

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

...If the Lord in His grace has preserved the truth in our midst, is there not an ever increasing urgency that we preach this gospel, also outside of our churches to others...? Woe unto us if we are complacent and careless in the face of this great urgency. Woe unto us if we care only about our own salvation and our own churches....

See "In His Fear" — page 322

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

### Rahab's Faith

Rev. H. Veldman

*"Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?"*

James 2:25

Likewise also Rahab, likewise as Abraham—yet, how different! Is not Abraham the father of believers, who reveals the power of faith? And Rahab is, we read here, a harlot. Why does James choose the example of Rahab? His choice of Abraham is easily understandable. But why Rahab? However, he is speaking of justification. And justification presupposes sin. Hence, the choice of Rahab emphasizes

that she was justified. And her sin is mentioned here to emphasize the need and also the blessed power of justification.

Likewise also Rahab—as far as James' line of reasoning is concerned, the cases of Abraham and Rahab are exact parallels. Fact is, both exhibited an active faith. Their faith was not merely intellectual.



The devils also believe, and they shudder. The faith of Abraham and Rahab was real, spiritual—it produced works. Besides, let us never forget: both, Abraham and Rahab, were justified, not *by* works, but *out of* works, works of faith.

Rahab—who is she?

She was a citizen of Jericho. Jericho, from a natural point of view may be called the gateway into Canaan. It was an impregnable stronghold. Moreover, Jericho was a worldly city, and it represents, symbolizes the world in the account of Joshua. Sin held complete sway in it. Its king and inhabitants had heard of Jehovah, Israel's God, and His exploits. Yet, we read that "now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel". In other words, Jericho was fully determined to resist Israel, maintain itself over against Israel and Israel's God, present a united front over against them. Jericho lived the life of this world, of sin and darkness, and would vainly attempt to resist and frustrate the advance of the Lord of hosts.

Rahab was a citizen of this Jericho.

It is important that this be noted. Fact is, she was justified out of works. Through her works she escaped the judgment of God upon the wicked city. Jericho was damned, cast into hell. But to escape this judgment she must be justified, justified according to the righteousness of God, redeemed from sin and become an heir of eternal life.

This is emphasized in the text when we read that she is a harlot. We must not minimize this expression. Some have attempted to spiritualize it. However, she was a harlot. Scripture never "softpedals" things. Think of Scripture's mention of the sins of the elect: Noah, Abraham, David, Asa, Hezekiah. This does not necessarily mean that she was still a harlot at the time of her deliverance. But she had been a harlot. She had been a woman who had given her body for the filthy and adulterous seeking of the flesh, a vile and filthy heathen. James mentions this purposely. We read that she was justified. And justification implies forgiveness. This was her sin.

Rahab believed—she believed what?

Rahab must choose between the host of Israel and Jericho. She must choose between Israel, the people of the Lord, and Jericho, the kingdom of darkness and of this world. Humanly speaking, she will surely choose Jericho. First, is not Jericho impregnable? How can Israel ever take this mighty stronghold? Secondly, does not Rahab belong to the city? She is a harlot. She therefore lived the life of this city. She loved Jericho and the life of Jericho. How can she choose for Jehovah Whom she hates and over against Jericho which she loves? Besides,

what right does she have to this escape? What right can she have to the inheritance of Israel? She is darkness and by nature wholly condemnable. Yet, Rahab chooses against Jericho and for Israel, the kingdom of Jehovah. We read in Hebrews 11:31 that "by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not." By faith, therefore, she believed in God, in the forgiveness of sin, in the fact that she was righteous before God and that, therefore, God would save her when unbelieving Jericho perished by the wrath of God. And by faith she forsook her ways of sin.

How is this possible?

We are all acquainted with Joshua's sending of the two spies to spy out the land secretly. These spies, however, must also visit Rahab and learn from her that the Lord had already begun to fight for Israel. Rahab received them, that is, received them as her guests, and, according to Hebrews 11, received them in peace, that is, not as their enemy but as their friend. And then we should note the remarkable words in Joshua 2:9-13.

What does this mean? Notice what she tells these spies in Joshua 2. What had happened? These messengers of Israel had found refuge underneath her roof, had proclaimed to her the truth of Israel and of Israel's God, had instructed her in her own sin and had proclaimed to her the word of salvation. They had told her of Israel's priority among the nations, of Israel's God, that He is the Lord, Jehovah, holy and good and righteous, Who will never acquit the guilty or free the ungodly. And they had also told her of what would befall Jericho, of the significance of that destruction, and that none would be saved but all would perish everlastingly.

And Rahab had believed their gospel of salvation. And now we also understand the token she requests and receives, the token of the scarlet thread or cord which must be suspended out of her window. Rahab understood this token. It had been explained to her. It was red, it spoke of her own sin, but also of the blood that should come, the blood in which she placed all her hope and confidence.

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Rahab's faith was *active*.

This receives the emphasis throughout this context in James 2. James is not contrasting faith and good works. But he is contrasting a dead faith and a living faith. Faith, a living faith, always manifests itself in works.

Faith always assumes a definite, antithetical stand over against the world. Of course! Faith is the living, spiritual bond which unites us with God in Christ Jesus. To believe means to live out of Christ, to trust in God through Christ alone, to trust that all



our life and expectation is from Him. Then we trust in the invisible God, also invisible in the sense that He does things which He alone can do and which are humanly impossible. Then we will and shall take our stand over against the world which is always hostile toward God and His Christ. In God, then, we trust. From Him alone we expect all our help. In His way we will walk. Faith means that we live out of Christ and, therefore, demands an antithetical walk in the midst of the world.

Rahab believed.

First of all, she believed in that which was only divinely possible and humanly impossible. She believed that Jericho, impregnable, would fall. She believed *in God*. She believed in the God Who raises the dead. Notice how, subsequently, her faith was tested. Notice what happened after the messengers left her and Jericho finally falls. Probably a few weeks elapsed. However, Rahab believed, believed that she was righteous, and suspended the scarlet cord from her window, placed her trust in God alone, that her deliverance would come only from God, the Jehovah of Israel.

Secondly, Rahab's faith was such that it placed her in grave peril in the city of Jericho. On the one hand, she was a marked woman. She had been a harlot, and she lived upon the wall. Rahab was, therefore, well known. Her house had been accessible to many. And now she was no longer a harlot. What a change had come over her! She had become, spiritually, a stranger in that wicked city, had turned her back upon it. But in so doing she had surely become a marked woman, one who already was well known because of her previous conduct and now because of what she had become. Principally she had already become a traitor to Jericho's cause and had already cast her lot with hated Israel. On the other hand, Rahab's position was all the more dangerous because Israel even now lay outside the gates. The king had commanded that none might leave the city. That her house was closely watched is evident from the fact that her admittance of the two spies was known to the king. Rahab lied to the messengers of the king. Was this wrong? Scripture, however, does not mention this incident again, does not condemn it, and has enrolled Rahab among the heroes of faith of Hebrews 11. In the meantime she was not afraid of the king. She had chosen against Jericho and for Israel. She shall indeed defend these messengers of Joshua and seek their safe return to the Captain of Israel's host. Do not minimize this action of Rahab. Do not say that she after all sought herself, to save herself in the way of lying and deceit. She is a heroine of faith. And although the city of Jericho is filled with fear, she will show sympathy to anyone who shows

sympathy for Israel's cause. Rahab, from the viewpoint of Jericho, was a traitor. Yet, she walked in faith.

