is a command to forgive, which their father gave them to convey to Joseph. There is absolutely no evidence that Jacob ever gave them that message and that command for Joseph. Would Jacob not have told Joseph that as he

lay on his deathbed? It cannot be argued that he had no opportunity, since Joseph lived so far away. For Joseph came to visit him with his two sons when he heard that his father was sick. No, the opportunity was there when he made Joseph swear that he would bury his body in Canaan.

We do find that the dreams of Joseph were still in effect, and therefore the brothers fall down before him and call themselves his servants. Surely they manifest great fear before him and keep their distance from him, even though they had the same father. But is it not true that we always judge others according to what we would do ourselves? They would have sought revenge, and so they expect Joseph to do so. They deceived their father to get revenge upon Joseph after he reported their evil to his father and told his dreams, and because they were jealous of the love their father showed so openly to this son. Would they hesitate now to try to deceive Joseph to protect their own lives, and tell him of a command which their father never gave them to relay to Joseph?

The fact that they were believing children of God and had shown remorse, and had confessed their evil, does not change matters. Name, if you can, one mere man, whose mighty works of faith are recorded in Holy Writ, of whom sins are not also recorded. What of Noah? of Moses? of David? of Peter—who made such a beautiful confession a few days before he so shamefully denied Jesus three times! And does not Paul say that the evil that he would not, that he does? Yes, we slip, and slide, and stumble all through our pilgrimage here below. We show that it is only a small beginning of that new obedience that we have in this life. The old man of sin does not give up when conversion takes place. He hates the new man in Christ; and when that new man appears at the rebirth, the old man is stimulated to new deeds of wickedness.

But there is an heavenly Father and almighty God Who loves that new man in Christ, and He will never let the old man of sin crush and destroy that new man in Christ. Yea, He will use the devil and his host, and men over whom he has dominion, to further the cause of the believer and bring him to everlasting glory. And that point is made here in

this end of the beginning. Joseph tells his brothers, in Genesis 50:20, that although they meant it for evil, God meant it for good to save alive His church. And this holds true for all that we find in this book of beginnings. Not once did the evil that men meant against the church mean that God was against His church. Not once did it do harm to that church. Always, and in every instance, it worked a good that God had eternally decreed for His church.

Let us not overlook the fact that God meant that sin of the brothers. Let it also be noted that the word *meant* is used twice without any indication that the meaning changes. It ought to be quite plain that the brothers planned evil, intended it, and meant it in that sense. And God meant it also in the same sense. He planned it, intended that wickedness of the brothers for the good of His church. This all was according to His plan, as well as that of the brothers. And His plan was behind the plan of the brothers. He used them for the good of His people. He used their sin—as was also the case with the cross of Christ—for the good of the church. And we, no matter what happens in the future, no matter how dreadful the persecutions are that are predicted in Holy Writ, may rest assured when they come, that the control has not slipped out of God's hands—not even temporarily—but that He is using the chaff for the good of the wheat. God always means well for His church and has never, and will never plan anything that is going to keep His church from the joys and blessings which He has promised. Whatever happens—and all that will happen has already been decreed and is written in the book with the seven seals—will serve the attainment of what God eternally decreed for His people. And that holds true for the people as a whole. It holds true also for each individual child of God. God always, in all things, has the good of each elect child in mind.

Space is limited, so let me apply this only to one event in this book of beginnings. And let that one event be the first one that took place in the very beginning of history. I refer to what Satan meant when he came to tempt, and succeeded in tempting, man into sin. God meant that fall of man as well as Satan did. Satan meant it for one reason. God meant it for the glorification of His name and the everlasting blessedness of His church. We must see that.