What does this say to us? No man can serve two masters. We cannot serve God and Mammon, Christ and Belial. It is either-or. Of course! By nature we are citizens, legally and spiritually, of Jericho, of the world. Let us not compromise here. Let us not attempt to straddle the fence between Israel and Jericho, between Jerusalem and Athens, between heaven and the world. Let us not deceive ourselves so that we believe we can have one foot in Jericho and the other in Israel. By faith, however, we are united with God in Christ. Now we live out of Christ. And the activity of this faith is always antithetical. God's cause will be our cause; His people will be our people. Believing in God and in Christ means that we shall walk out of that faith. Our position may appear to be hopeless. The world is stronger than we. All we have is God and His Word. Indeed, we may be courting disaster. However, nothing may deter us; faith is a living power; it demands complete obedience.

Rahab was justified.

Indeed, she was not justified *by* works. She was justified only because of the blood of Christ. She was justified *out* of works. She was justified through faith as the means through which the righteousness of God in Christ was imputed to her, and in the way of works, because works are the fruit of faith and in the way of works is faith made perfect and complete.

Hence, she was justified out of works. What would have happened had she not believed unto the end, had she not repented of her evil walk, had she not cast in her lot with Israel, had chosen to remain with the destiny of Jericho? She would have been destroyed. So is it not plain that in the way of works Rahab received the blessedness of justification? By faith she received the spies and befriended them. By faith she hid them and was instructed by them, suspended the scarlet cord from her window, escaped the destruction of Jericho, became a part of Israel, partook of Israel's life and sacrifices. In fact, she is incorporated into the royal line and becomes a mother of the Christ.

We, too, must walk in faith, live out of the life of Christ. And we, too, will experience the blessedness of justification, because faith is the fruit of the grace of God within us, and therefore, the evidence that Christ died also for us.

This assurance we will taste already in this life.

And we will also taste the assurance of our eternal justification.



## EDITORIAL

# Synod of 1982 — Critique

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

Some months ago, after having written about last year's Synod, I promised also to write a few things of a critical nature in connection with that broadest gathering of our churches. As so often happens in the life of an editor, there arose in the meantime other items which demanded editorial attention and which made it impossible for me immediately to carry out my intention to write more about our last Synod. I now fulfill that promise, however, in the hope that future synodical meetings may profit.

My chief item of criticism concerns the mass of material which dealt with important matters and which was thrown on Synod's table *and treated* when Synod convened. This material did not appear in the published Agenda. None of the delegates so much as knew of it prior to the time Synod convened. None of the consistories or individual officebearers knew of this material. No one had the opportunity to reflect on it. No consistory or classis had the opportunity to express an opinion about it or to file a protest about any proposal. It was simply put on Synod's table and handed out to the delegates at the last minute.

The material involved was as follows, and I quote from the Mission Committee's cover letter, received by the Stated Clerk on May 26, 1982:

The Mission Committee herewith submits the following supplemental material, which could not be included with our original report due to circumstances beyond our control.

We offer to this Synod the following additional material for your consideration.

- 1) Report and recommendation re our Birmingham, Ala. mission field.
- 2) Report and recommendation re our Jamaican mission field.
- 3) Report and recommendation re our Monroe-Mt. Vernon, Wash. mission field.
- 4) Additional recommendation re Bradenton.
- 5) Budget.

In addition, in connection with the Jamaica item there were two lengthy reports from the emissaries to Jamaica, Revs. Lubbers and Heys, reports which were certainly germane to the Jamaica proposals in this supplementary material. It should also be

noted that the only one of the five items listed above which came directly from the Mission Committee is that concerning the budget. The reason why this budget proposal was late was the fact that obviously the Mission Committee could not prepare a proposed budget without taking into account the information involved in the other four reports and recommendations. The Mission Committee, it should be noted, speaks rather euphemistically of "circumstances beyond our control." The simple fact is that the consistories involved were tardy in reporting to the Mission Committee.

What happened to this material at Synod's meetings?

If you consult the Acts of Synod, you will discover that all of this material was simply received and treated by Synod as though it were ordinary Agenda material. The question of the propriety and legality of treating it was not even dealt with by Synod. Neither the advisory committee nor the Synod itself faced the question of the legality. They did not face the question whether this was indeed a "supplemental report." Neither did they face the question whether this material was legally before Synod under our adopted rules. It is not that the question was not raised and that this point was not brought to Synod's attention; but it was brought by an advisor, who, of course, cannot make motions; and the question was answered by the president, who, however, was not ruling on a point of order. This explains why nothing appears in the Acts of Synod about the entire matter, and why it appears in the Acts as though all of this material was ordinary Agenda material.

What is involved here?

First of all, it should be pointed out that there is indeed a provision in our Rules of Synod which allows for supplemental reports. This is found in Article 8 of the Rules of Synod, entitled "Reports":

1. The reports of all committees, special and standing, shall be included in the Agenda, so that all churches may be duly informed.
2. Standing committees may make supplemental reports of matters arising after the deadline for the Agenda. Such reports, however, shall be distributed in



mimeographed form to all members of Synod at the opening session, and the committee concerned shall be responsible for this.

Now it may be granted, first of all, that this rule indeed makes provision for the possibility of supplemental reports. However, in the second place, it should be noted that the rule does not define what is meant by "supplemental." In the third place, in this particular case it is, to say the least, highly questionable whether the material involved could properly be called "supplemental." To me, supplemental implies that the main body of the report is already in existence, but that something must be added at a later time. And in this sense, it is entirely appropriate that there be supplemental reports. Such supplemental reports would not include entirely new items, which are not even touched on in the main report. But they might include new facts, new information, additional grounds, or even a change in recommendations because of new light. To use a simple illustration, there might be in a main report a recommendation, let us say, concerning salary of a missionary. In the meantime, facts come to light which show that because of circumstances or because of inflation the recommended salary is not adequate. In such an instance a supplemental report with new light and a new recommendation would be entirely proper. The matter proper is already on the Agenda; the supplemental report does not change that fact, but helps Synod deal with it properly. In this case under discussion, however, the simple fact is that the items included in the supplemental report were not included in any form in the main report. Besides, the items of the supplemental report together constituted by far the largest part of the Mission Committee Report, as well as the most important and most difficult part of the report. I submit that it is rather silly to call a report supplemental when that report is larger, more important, and more difficult than the original report.

But this is not all.

The Rules of Synod themselves explicitly forbid a Synod to do what our 1982 Synod did. There is a much more important rule of Synod which certainly takes precedence over Rule 8, which is after all only a simple procedural rule. Article 5 of the Rules of Synod concerns "Matters Legally Before The Synod." This is obviously a fundamental rule: it concerns the question what may and what may not properly be treated by Synod. And under Part B, "Rules," we find that the second rule reads:

2. No proposals of importance shall be presented to Synod that have not appeared on the agenda, so that Consistories and Classes may have opportunity for previous deliberation. All matters appearing in the

Agenda must be dealt with by Synod before its adjournment.

It is this rule which was simply ignored by the Synod of 1982 in spite of the fact that it was called to their attention. You may be sure that no one thought for a moment that the proposals included in the supplemental report were not important; everyone knew that these proposals involved the very continuation of our home missions work in the coming year. The simple fact is that in spite of this knowledge that the proposals were important, the Synod went blithely on, without so much as facing the question of legality.

I would have you notice that the rule furnishes a very important reason, a reason which goes to the very heart of our presbyterian-synodical system, namely, that consistories and classes must have opportunity for previous deliberation on proposals of importance. This is their sacred right under our system of church government. It must not be trampled, and it can only be trampled with grave risk to the fundamentals of our Reformed system. I submit that if Synods act in this fashion, excluding consistories and classes from a voice in important matters, then consistories have every right to ignore such decisions and to consider them null and void!

But there is another very obvious reason. That reason concerns the delegates themselves. None of the delegates had the opportunity during the busy sessions of Synod for calm study and reflection on the important matters included in that alleged supplementary report. And there were indeed major proposals in the report, as, for example, the proposal concerning Jamaica, with its \$50,000.00 price-tag! And the subsequent discussion showed, too, I believe, that Synod was not ready to face some of these issues and to make calm, mature, well-founded decisions.

What, then, should be done?

In the first place, the very first question which an advisory committee ought to face is the question of the legality of the material on which they must give advice. This pertains to all material, but especially to material about which there might be some question. And the very first item of advice should be concerning the legality of material. Whether that advice is to treat or not to treat the material is not the issue; the committee must bring advice on the matter. In that way it will also automatically insure Synod's dealing with this question.

In the second place, Synod should have rebuked those responsible for tardy reports and admonished them that if the work of Christ the King is to receive its due attention, there must be order in the churches and there must be timely reports. We



have agreed together as churches to live under our Church Order and its appended regulations; let us live up to that agreement. It is obligatory! And it is salutary!

My second item of critique I will mention briefly. It is high time that our new Church Order book be published. There have been numerous changes in regulations and in constitutions of

standing committees. In some instances new constitutions have been published in separate leaflets. In others, things are buried in past Acts of Synod. Besides, it is already several years ago that the project of a new Church Order Book was initiated. It was reported at last Synod that the book was ready for publishing. Why can we not have it at once?

## Contribution

For the past three years the *Standard Bearer* has come to our address. Invariably, unlike the many other periodicals received, it is read from cover to cover. Why is that? Perhaps the first reason is that its writers take the Bible as truly being the Word of God, avoiding all the theological gobbledygook too often found in Reformed circles which severely qualifies the Word. Because we live in serious times, as the series of articles, "Signs of the Times," in the *Standard Bearer* disclose, the articles are serious. Well they should, for the Christian life and one's eternal destiny are not matters of light import.

Then, too, I appreciate the fact that the *Standard Bearer* makes a clear defense for the Reformed faith and confessions as we both, whether Protestant Reformed or Christian Reformed, were taught in yesteryear. As a member of the Christian Reformed Church, I see my denomination being torn at the seams. It is sad to see leaders questioning the doctrines of election and reprobation within the Reformed fold. It hurts to see pastors pushing for women in the threefold offices of the church. One wonders what might occur to our denomination when there are ministers that question the historicity of Adam. The seeds of doubt and questioning are being sown now, but what will their sprouts of unrest and dispute bode later for the church?

It is good to see that the *Standard Bearer* stands for the antithetical stance of the Christian. There is

a place for that in the Christian walk of life, though one realizes that it should avoid the tangles of legalisms that can so easily slip in. The tension is ever present for the Christian to avoid the extremes of self-righteous Pharisaism on one hand and of worldliness on the other. I was not impressed when my own Synod spent too many hours on the matters of pleasure (dancing) we Christians should enjoy. The time of a major body should be spent on things of more serious consideration.

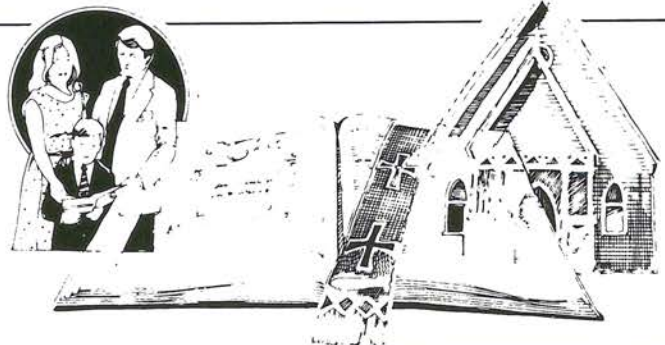
The series of articles entitled "Signs of the Times" in the *Standard Bearer* reassures me there is a branch of the Reformed Church that takes eschatology seriously. I neither read nor hear much about the second coming of our Lord in my own denomination. Has our enriched affluent life style made us too comfortable in this world of sin?

Perhaps what hurts most is that I know there are so many ministers my age or older (I am sixty) in the denomination who are solidly grounded in the Reformed faith who cling to the convenience of silence rather than make a bold stand for the faith of our fathers. Retirement should not atrophy into prudential silence.

So, may the *Standard Bearer* continue to do what it does so well now. You are not only a blessing to your own membership but to others as well.

Yours sincerely,  
John H. Sietsema

*The Standard Bearer  
makes a thoughtful gift  
for many occasions.*





## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

### Letter to Timothy

April 15, 1983

Dear Timothy,

In past letters we have talked at some length about what precisely constitutes a "Christ-centered" sermon. I want to give some particular illustrations of this in this letter, so that you may see how these ideas we have discussed can be put into practice.

As you know, there are many different kinds of material in Scripture. There are not only differences between the Old and New Testaments, but there are also differences between various kinds of material. There are historical books, poetical books (not only the Psalms, but also parts of the historical books and prophetic books), prophecies, epistolary books, and what is sometimes called wisdom books (which would include especially Proverbs and Ecclesiastes). Each kind of book presents a somewhat different problem, although all are certainly a part of that one Scripture which contains the written record of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

I cannot, of course, give detailed examples of all these different types of books, nor many examples from each type; but some illustrations would perhaps be of some assistance to you.

It is, I think—if I may speak from my own experience—sometimes difficult to preach on historical material and still have a Christ-centered sermon. But if one remembers that the history of Scripture can be treated from two different viewpoints, our understanding of how this is possible will also be clearer. We all know that history, especially that of the Old Testament, can be treated either from a "redemptive-historical" viewpoint or from an "exemplary-historical" viewpoint. If one treats an historical passage from the viewpoint of redemptive history, then one emphasizes how history in the Old Testament was part of the dispensation of types or shadows which pointed ahead to the realities of salvation in Christ. God gave His people types and pictures of Christ and the great work of salvation in the history which that people lived and experienced. The Bible makes this very clear. The ram which was caught in the thicket when Abraham offered up his son Isaac was a picture of

Christ, the Substitute for His people. The land of Egypt where Israel served as slaves of Pharaoh was a picture of the bondage of sin in which we all are held. Paul tells us in I Corinthians 10 that the Rock from which the water flowed in the wilderness was Christ. The land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, which Israel inherited was a picture of heaven. Israel's conquest of Canaan by the power of God (remember how we sing: "They gained not the land by the edge of the sword. . .") was a picture of the victory over all our enemies which God gives to us by faith in Christ. And so we could go on.

But one can also use the "exemplary-historical" method of treating Old Testament history. Paul gives us the ground for doing this in I Corinthians 10:6, 11: "Now these things were our examples. . . . Now all these things happened unto them for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." When we treat Old Testament history from this viewpoint, then we stress the fact in our sermons that the life and experiences of the people of God in the Old Testament were given to them and recorded in Scripture that we might learn from them how to walk as the people of God in the midst of the world. The Scriptures not only show us our walk, but illustrate that copiously from countless examples of the saints. And these examples are indeed a rich source of instruction for us.