The theory of a "Covenant of works" fails to see that. It speaks of a glory Adam could have merited for us, and it makes the work of Christ repair work. As its very name indicates, it teaches a glory that could be obtained by works, not by grace. It fails to realize that to tell a child that if he does a certain deed he will be punished does not imply that if he does well he will receive a coveted gift. It only im-

plies that he will not be punished. That theory fails to note what God meant. God planned a great good for His elect through that fall, so that man fell into the arms of Christ, Who could bring Adam and the church to a higher glory than Adam ever could. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. Adam had no way—no matter how long he walked perfectly before God—to give us resurrection bodies that are spiritual, with life that is incorruptible and undefilable. Our glory comes only in the way of death and a resurrection with spiritual bodies. And God meant the fall in order that His own Son might realize all this for us in a way that no mere man could ever realize. And that this is true is plain from the fact that in Colossians 1:15 Christ is called the *firstborn* of every creature. And the idea is that God had Christ in mind—He *meant* to send Christ even before Adam was created—because eternally He meant a higher good for man than that wherein He created Adam. And the only way for man to get that higher glory was that way of God Himself coming in that flesh, dying for the church's sins, being raised with a spiritual, heavenly body and life that He could give to His own, and of creating a new earth and heaven that would be united in Christ.

Yes, God meant something, He had something in mind before He began to create the world. And what He had in mind was the everlasting good of an elect people that He chose in Christ. And all that which the enemies of the church mean to do—and they have some dreadful things in mind for that church—will be used by God to bring His people into that higher good. Therefore we can stand at the grave of one persecuted for righteousness' sake and behold what evil the enemies of the church meant to do and succeeded in doing, and be assured that God meant it for good to save from this world's woes and to bring into the joys of a better world.

In that light we can understand Joseph's request that his brothers carry his body into Canaan when God visits them to bring them out of Egypt and into the land which He swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. He knows that he will die. But he also knows that God will use that death for his good. For he is sure that God will keep His promise and give His church the city which hath foundations, whose designer and builder is God. In that faith he wants his body buried in that which is a type of that coming kingdom. "By faith Joseph when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones" (Hebrews 11:22). Because he was sure that God meant to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and into Canaan, he wants to be buried in that land of promise.

And even as Jacob's dead body buried in Canaan

reminded his sons of God's promise to give them that land, so Joseph's body in that coffin, waiting for the day of deliverance, reminded the brothers of God's promise to bring them back and to give them the land. No return would mean the land will not be given them. A sure promise of a return means that the promise to give the land will be fulfilled.

But what an amazing turn of events! They sold Joseph into Egypt and did not want him to inherit anything in the promised land. He forgave them. And now they swear an oath before God that they will take his bones and bury them in the land out of

which they expelled him. Now they are willing to inherit the land with him, and have him inherit it with them. They meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. And now God makes them do *good* and to desire the good of Joseph. Salvation makes radical changes in the sinner. What a way to end the book of beginnings! For the beginning of the new life which is given us is the beginning of our perfection. The end, in the sense of goal or purpose, of the beginning in us of a new life is holy, sinless citizens of the kingdom of heaven. That end God had in mind when He began all things in creation.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Nicene Creed

Rev. James Slopsema

Article 1 (cont'd)

The Nicene Creed confesses in Article 1 faith in the one true God. This one God is further identified as the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

When the creed speaks here of the Father it speaks of the Triune God. Our first inclination may be to understand the Father of this first article to be the first person of the Trinity. That would seem reasonable in light of the rest of the creed. For in succeeding articles we read of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and then of the Holy Ghost. It would appear reasonable to conclude that in this way the Nicene Creed identifies for us the three persons of the Godhead. There is the Father, the first person of the Godhead. Then we have the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead. And finally there is the Holy Ghost, the third person of the trinity.

A closer examination will reveal that this is not the case.