Any and every part of the Old Testament can be treated either from the redemptive-historical viewpoint or from the exemplary-historical viewpoint. The former is true because the whole Old Testament is the progressive development of the types and shadows which pointed ahead to Christ. Even if one does not always find specific *types* in the technical sense of that word, as is the case, e.g., of Joseph, yet all the history of the Old Testament belongs to that progressive development; and preaching from the redemptive-historical viewpoint requires that one find the particular place which any event occupies in that development. But all of the Old Testament is also given for our examples upon whom the end of the ages has come. And so we have these two possibilities, or even a combi-



nation of the two in our preaching.

But the point that I want to make now is that whatever approach is used, the sermon must be Christ-centered. If one treats the appropriate passages from the redemptive-historical viewpoint, then there is very little problem, for the history itself points ahead to Christ and one can hardly miss "Christ" in preaching on such material. It is, e.g., impossible to imagine how one could preach on the manna with which God fed His people in the wilderness without preaching also about Christ Who is the Bread of life (see John 6). The redemptive-historical approach, by definition, means Christ. But when one takes the exemplary-historical approach, the same must be true. Scripture holds up the life of the people of God as a life of faith—faith in the promise. It is true that there are also negative examples. When Paul, in I Corinthians 10, says that all things were written for our examples, he is referring to the unbelief which characterized a large segment of the nation. And he is telling the saints of the New Dispensation that they must not be like that. But whether positive or negative, it is a life of faith which is held up as the example for us to follow. And this means two things. It means, first of all, that that life of faith which characterized the Old Testament saints was a faith in the promise of God. And that promise is, in one word, Christ. All that they did which was pleasing in the sight of God was rooted in faith in God's promise that He would send Christ. Without this emphasis the whole point of the Old Testament is missed. But it means, in the second place, that the saints walked by faith because the power of the promise was already worked within them. No more than the saints of the New Dispensation did they have faith of themselves; then too, it was the gift of God. Already the salvation which God promised in Christ was given to them on the strength of the promise, by virtue of the certainty of the promise and because they already tasted the firstfruits of the promise—if I may put it that way. And so all their godly life was a life which they lived because the Christ Who was yet to come was the strength of their hope and calling.

But what is true of historical material is also true of what we sometimes call "wisdom" material. After all, it cannot be forgotten that the central chapter in the book of Proverbs, and therefore the key to the whole book, is chapter 8. And there is clearly stated that the wisdom of which the whole book speaks is, after all, Christ. Of Whom else can it be said, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. . ." (vss. 22ff.)? If this point is ignored in preaching on the book of Proverbs, then the book

becomes little more than a handbook of moral conduct and etiquette. Christ is always the wisdom of the whole book.

The Psalms are the same. It is true—and anyone knows that—that the Psalms arise out of historical circumstances in the life of the Psalmist. And if it is possible to determine these historical circumstances, it is also important that the minister, in preaching on the Psalms, make this clear. The Psalms have certainly been such a treasured part of the meditations of the people of God in every age because they, taken together, form a kind of spiritual biography of every saint. But the fact, nevertheless, remains that the Psalms are all, without exception, Messianic. There are sometimes efforts made to distinguish between the so-called Messianic Psalms and the Psalms which are not Messianic; but this cannot be done. Christ is singing in these Psalms—in all of them. This is so true that there are passages in the New Testament which literally state this. Just today we were discussing in school the passage in Hebrews 10:5-7: "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God." Once again it struck me that the author of this epistle literally states that Christ said these words. There are many such quotations from the Psalms in the New Testament. And when you read them, you discover that the words of the Psalm quoted by Christ really only fit in His mouth—not really and in the fullest sense of the word, in the mouth of the Old Testament Psalmist. Think for example of the first verse of Psalm 22. Who else could really say these words but Christ? This is even true of those Psalms where the Psalmist speaks of his sins—and they are many. Undoubtedly, here too, Christ is speaking—speaking of the burden of sin and guilt which He bore for His people and the agony of the wrath of God which He endured because of it. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that neither the Psalmist nor we could ever sing these Psalms if it were not for the fact that Christ sang them first of all. All this surely must be made explicit in a sermon if a sermon is truly to be Christ-centered.

The same is true of prophecy. We all know that a great deal of prophecy points directly ahead to Christ, and it is clear on the surface that it is impossible to preach on such prophecies without preaching about Christ. But this is not true of all prophecy. There are many prophecies which are directed to the historical situation in which Israel found herself and which have no specific and explicit reference to Christ. Certainly this is true, e.g.,



of the prophecy which Isaiah spoke to Hezekiah when he told Hezekiah that his life would be prolonged. (By the way, there are also prophecies which refer only to Christ without any immediate historical reference. I refer, e.g., to the prophecy made to King Ahaz in Isaiah 7:14: "Behold the Lord Himself shall give you a sign...." And there are prophecies which have both an historical and a future-prophetic reference. But this by the way). Nevertheless, even those prophecies which have only an historical reference must be treated in such a way that the sermon is Christ-centered. And this will surely be the case when it is understood that the historical

events of which the prophets spoke were historical events which belonged to (or touched upon—as in the case of the prophecies against Syria, Assyria, Babylon, etc., e.g.) the history of Israel. They must therefore be also treated as we would treat history, of which I have spoken above.

I had hoped to complete this discussion in this letter, but now see that there is still more to say which cannot be included here. And so . . . one more letter.

Fraternally, in Christ,  
H. Hanko

## IN HIS FEAR

# Should We Expand the Mission Endeavors of our Denomination

*Rev. Arie den Hartog*

Are we as a denomination faithful to the great commission of our Lord Jesus Christ to preach the gospel to all nations? What a glorious and wonderful commission that is! It is through the preaching of the gospel that the Lord is pleased to gather and defend and preserve His church in all ages and all places. It is through the preaching of the gospel that men are called from darkness into the marvellous light of everlasting salvation. Above all it is through the preaching of the gospel that the glorious praises of the Lord our God are declared throughout the earth. Surely if we are truly a Reformed church that seeks the glory of God in all things we will be greatly concerned about being faithful to the great commission.

With the above question we want to address ourselves specifically to the matter of the preaching of the gospel on the mission field. It is certainly true that the great commission, properly understood, involves all the work of the preaching of the gospel. It includes the preaching that is done from Lord's Day to Lord's Day in our established churches. It includes all the labors which the church performs to defend and preserve the truth of God. The Lord has blessed our churches with faithfulness in many aspects of the fulfillment of the great commission in our midst. We praise His name for this. We want now however to address specifically the calling that we as churches have to preach the gospel outside of our own communion to people other than the

members of our church, whether in our own country or in other lands. In order to be faithful to the great commission of the Lord we must always be diligently and zealously preaching the gospel outside of our own churches. It is through this means that the Lord adds to His church also from without such as must be saved.

Let us stand back and take a look at the efforts of our denomination. We are a small denomination. Our resources are very limited. We cannot be compared with the large denominations that are able to sponsor hundreds of missionaries. The Lord does not require this of us either. The fulfilling of the great commission is done by the church through all ages and in all places. We are surely not alone in this great task and calling. The Lord has given us a small name and place in the church world and in His kingdom. According to that place we must labor faithfully. But consider that presently our churches have only one active home mission field and one active foreign mission field. It is difficult to make valid comparisons with other denominations. Surely we as churches do many things as a denomination by the grace of God which normally are done by much larger denominations, such as support our own Seminary and our own Christian schools. Taking all of this into account however, should we not and could we not be doing much more in the area of missions? I believe we should.