First of all, we must notice that Article 1 is speaking of the one true God. This one God, Who is identified as the Father, is in turn described as being Almighty and the Maker of the heavens and the earth. Certainly this is not true of the first person of the Trinity alone. The first person alone is not the one true God. Nor is He alone Almighty, the Maker of the heavens and the earth. All that is said here of the Father applies equally to all three persons of the Godhead. Consequently, the Father spoken of here in Article 1 is the triune God. This is also in har-

mony with the Scriptures. Very seldom if ever does the name "Father" refer in the Scriptures to the first person of the Godhead. Rather it designates the triune God. Take for example the Lord's prayer, where Christ taught us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven." Quite obviously, the Father in this instance is the triune God. We pray not just to the first person of the Godhead but to the triune God.

In harmony with this we must understand that when the Nicene Creed speaks of the Son of God it does not have in mind simply the second person of the Godhead as He subsists eternally with the Father and the Spirit in the divine nature. The creed refers rather to the eternal Son as He came into our flesh through the virgin birth. It refers furthermore to the Son of God in our flesh as he subsequently suffered for our sins on the cross, died, was buried, arose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, sits at God's right hand, and will one day return to judge the living and the dead. In short, the creed is speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is indeed the Son of God, but Who is also our Mediator and Savior.

In like manner when the Nicene Creed speaks of the Holy Ghost it is not speaking just of the third person of the Trinity. It speaks rather of the Holy Spirit as He has been given to Christ at His ascension to be the Spirit of Christ through Whom the exalted Christ bestows all the blessings of salvation upon His people. That this is the emphasis of the creed is evident from the way that the Holy Ghost is described. He is the Lord and Giver of life. This

refers to the life of regeneration as worked in the heart of God's elect by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Furthermore, the Holy Ghost is identified as the One Who spoke by the prophets. The word spoken by the prophets of old was the word of Christ. But they spoke that word by the power and direction and illumination of the Holy Spirit in the service of Christ.

What we have therefore in the Nicene Creed is the doctrine of the Trinity set forth not in some abstract and philosophical way but as it is revealed in the Scriptures. God always reveals Himself in the Scriptures as being three yet one. However, the Scriptures very seldom speak of any one of the three persons as He subsists within the one divine nature as such. Instead the Scriptures speak of God the Father Who is the fulness of time sent His Son into the world in our flesh to seek and to save that which was lost. This same eternal Father also lives in our hearts by His Spirit, and through the indwelling Spirit blesses us with all spiritual blessings from heaven. This is sometimes referred to as the economical Trinity in distinction from the ontological Trinity. In other words, this is the Trinity as revealed in the work of salvation. And this is how the Nicene Creed also confesses the Trinity.

The next question we face is this: why is the triune God called "Father" both in the Scriptures and here in the Nicene creed? In what sense is He Father?

The basic idea of fatherhood is that of procreation, of authorship, of productivity. Thus for example a man becomes a father when he produces children. In a somewhat broader sense we use the idea of father to express that someone is the originator or inventor of something. Thus for example we speak of the father of modern science or of some other branch of science. Or we speak of the father of the printing press or some other type of modern invention.

In like manner we may also speak of the triune God as Father.

God is Father first of all because of His work of creation. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Out of nothing He brought forth the heavens and the earth in their unformed state. Then, according to Genesis 1 He proceeded in six days to form the light and the firmament and the whole creation as we know it today. Hence, God is the Father of the creation. The whole creation finds its source in Him, proceeds from Him, is His child.

According to the Scriptures God is Father in even a higher sense. God is first of all the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures speak of this quite often. This is true because of the miraculous

conception by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary to bring forth the Lord Jesus. This makes the triune God the Father of Christ in a very direct sense. Closely connected to this, God is also our Father for Christ's sake and in Christ. He is our Father first of all because in Christ and for the sake of Christ He adopts us as His sons and heirs. Even as it is possible to adopt into your own home and family a child that is not your child and make him an heir of all that you have with all the rights and privileges of a son, so too does God adopt His people in Christ as His sons and heirs. Being adopted by God in Jesus Christ we have all the rights and privileges of sons in God's eternal home on high. But in Jesus Christ God becomes our Father in a way that no earthly parent can become the father of a child whom he has adopted. No adopting parent can give his adopted child his own image. No parent can take a child he has adopted and make it resemble him as a natural child would. But this is what God does to those whom He adopts. According to the Scriptures we who are in Christ are born again; we are in fact born of God. Through this spiritual rebirth we are restored to the image of God in which we were originally created but which we lost in the fall. Being born of God we are made to resemble God in a spiritual way. In this sense the triune God is our Father in Jesus Christ. This is also the emphasis of the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 9 where the Catechism explains the first article of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

It was however the intention of the early Christian church to emphasize God as Father from the viewpoint of His being the Creator of the heavens and the earth. This is evident from the fact that in this same article the early church continued to speak of God as the Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. Quite obviously the church meant to emphasize that God is Father because He is Creator. This is also verified by the writings of the early church fathers where the emphasis is time and again on God the Father as Creator.

There was good reason for this emphasis. This truth had to be confessed over against two formidable foes that the early church faced: paganism and Gnosticism. In our treatment of this first article of the Nicene Creed we have already seen how that the early church was required to oppose the polytheism of both of these. Now we see that the church also had to oppose paganism and Gnosticism on the question of creation.

It is characteristic of all paganistic religions even as they have survived to today to have some concept of the creation of the world. This is to be ex-

plained by the fact that from earliest history the fact of the creation of the world has been passed down from generation to generation either in oral or written form. However, as the fact of creation was passed down through the unbelieving, reprobate generations of the world, the story of creation was altered and distorted to fit into the godless religion which they promoted. The creation of the universe in turn was attributed to the idol gods that they served. It was over against this lie first of all that prevailed in the society in which the early church found herself that she confessed in this first article of the Nicene Creed that the triune God is the Father of the creation. The idol gods of the heathen did not create the heavens and the earth. This great and glorious work is to be ascribed solely to the triune God Who sent His only Son to seek and to save that which is lost.

That the triune God is the Father of the creation was also confessed by the early Christian church over against the error of Gnosticism. We have earlier touched on the Gnostic idea of creation. The Gnostics taught that from God, Who is an impersonal and unknowable force, there emanates or issues forth a series of aeons or spiritual beings. These aeons have divine characteristics and together comprise the *pleroma* or fulness of divine power and attributes. According to the Gnostics, the weakest of the aeons fell from the spirit world and created the Demiurge or Worldmaker. This Demiurge in turn formed the present visible world from the *kenoma*, the world of matter which is eter-

nal and intrinsically evil. This Demiurge is Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament Jews, who imagines that he alone is God. Over against also this frightful lie of hell the early Christian church set forth in the first article of the Nicene Creed that the triune God Who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ is the Father and sole Creator of the universe.

The same confession must still be made today, the same truth defended. The church in our land no longer must contend with paganism as did the early church. And Gnosticism has long ago died out. But the church today is required to contend with the error of scientism and its pet idea of evolution. In the modern idea of evolution we see a development in error. Whereas before the unbelieving world was content to allow the creation of the heavens and the earth by some divine force or being, the unbeliever today will not even allow a creation. Evolution has no room for either a creator or an act of creation. The world as we know it today just evolved from nothing to its present form. Foolishness did not die with the unbelieving generations which opposed the church in her early history. It has been continued to this day and taken a great leap forward! And over against this great foolishness of men (some even call it wisdom) the church today is called to confess, and the faithful church does confess, "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible."

GUEST ARTICLE

Jehovah My Portion

Rev. R.G. Moore

"The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot." Psalm 16:5

The above text affords the child of God great comfort and assurance as he lives his life as a pilgrim and a stranger in this world. In this Psalm we find the terms lot, portion, and inheritance used repeatedly. All men seek a certain lot in this life, all set their hopes upon a desired portion. What do you seek? What do you want out of life? What do you look for in your present life? These are important questions, and our answers to them are most crucial.