We thank the Lord for His blessings upon the



work of our churches here in Singapore. This ought to be of great encouragement for our churches that the Lord would use us in such a wonderful way. Surely the Lord does not need men for the gathering of His church. The work of missions is not dependent upon the great efforts and achievements of men. The Lord sovereignly gathers His church. That He should even use us as churches we must count as a great honor and blessing. If a church does not prove faithful in the work of missions, then the Lord will raise up another. We have seen how the Lord has been pleased to use us here in Singapore. We rejoice greatly in this. But this also should spur us on to get more involved in the work of missions than we have in the history of our denomination. We must move on to greater faithfulness and devotion unto our Lord. We ought to be ready to spend and be spent for the cause of the preaching of the gospel also to others. We ought to be ready to make great sacrifices and offerings of ourselves. We ought to labor to the absolutely full extent of our resources and ability. In light of the small mission program that we have I believe that we have not yet done that.

That the need for doing mission work is urgent is obvious. The words of our Lord that the harvest is truly plenteous but the laborers are few is certainly true today. It is true that the great sign of the ages, the sign of the preaching of the gospel unto all nations, the great sign of the imminent return of our Lord, is evident as never before in the history of the world. Yet it is also true that as long as our Lord carries His church must continue faithfully to carry out His great commission. There are still places where the gospel must be preached. There are still those who are ordained unto eternal life that must be saved. Surely, if we diligently look over the world and even our own country, how many places there are where the gospel must be preached. Even in the Far East alone where we are laboring there are many areas that could be investigated. There are still places where the gospel has never been preached and people who have never before heard the gospel. The Far East alone would be a far larger field of labor than our churches could possibly serve. Let us not say that we need not do missions because all have already heard the gospel and there are no mission fields where we can send missionaries. Consider that in many places where the gospel has been preached, the gospel which has been preached is very corrupted and even false. The Lord in His wonderful providence has given to our churches the blessed and glorious Reformed Faith which we are convinced is the true gospel, the gospel of salvation by the sovereign grace and mercy of the Lord alone. Consider how few places in the world have heard such a gospel. Consider

that in many places the gospel of humanism and socialism and Arminianism, which is no gospel at all, has been preached. As apostasy increases, there are fewer and fewer churches who hold to and preach the true gospel. If the Lord in His grace has preserved the truth in our midst, is there not an ever increasing urgency that we preach this gospel, also outside of our churches to others and even unto all places where the Lord will send us? Woe unto us if we are complacent and careless in the face of this great urgency. Woe unto us if we care only about our own salvation and our own churches and will not declare the glorious gospel which the Lord has given to us unto all the world.

The Lord has also given us in recent years objective reason to look towards fields of labor outside of our own churches. In the past we have had to struggle with doctrinal heresies both within and without our denomination. We have had to spend much of our resources in doing this. The Lord in His grace has in the process of this struggle made us a strong church doctrinally and united us together upon the true Reformed Faith. Though there will never come a time when we will be able to lay down the weapons of our warfare and no longer need to be on guard against false doctrine, at least not in the history of this present world, yet when we have peace in our own midst we are able to use our resources for the preaching of the gospel on the mission field. Furthermore, we can take advantage of our unity and doctrinal strength to do the work of missions. We ought to be earnestly desirous to communicate all that the Lord has given to us also to others. Furthermore, for the first time in the history of our denomination we have now enough ministers to fill all of our own pulpits. This is a wonderful blessing of the Lord. But this ought not to be an occasion for us to rest at ease and call and support no more preachers of the gospel. In the past we were hampered in our ability to send out missionaries because of the shortage of ordained men. Now for the first time we have enough men to send out. What reason to expand significantly our mission endeavors!

There are a number of things that must be true of our churches in order to expand the work of missions in our midst. First of all, we must be a truly mission-minded church. By that I do not mean that we must neglect all of our other calling as churches and give everything so to speak to missions, as some churches foolishly do. Missions is not the only calling of the church, though it is a very important calling. We must as churches become truly zealous and earnest for the work of missions, both in our local congregations and abroad. We must make the work of missions the great burden of our prayers continually. We must have a great



desire in our midst that others besides our own numbers come to hear of the glorious and blessed gospel of salvation. As imitators of our Lord Jesus Christ we must be filled with compassion for the lost souls of men, willing even to lay down our very lives that others might hear the gospel and be saved. We must learn as members of the church to communicate the gospel to others in a living and personal manner. Missions is the work of the whole church of Jesus Christ, and not just of a few ministers or missionaries. As members of the church we need to get directly involved in the work of missions. As Reformed churches we have done well in emphasizing the centrality of the official preaching of the gospel by ordained men in all the work of the church. I would not want to detract from that one iota. But have we done as well in emphasizing the great importance of the involvement of the members of the church in the office of all believers in the work of missions? We need members who will get themselves involved in starting Bible studies and supporting the preaching of the Word in places other than our own church. We need members of the church who are willing to make large sacrifices, such as perhaps leaving their own congregations to start new churches, and maybe even moving to other areas of the country to start new churches. I do not believe that we will ever become a truly mission-minded church until the members of our denomination see their calling. We need the members of our churches to have a profound appreciation for the Reformed Faith which the Lord has given to us and to give a zealous testimony of the Reformed Faith in their lives and with their mouths to their neighbors. We need members of the church who will invite relatives, friends, and neighbors to come to church with them. We must understand that very few people will come to our churches by means of mere newspaper and radio advertisements. They need to be invited personally. Those who come to mission stations need to be supported and encouraged by our own members. We are expecting too much of people when we think that even before they come under the strong conviction of the Reformed Faith through the hearing of the preaching and instruction, they will make the necessary sacrifices and suffer persecution and reproach from the world without the support of strong and zealous members of our churches. We need Priscillas and Aquilas for the mission field, unordained people that will devote large amounts of time and energy to supporting the work of missions in a given place. I believe that often our mission fields have struggled so hard because the minister or missionary on the field is expected to labor so much alone.

In order to expand significantly the work of mis-

sions in our denomination we need a continual supply of ordained ministers. We believe that the preaching of the Word is central in all the work of the church. For this we need ministers. We must by no means become slack in calling and encouraging young men from our churches to give themselves to the full-time ministry of the gospel of Christ Jesus. We must continue to pray for reapers in the Lord's harvest.

The work of missions is also a very expensive work. If we are to expand our missions we must be ready also to give sacrificially for this cause. Surely the Lord has given to us great abundance so that we have great potential to give. We were especially struck by the great wealth of Americans when we travelled around on our recent furlough. How much more we as Americans have than most of the rest of the world. Also the members of our churches do not lag behind other Americans in the beautiful cars, palatial homes, large and prosperous farms that they have. The Lord has given us all these things. If we would truly give sacrificially for the cause of missions, being ready even to forego some of our luxuries, we could come up with very large sums of money for the work of the preaching of the gospel. Surely our earnest desire to publish the glorious praises of our God and our great desire for the salvation of men ought to make us to be ready even to sell all that we have if necessary. I am not suggesting that it is necessary for us all to sell all that we have, but only that it is necessary for us all to make large sacrifices for the Lord's sake.