One might answer that he wants a portion of

prosperity, of physical strength and health, that he desires not to be troubled or plagued, that he desires that his eyes stand out with fatness and that he may have all that his heart desires. Asaph in Psalm 73 says that, when looking at the portion of the wicked and seeing the above things that the wicked had, his feet had almost slipped. He was tempted to follow their ways because of the portion which was seemingly good. Then God led him into the sanctuary and revealed to him the end of the wicked. But, beloved, there is no grace in things. May God also give us grace to see this. Let us ask the question: What can these above mentioned things really do

for the child of God? Do they give peace to our soul which is burdened with sin? Will they help us to manifest the glory of God's Name in our life's walk? Do the so-called pleasures of having these things last? We are told that this creation and all in it perishes. Then what good is physical strength, riches or any thing in itself? Can they invoke our hope? Can they give us eternal comfort? Rather it is true that one who sets his hope on these things is never satisfied. Always one needs more, or else is fearful that he will lose what he already has, and he is not at rest. And above all, they can never change the fact that one dies.

However, it is true that all men are concerned with their lot in this life. We are also affected by this concern. We have the need to be satisfied with our life in the midst of the world. This life for man must have purpose and meaning to it. But the wicked seek this satisfaction with life in vain. Then how blessed are the words of the Psalmist. We have a perfect portion, a perfect lot in life! O! It is true that the lot in life before us in this year or in our whole life may be characterized by the other portion received by man as set forth by Asaph in Psalm 73. Asaph said, his portion was being plagued each day, and chastened every morning. Often the child of God's life is filled with trial and tribulation. In fact we may expect that this will increasingly be our portion in this life as the day of Christ draws nearer. Antichrist shall more and more press upon us as Satan makes his last futile efforts to bring the cause of Christ to naught.

Yet, I say (yet not I, Christ says) that our portion is perfect. This He says in our text when He says the Lord is our portion. Indeed, the children of God have had to face many difficult times. We can think of David who writes this Psalm. David had many enemies. They came against him in many ways; they took counsel together to kill him. His own son turned against him. Further, he had to fight the battles of the Lord throughout his life. However, although many were the tribulations, trials, and temptations of David, he says in Psalm 16, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage." Besides, it is evident that this Psalm is also Messianic, that is, it directly refers to Christ. What is said here was also said by our Savior. This is evident from the New Testament Scripture in Acts two. And Christ's way was the way of deepest suffering as He came to bear the burden of our sin. This was the portion of His whole life; but we think especially of our Lord in the garden, sweating great drops as of blood. We see the anguish cross His face as He suffers, the righteous for the unrighteous. We see Him on the cross bearing the very wrath of God to cover the terrible debt of His elect body. Yet too, the portion

of our Lord was good, the lines fell unto Him in pleasant places.

We know, therefore, that as children of God we will see much suffering and tribulation in this life. And as we think about this portion in life, we may tend to say it is too hard. The flesh does not enjoy this portion, for it is a lot that does not guarantee any earthly relief. And yet, the Psalmist says it is the portion which is most blessed. For God is our strength and our heritage. This is our confession. Beloved readers, this means that we belong to Jehovah, that we are His people. And all that comes upon us, our God, Who is our Covenant Father in Christ sends us in perfect covenant love. We do not receive a portion in this life haphazardly, but we receive exactly what God sends to us. He is our cup. All that we taste and drink of life is of our covenant Father.

We speak of not just any god, but of Jehovah. This is a wonderful part of our confession. We belong to Jehovah, He is our portion. When we are privileged to hear the true Scripture preached, and the Spirit of our Lord applies that Word unto our hearts so that we live out of it, we are blessed with a most beautiful confession—a confession that gives the child of God confidence in all things. With Jehovah, as our cup, indeed we may live with confidence and assurance in this life no matter what we face. This gave David all he needed in his difficult life. This strengthened Christ in the garden of Gethsemane to go on to the cross. And my readers, elect in Christ, this confession will give you the confidence and strength to fight the battle of faith that lies before you in the time to come.

Jehovah is our covenant God. Do you realize the wonder of this truth? It means that God has loved us from before the foundation of the world. He has chosen us to be His own precious possession. This means that our God will care for us; for He has established His covenant with us in Christ from eternity, to take us into His fellowship and communion. It is therefore His will to make us to experience His blessings and love through Christ Jesus. And His purpose is that all things serve this end.

Secondly, Jehovah is the unchangeable, and thus faithful God. The Lord changes not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. O, we are not worthy of salvation, or of God's covenant love. We are sinners in and of ourselves. But our God has chosen us in Christ unto true covenant life in Christ. And God is not slack concerning His promises. Because God changes not His promise is always sure. Therefore the child of God may be assured that Jehovah Who is his God in Christ shall protect him and shall deliver him from all sin and evil. And for His sake God will surely send only that portion unto us that shall maintain His promise to save us.

Further, because of His name, Jehovah, we know our God has the power to accomplish the realization of His covenant promise. He is the "I am that I am." This means that God is dependent upon no one, but rather governs and upholds all things. He does whatsoever He pleases. Thus, His will He accomplishes, and He saves His chosen in Christ.

This confession brings peace, blessing, and joy to us. It is a confession that gives us peace in all of life. When we confess Jehovah to be our portion, it means that God makes us one with Himself in Christ. It means that God gave His only Begotten Son unto death that we might be heirs of eternal life. Then indeed all things work for the good of them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. All that God sends to us is sent in Fatherly care.

How wonderful this word of God's grace! We have been blessed in a way few others are, as we have been privileged by God to hear this gospel proclaimed unto us. Many hear of a God that is dependent upon the will of man in order to save them. Many hear that all things take place according to a destiny dependent upon what man does with his life. But then they receive no comfort, they can only face the future in fear and doubt. But, beloved readers, we have so much to be thankful for in a church where the truth of a Psalm such as this is faithfully proclaimed. For as the Spirit applies its truth to our hearts we are given a knowledge of faith that gives us complete confidence and assurance in all the ways of life.

Even more, the Psalmist goes further, and he says that the same Jehovah that is our portion maintains our lot, our inheritance. David, or any child of God, knows the impossibility of man's maintaining his portion. We are dead in our sins and trespasses by nature. Apart from God we cannot have Jehovah as our portion. We are not capable naturally of laying hold of God or of His Son. We cannot make God

our portion. Rather, He must become a portion unto us. God alone can provide us with this blessed lot. It is all one-sided. He chooses us in Christ before the foundation of the world. He sends His only Son to die. Jesus Christ goes alone to the cross that we might receive the blessings which God pours forth. God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts to deliver us from the bondage of our sin. He changes our hearts, making them new so that we are given the power to lay hold on the truths He reveals unto us through the proclamation of the truth. He gives us hearts willing and desirous to serve Him. He guides us by His Spirit and by the Word of Christ to glory. And He sends the perfect portion to serve this end. God maintains our lot!

Surely then we may say with the Psalmist, "the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea I have a goodly heritage." This line that the Psalmist speaks of is a measuring line, something like a surveyor's chain. Then you see that Jehovah measures out our portion. He measures out the proper portion for His elect children. He gives us a place in His kingdom. He does so by giving us the means, by drawing us under the true preaching of His Word. Whereby He calls us into His comforting arms and gives us the assurance which is here so beautifully set forth.

It is a most blessed thing that our God has given to us this sound, biblical, Reformed faith to cling to. We have a blessed heritage and portion. We have been made heirs of the kingdom of heaven! Yea, we have a goodly heritage!

Indeed, it is with humility that we must bow down before our God, expecting all things from Him. Then, too, how foolish it would be to be filled with anguish and care. Rather, with contentment and satisfaction we shall receive all things, as from the hand of our covenant God. Let us, therefore, never cease to praise Him, the God Who is alone worthy of all of our praise, honor, and glory.