In order to expand the work of missions we need also to search more actively for new mission fields. Much of the burden of doing this falls upon our mission committees. I would not suggest that the brethren on these committees are not laboring hard. From direct experience I know better than that. Perhaps we need to expand our mission committees to do the necessary work of investigating fields. We need to do much more in terms of going to fields and preaching on fields and doing preliminary investigatory work. There are cases in which we as a church will receive a Macedonian Call to come to a certain field. It is questionable however whether that is the only basis to work in a given field and to investigate a certain field. Surely the apostle Paul did not remain in Antioch. He went out on missionary journeys preaching the Word where the Lord directed and establishing churches where people were gathered around that preaching of the Word. Our labors in Singapore did not begin with a Macedonian Call, unless we want very much to stretch the idea of a Macedonian Call. In reality our labors in Singapore started simply through two of our ministers first coming to Singapore and preaching. Though it was not planned or expected,



by the providence of the Lord there were those who came to hear the preaching, and over the process of time showed more and more appreciation for that preaching through contact with our churches. Then our churches convinced them of the need and benefit of having a missionary here and they were persuaded to call a missionary of our churches. I believe we need to do much more in investigating fields and looking for fields of labor. How quickly a year goes by and no recommendations for a new field come to our Synod and we cannot move on in the work of missions. Years go by without any new

developments. Surely we believe that the progress of the work of missions is under the sovereign control and direction of the Lord. This does not however preclude the necessity of our actively searching for mission fields and thereby searching His will.

May the Lord bless our churches that we may be more faithful in our calling, for the glory of His name and the increase of His church and the salvation of those ordained to eternal life.

## ***TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE***

# **God's Providence and Sin (4)**

*Rev. H. Veldman*

We concluded our last article by calling attention to the seemingly irreconcilable conflict between the providence of God and sin, between the holiness and the righteousness of God. That the Lord is absolutely sovereign and that therefore the reality of sin must be understood as having been willed by the alone sovereign God is surely Scriptural. Of this there cannot possibly be any doubt. His counsel, we read in Isaiah 46:10, shall stand and the Lord will do all His good pleasure. The crucifixion of our Lord, that heinous deed by wicked hand, occurred by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, according to Acts 2:23. On the other hand, however, God is holy and righteous and sin must be viewed as wholly foreign to the Lord. Passages such as Job 34:10 and Habakkuk 1:13 speak for themselves. God is light and there is no darkness in Him. And, our God is surely a consuming fire. And so the question is surely pertinent: how is it to be harmonized with our God, Who never beholds iniquity, that sin is nevertheless never to be explained as independent of Jehovah, Who has formed the wicked, mind you, the wicked, unto the day of evil? Indeed, we must surely say something about this. And we can say something about it. To be sure, we cannot fathom this mystery, understand it intellectually. And neither do we propose to offer such an explanation. But we can say something about it. And this we can do because Scripture leads us in this. And we must take God at His Word, and this refers to all of His Word.

In close connection with the question how God's

providence and sin must be understood in relation to one another is this question: what is freedom? We must never confuse freedom as held before us in the Word of God with moral sovereignty, that we control and determine our eternal destiny. This is the error of the Pelagian and also of the Arminian. Pelagianism denies the organic connection between Adam and the human race. It is individualistic. Whereas the Reformed truth emphasizes that we act as we act because of what we are, the Pelagian would have us believe that we are and become what we will to be. The sinner is inherently good and becomes evil because he wills and chooses it. Of course, he stands here before the insoluble mystery (insoluble as far as he is concerned) that the whole human race is evil and that only a few are saved. If it be true that every man is inherently good and is able to choose the good as well as the evil, why is it that more do not choose the good and why is it that more are not saved? The Pelagian simply explains the responsibility of man as his free will. When speaking of the sinner's free will, he understands it to mean that man must be free to choose between good and evil in the sense that he is able to choose either of the two. To deny this, according to the Pelagian, implies that man's responsibility is denied. He would maintain that the Lord cannot hold the sinner responsible for his wickedness unless that sinner be able to choose the good which he rejects. Now we must certainly maintain that man always chooses between good and evil, and that he is also free in that choice. He



never chooses sin because he is forced to do so; the sinner always sins freely. This, however, does not imply that that sinner is able to choose the good as well as the evil. Today it is no longer understood that one can be responsible for his action without being able to choose the good. If, we understand, the responsibility of the sinner must mean that he is able to choose both, the good and the evil, then there is simply no responsibility, inasmuch as the Scriptures plainly teach that it is impossible for him to choose the good.

This Pelagian conception of man's freedom, that he is able to choose both, the good and the evil, is surely impossible. How impossible this view is in the light of Scripture! The fact remains that, according to the Word of God, not man determines his course of action, but the Lord. This is a Scriptural truth so clearly stated in the Word of God as to tolerate no contradiction. We are born dead in sins and in trespasses, and the flesh cannot desire the things which are of the Spirit. Clearly and emphatically the apostle writes in Romans 8:6-8: "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." We understand, of course, that the carnal mind here refers to the natural man. I do not determine the action of my heart, but my heart determines all my action. Throughout Scripture we have the repeated refutation of all Pelagianism. The Pelagian claims that he is and becomes what he wills to be. The Scriptures, however, teach that a corrupt tree brings forth corrupt fruit. The tree does not become corrupt because of its fruit, but the fruit is corrupt because of the tree. The fruit does not determine the tree, but the tree determines the fruit. An apple tree, for example, does not become an apple tree because of the apples, but the apples appear because it is an apple tree. Indeed, throughout the Word of God we have the repeated refutation of all Pelagianism. Every thought and every desire, every emotion of the soul, every action of the will is controlled and directed by God so that there is no action within me which is independent of the Lord. This is surely taught everywhere in the Word of God. Are not all the hairs of our head counted, and does not the Lord clothe every lily of the field? It is particularly in the book of Proverbs that we have this truth stated clearly, although the apostle writes emphatically in the ninth chapter of his epistle to the Romans that God is the Potter and that man is the clay. We read in Proverbs 16:1: "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." When the man of God speaks here of the preparations of the heart he refers to the

deliberations which man has before his consciousness and from which he must choose. And notice that the answer of the tongue, his decisive choice, is from the Lord. The Lord alone determines our course of action. The same thought is expressed in verse 9 where we read: "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps." Or, as we read in Proverbs 21:1: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as rivers of water. He turneth it whithersoever He will." We must bear in mind here the power of an eastern monarch as he held absolute sway over the life and death of his subjects. Note that his heart, the deepest fountain of his spiritual life is controlled by the Lord to do only what and as He wills. And this same truth is also held before us in chapter 19:21: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." To this we may add that throughout the Word of God the same truth is always held before us. Permit me again to quote Isaiah 46:10: "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." Does not Isaiah, in chapter 45, speak of Cyrus as His anointed, His servant, and does he not mention him centuries before the appearance of this heathen, idolatrous Persian monarch upon the stage of history, declaring in verse 4: "For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou has not known Me"? Let the critics of infallible inspiration explain this phenomenon! Indeed, all of Scripture condemns the proud and vain heresy of Pelagianism. I say: the proud heresy of Pelagianism. Always man seeks to maintain himself. Always he will claim to be able to be what he wills to be. Always he will deny that he can never of himself seek the kingdom of God and of heaven and the things that are above! And, yet, Pelagianism is everywhere condemned in Holy Writ. Are we not conceived and born dead in sins and in trespasses? How, I ask you, can this dead sinner ever choose the things of God and of His kingdom, the kingdom of heaven? Can the deaf hear because he wills to hear? Can the blind see because he wills to see? Can the dead live because he chooses to live? Now we can understand the Word of God as recorded in John 14:17: "Even the Spirit of truth; Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Indeed, the world cannot receive Him. We do not read that they not receive Him, however true this may be. Of course, the wicked world does not receive Him. They always reject Him. But we read here in this Word of God that they cannot receive Him. To receive Him is for them an impossibility.