Book Reviews

KITTO'S DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS, by John Kitto; Kregel Publications, 1981; two volumes: Vol. I, 1008 pp., Vol. II, 894 pp.; \$49.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

The jacket blurb of these books tells us that John Kitto lived from 1804-1854. At an early age (13) a bad fall left him totally deaf. Although this was only another in a series of tragedies which he en-

dured, God used all these afflictions and troubles to prepare John for work in the church. He became an expert in Middle Eastern customs and an authority on the ancient customs of Bible times. He wrote prolifically in his field and contributed much to subsequent knowledge of the cultural, geographical, and historical background of Scripture. Volume I has an extensive biography of John Kitto

from which much more can be learned concerning the interesting life which this Bible scholar lived.

The books are very large with vast amounts of material in them. Each volume is nearly the size of an ordinary piece of typing paper and each page has two columns on it. So, although the price may seem somewhat high, there is a great deal of material to be found here.

The subtitle of the two volumes reads, "Studies of key characters and problem passages in the Scriptures." Undoubtedly this does characterize these two volumes in a general way, but they are really much more than that. From one point of view, they serve as a commentary on the whole Bible — every book of the Bible is discussed in them and most books of an historical kind are treated section by section. From another point of view, they are a sort of reference book which contains an abundance of material on such things as the flora and fauna of Bible lands, the geography and history of Bible lands, the customs and culture of Bible people. This feature of the work seemed to this reviewer to be its greatest value. A bonus in this connection is the fact that two different editors have brought some of the material up to date in the light of more recent discoveries.

Other interesting and worthwhile features of the work are: 1) a detailed study of the book of Job (130 pages); 2) a topical discussion of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and the prophets; 3) an interesting and helpful discussion on Hebrew poetry; 4) a sound approach to Biblical interpretation; 5) a very skillful and beautiful style (although in keeping with the days in which the author lived), a skill no doubt developed and honed because of the author's deafness.

I urge our schools to obtain this work for the school libraries. While it is not always easy to find material which one wants by looking up the text, an exhaustive index at the end of Volume II makes subject reference work very easy. It can be used in our grade schools as well as our high schools. But it is also a valuable addition to our home libraries. It can be helpful in Bible study for societies and personal devotions as well as a general reference work.

HOW TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS, by John D. Arnold/Bert Tompkins; Mott Media, 1982; 180 pp., price not given. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

We quote from the preface to give you some idea of the contents of the book:

Section I (Chapters 1 and 2) reminds us that God has given us able minds to determine and evaluate options, along with understanding the ultimate responsibility for our decisions. This section explains the many difficulties people have in making decisions and further explains why a systematic decision-making method is necessary. . . .

Section II (Chapters 3 through 9) explains in detail our seven-step decision-making process. It has been tested and proven of value to thousands of people as they struggled with important decisions of spiritual, moral, personal, or financial consequence. . . .

Section III (Chapters 10 through 13) focuses primarily upon how you can help others make decisions. . . .

The book leaves out the essential Biblical teachings on these matters.

NOTICE!!!

All students who are to be enrolled for the first time in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, who are members of the Protestant Reformed Churches, and who are in need of financial assistance, are to contact the Student Aid Committee, Gerald Bouwkamp, Secretary, 5440 Lawndale Ave., Hudsonville, Michigan 49426. (Phone 616-669-9230). This contact should be made by April 9, 1983.

LEAGUE MEETING NOTICE

The Spring Meeting of the League of Eastern Men's and Ladies' Societies will be held, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, April 12, 1983, at 8:00 P.M., at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Members and friends are urged to attend.

Prof. Herman Hanko will speak on — "Organ Transplant, Is It Biblical?"

Gwen Van Kampen (Mrs. Joe)
Secretary

NOTICE!!!

The Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a teacher for the Kindergarten and Grade 1, for the 1983-84 school year. Please contact Mr. Ron Koole, 306 Second St., Box 618, Hull, Iowa 51239. Phone - (712) 439-1060.

Henry Hoekstra, Sec'y.

News From Our Churches

March 15, 1983

What is the "Tape Room"? South Holland Protestant Reformed Church has a tape room in the balcony, in which you will find a catalogue listing hun-

dreds of tapes of sermons and lectures, from which tapes can be easily ordered. The Evangelism Committee says that these tapes can be borrowed without charge or you can purchase a tape for \$3.00.

Over the past year the Reformed Witness Committee of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, in Walker, has received a very large number of requests for tapes, literature, Bibles, etc. from individuals and groups in many areas of the world. Here are a few of the replies that they received.

Belfast, Northern Ireland:

"....I would like to thank you for the tapes you are sending to us. They are a great blessing to us and other Christians in the Reformed Faith....I had a large selection of Protestant Reformed leaflets on the book stall and by the end of the week most of them were gone.... Yours in Christ, Desmond Callendor."

Singapore:

"....These tapes go into our GLTS tape library. In fact, we have gatherings regularly on almost every Sunday nite to hear tapes and messages from overseas. Rest assured that these tapes will be in good use.... Love in Christ, Johnson See Choon Hock."

Accra, Ghana:

"This is to inform you of the safe arrival of your recent parcels, one the cassettes and the other Covenant Witness booklets. I now understand why you are getting mail from Ghana. On Sunday I opened my wireless set to my favorite station ELWA in Monrovia, Liberia and your witness program was on. It is the best Christian radio station in Africa. Yours in the service of the Lord. G.L. Anigba Evangelistic Assn."

Since I mentioned Singapore, here are excerpts from a letter Rev. Arie den Hartog wrote to the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, January 18, 1983, and which was subsequently printed in the March issue of *ACROSS THE AISLE*.

"We immediately got back into the work. Later in the day on which we got back, I attended a public engagement of two of the church members... The next day I already had to preach and teach Sunday School in the church. I had part of this sermon made while still in the U.S.A.

"We were surprised to hear when we came back that there are now eight couples in the church planning to get married. So I am busy giving pre-mar-

riage classes to three couples presently and later to the rest....

"There is still no news from the Singapore government either on the registration of our church or on the tax exempt status for our church. All of this is sure taking a very long time. There are also no new developments as far as purchasing property for the church."

The Jamaica Missions Committee of First Church states that Rev. Miersma will return on April 5. You may wonder why three ministers went to Jamaica. Rev. Joostens went "because he is the pastor of the church responsible for the field. He then can bring back a first hand report to our consistory, who must make recommendations to Synod '83 concerning our future labors on this field. Rev. Flikkema and Rev. Miersma are both on our denominational Mission Committee and are then also involved in the oversight of the field."

If you want to discuss how to discipline children constructively, from the very young through their teen years; how we can teach (children) to be more spiritually minded in friends they choose, music they listen to, places they go; what are the implications of making children feel guilty in specific actions they do, and long lasting guilt; what effect the use of liquor and tobacco in the home has on children's attitudes; and many other topics, make sure you attend the Child Development Conference on April 8, 1983, at Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church.

Loveland Protestant Reformed Church had this to say about the lottery in its January 30 bulletin:

"Since the Colorado government has instituted the public lottery, it is good for us to remind ourselves that the use of the lottery is forbidden us:

1. It contributes to covetousness, the root sin of all gambling. I Tim. 6:10 and Eph. 5:5. Also 8th commandment.
2. It exposes us to poor stewardship wasting what God has given us on buying chances. Eph. 4:8; Heid. Cat. Q. 110.
3. It corrupts government, their duty is to raise revenue by taxes, not gambling. Rom. 13:6, 7.

Rather, let us be content with what our gracious God has given to each of us and use it in His service. Phil. 4:11-13."

DH