Why? The Pelagian maintains that they can receive Him and do not possess Him because they refuse to receive Him. And the Arminian concurs. The world cannot receive Him because they see Him not and know Him not. The world does not know Him, has never experienced Him. So, to receive Him one must first be received of Him, experience Him as dwelling in his heart. He must first enter into our hearts.

That true freedom is not to be understood in the Pelagian and Arminian sense of the word is therefore abundantly clear from the Word of God. To this, however, we may add the following. God is free in the absolute sense of the word. Will anyone attempt to refute this? He cannot do evil. Wickedness is surely far from Him. Need we quote Scripture in support of this? We read in Habakkuk 1:13: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." That the Lord cannot look on iniquity does not mean that He does not see it, is not aware of it. But it does mean that He cannot look upon it in the sense that it in any sense appeals to Him. The apostle John writes in the first chapter of his first epistle that God is light and that in Him is no darkness at all. And to this he adds in verse 6: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness we lie, and do not the truth." And in James 1:13 we read: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He

any man." Indeed, the Lord is far from evil. Even as a moth is immediately consumed when contacting the light, so the Lord lives eternally in the light, is Himself light, and no sin or sinner can live or stand before Him. And, yet, God is free in the absolute sense of the word. This surely cannot mean that the Lord is able to choose the evil as well as the good. That He is free means that He unhindered and unmolested wills and maintains Himself. And we must bear in mind that the Lord's freedom surely determines our freedom. This is not freedom that I can do whatever I please. It is surely not the desire of the bird to be in the water, as well as in the air or of the fish to be in the air as well as in the water. And, spiritually, it is surely not the desire of the reborn child of God to be Lord himself. This was Adam's sin, to be equal with God, and the result was that he plunged himself and all mankind into sin and became the object of the curse of God. The sinner has the power to choose both, the evil and also the good? Indeed, the child of God looks forward to the day when he shall inherit everlasting life and glory. Why? Because in that day he will no longer be able to do evil and choose iniquity. How he longs to be delivered! How in this life he is plagued by sin and evil, that he cannot perform the good he wills and that he commits the evil he hates. Then, in everlasting glory he will be free, perfectly free. Free also to do evil? No! Then sin will have become for him everlastingly impossible.

## ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

# Our Only Comfort?

Several months ago there was a very sad "accident" in Grand Rapids. Three young men, present or past students of Calvin College, were killed in an auto accident. The lives of three young men were suddenly snuffed out. Of course, such an "accident" strongly affects families, friends, and even a whole community.

Since two of these young men had Canadian roots and were well-known there, the *Calvinist Contact* contained an account of the accident (without all of the details presented in the *Grand Rapids' Press*) in its February 4, 1983 issue. I am not con-

cerned with that report, but rather with a response to it — and an answer by the editor of that paper. A reader wrote:

When I pulled my C.C. out of our mailbox this week, the top headline immediately jumped out at me: "Cruel accident takes lives of three young men." It disturbed me because I would expect to find that kind of a line in the *Star* or the *Sun*, but certainly not in C.C.

In the obituary column I found the same event described this way: Our heavenly Father, all wise and all merciful, called to His eternal home....



Though death is alien to us, though the passing of promising young men grips us deeply, our grief should not be for those young men, but for their loved ones who grieve. How is it possible to refer to the deeds of our wise and merciful God as a cruel accident?...

The editor gives answer in a brief note under the heading: "God is not the author of accidents":

Most of the time we do not reply to letters. But there are times that an editor should reply to a letter. This is such a time, in my opinion, because not to answer would leave some misunderstanding and allow a view of death and suffering to continue in our circles that is not helpful.

The title "Cruel accident takes lives of three young men" was not a carelessly tossed off headline nor are we trying to be sensationalistic. The news struck us hard, as it did others, I am sure. The accident seemed so cruel. Quite often in a similar accident several will survive, but not this time. All three young men were killed.

We took care not to call the accident a tragedy. There is no room for tragedy in the life of Christians. It was a short news item that we felt should be run because it is our task to inform the Reformed community. We could have run it a week earlier. But because we did not want to treat it like a "hot" item, we kept it over for a week. On reflection, we should perhaps have given it a less prominent place.

But my main concern is with the idea in the letter of ... that the accident can somehow be tied in with the deeds of our God. Not for a moment should we think that God caused that accident. He did not want those three young men to die. In His infinite mercy He can turn evil to our profit, call the young men to Him in His eternal home and comfort the parents and the community. But the accident is and remains a cruel accident which God does not wish to happen to anyone. It is our collective and individual sinfulness that has brought suffering into this world. Our loving God did not cause it.

That God allows such an accident to happen is a mystery before which we, like Job, should bow in reverence.

My concern is the statement of the editor, "In my opinion, ... not to answer would leave some misunderstanding and allow a view of death and suffering to continue in our circles that is not helpful." And again he shows what he has in mind by stating, "Not for a moment should we think that God caused that accident. He did not want those three young men to die.... The accident is and remains a cruel accident which God does not wish to happen to anyone.... Our loving God did not cause it."

Some troubling questions arise when a "Calvinist" editor makes the above claims. Who is in control of events—"accidents" or otherwise?

What does the Sovereignty of God mean to the Reformed Christian? Can Sovereignty mean that God "permits" certain things to happen that He does not really "cause" or even "wish to happen"? What does such a view do to the truth of God's providence? Does He, or does He not, govern all things that take place?

What does this view do for the "comfort" of a Christian; If "fate" or "chance" or even man's sinfulness controls events, what a discouragement life itself would become! What must I think of my God—Who presumably does not want these things to happen, yet permits them to be? One can resort to a claim of "mystery," but the fact is that this presents not mystery but contradiction.

Trouble is, the editor who would remove "a view of death and suffering ... in our circles that is not helpful," is seeking to remove a view that is Reformed, confessional, and Scriptural. Reformed writers make clear that theirs is not the view which the editor of C.C. proposes. Calvin writes extensively on providence in his *Institutes*. A study of this in his book is instructive. I quote just a small portion:

If any one falls into the hands of robbers, or meets with wild beasts; if by a sudden storm he is shipwrecked on the ocean; if he is killed by the fall of a house or a tree; if another, wandering through deserts, finds relief for his penury, or, after having been tossed about by the waves, reaches the port, and escapes, as it were, but a hair's-breadth from death, —carnal reason will ascribe all these occurrences, both prosperous and adverse, to fortune. But whoever has been taught from the mouth of Christ, that the hairs of his head are all numbered, will seek further for a cause, and conclude that all events are governed by the secret counsel of God. And respecting things inanimate, it must be admitted, that, though they are all naturally endued with their peculiar properties, yet they exert not their power, any further than as they are directed by the present hand of God. They are, therefore, no other than instruments into which God infuses as much efficacy as He pleases, bending and turning them to any actions, according to His will.

Later Calvin writes, in connection with a quote from Augustine:

He [Augustine] certainly does not suppose God to remain an idle spectator, determining to permit anything; there is an intervention of actual volition, if I may be allowed the expression, which otherwise could never be considered as a cause.

L. Berkhof, in his *Systematic Theology*, insists on the same thing in describing the idea of "government" within the concept of providence (cf. p. 176).

But the editor of the C.C. will have to correct our Reformed confessions too. We read, for instance, in



the first Lord's Day of the Heidelberg Catechism, that Jesus "so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation...." Later, in Lord's Day 10, we read concerning providence that it is "the almighty and everywhere present power of God; whereby, as it were by His hand, He upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures; so that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, *not by chance, but by His fatherly hand.*"

The Netherlands Confession states also in Article 13,

We believe that the same God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, but that He *rules and governs* them according to His holy will, so that nothing happens in this world *without His appointment....* This doctrine affords us unspeakable consolation, since we are taught thereby that *nothing can befall us by chance*, but by the *direction* of our most gracious and heavenly Father; Who watches over us with a paternal care, keeping all creatures so under His power, that not a hair of our head (for they are all numbered) nor a sparrow, can fall to the ground, without the will of our Father....

But what does Scripture itself teach? Did God simply "permit" it to rain on the earth in the days of Noah, and did God not want the destruction of

the wicked then? (see Gen. 7:4). Did God simply "permit" but not desire, the destruction of Sodom (see Gen. 18:17)? Did God permit Joseph to be sold into Egypt, or did He sovereignly direct that (Gen. 50:20)? Did not God say to David, after his sin with Bathsheba, "Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house...." (II Sam. 12:11)? And did not Shimei curse fleeing David because God said to him, "Curse David" (II Sam. 16:10)? Or there is the oft-quoted words of Christ, found in Matthew 10:29-30, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father (by "permission" or by "sovereign will"?). But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Obviously, the editor of C.C. has a lot of correcting to do of views he considers "not helpful." For me, I prefer and cling to the old Scriptural, Reformed, confessional truth that God is Sovereign—and in His sovereignty He controls and governs all things, even cars that are involved in "accidents." Though through tears the child of God can confess, not that "My God didn't really want it to happen," but that "My God so governs all things that even my light affliction worketh for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17). Though I can not always understand, I acknowledge His wisdom in directing all things which befall me too. Any other statement destroys the Christian's comfort.

## The Gospel according to ?

Many enjoy reading cartoons and comics. Some are atrocious, some are very blasphemous and surely harmful spiritually. Yet some strike close to home and emphasize in simple form a very important point. The Grand Rapids' Press, March 29, 1983, had one such editorial cartoon. It pictured the congregation being welcomed by the pastor at the church door. On the bulletin board outside of the church were listed the topics for the day: 10 a.m. - "Nuclear Arms Workshop"; 11 a.m. - "Examining the National Defense"; Noon - "Stop the Godless

Commies for Jesus"; 1 p.m. - "El Salvador Seminar"; 2 p.m. - "Understanding Nuclear Holocaust"; 3 p.m. "Getting Tough With Moscow." In the corner, a little character declares: "Now we'll all sing, 'Onward Christian Military Advisers.'" The point was well-made. Paul's confession, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2) seems to be hardly the position of most churches today.



## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

### A Pilgrim's Perspective (IV)

Rev. R. Flikkema

Concerning these articles that I have been writing in this rubric there seems to be a bit of clarification necessary. People have asked me, for example, "Are your parents really dead?" or "Who is this friend of yours that had that terminal illness?" I am thankful to inform the reader that *my* parents are very much alive! But the parents of a man named "Pilgrim Watcher" are not, and possibly it is true in the reader's life that your parents are not either.

You see, these articles and the events or persons that they describe, though written by the undersigned, are not intended to present the events that have happened in *my* life *as such*; nor are they intended to describe persons that *I* know or have met *as such*. Some are. But some are not. Rather, they are the events that have happened and the persons that have been met by Pilgrim Watcher in whom the reader may to a greater or lesser extent see himself. Hopefully we all, including myself, will see ourselves at least somewhat reflected in Pilgrim Watcher and by that be better equipped to walk with him as a pilgrim and with him watch for the signs of our Lord's coming.

Ny name is Pilgrim Watcher. As I wrote earlier, my parents gave me that name when I was born. I sometimes think about my early childhood. My parents lived on a farm. There is something nice about a farmer's life, that is, a Christian farmer's life. A Christian farmer lives close to his God. He knows that he is entirely dependent upon God for all things—for rain and sunshine to grow his crops. Not that a Christian factory worker is not dependent on his God. I do not mean to imply that. Certainly a Christian factory worker is also dependent on his God. But what I mean is that a Christian farmer is constantly reminded by the very nature of his occupation just how much he is dependent on his God. There is another thing that is nice about a Christian farmer's life—the serenity and peace that he experiences! And, in that connection, the fact that he can go off by himself in the field and be alone with his God, apart from the blatant sinfulness and foolish talking and corruption of the wicked.

I miss that! I did not take over the farm when my father died but moved to the city. I took up my labors working in a factory, which, as I already in-

dicated, is certainly not the same as that of a farmer's life. Not that I am complaining, you understand. I am certainly thankful that I have the work that I do. God has been good to me in providing this means to take care of the needs of my family. But it is not quite the same.

I work from seven o'clock in the morning until about three or four in the afternoon. The factory gives me about a half-hour to eat my lunch. But from the moment that I walk into the factory, I feel like I am in another world: a world that militates against what I consider my life as a pilgrim and a stranger to be. Gone is the peace and serenity! It is replaced by the incessant roar of motors and clanging of machines. I say "Good morning" to the men with whom I work. I wonder about that expression "good morning." Yes, the morning is good. Every morning that God gives is a good morning. But when I say to my fellow workers, "Good morning," do they really understand what I mean by that? That it is a good morning because the God of my salvation made it such, and that I experience the fact that it is a good morning by consciously relying upon the goodness of God to keep me and guide me through the morning? The answer is clear to me. They do not! They do not mean the same thing about that expression that I do. And I wonder too about that expression as to the intent behind it. If my intent behind that expression is merely formal then maybe it is not so bad. But if my intent is to wish them a *good* morning, then it is wrong. How can I wish something upon the wicked that they can not and do not experience?

And it is obvious that they do not experience the goodness of God in their hearts. Yes, they are given good things by God. Not in His grace, you understand. There is no grace of God for the wicked. Only God's wrath. But they are given good things, nevertheless. However, they who are given good things by God, are not thankful for them. They complain! They are always grumbling and complaining about this or that or the next thing. Their wages are not high enough, or the working conditions are not good enough. The hours are too short or the hours are too long. They do not obey the



Word of God when it says in Ephesians 5:20, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." And too, they do not use the good things that God gives them to the honor and glory of God. They hold those things under in unrighteousness. They consider the things that God gives them to be their own. Instead of singing, "All that I am I owe to thee," they live by the motto, "All that I am I owe to me." They squander the things that they are given. They squander their paycheck on gambling and alcohol and all kinds of other foolish things. They squander their time and talents by not using their time and talents to the best of their ability. They are thieves! Robbers they are of the good things that God has given to them. God says also in Ephesians 5, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time because the days are evil." But they do not do that. They are fools. Fools who say in their heart there is no God. A wise man never says that. A wise man who really experiences the goodness of God in his heart always acknowledges from his heart that God is and that from the hand of God all good things flow.

This bothers me. I weary of all this grumbling and complaining, this squandering of time, this mockery of the God of all glory and goodness. Sometimes I am more weary at the end of the day from observing all of this than I am from working on the assembly line. And it is especially this bold mockery of God that wearies me. Man is called to do one thing in life, namely, live his life to the honor and glory of God. He is to reflect that in every facet of his life, certainly in his speech. The Bible says also in Ephesians 5, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither *filthiness*, nor *foolish talking*, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks." But filthy and foolish is their language. It makes me cringe to listen to that day in and day out. It goes contrary to the very depths of my being and existence.

And where do I go to escape all of this? I really can not escape. Even at lunch hour when I try to separate myself from all this, I am confronted with it. I try to find some isolated part of the factory to eat my lunch: some place where I can pray quietly and meditate upon spiritual things. But such places are almost nonexistent, and I sometimes long for the open fields that my father and I used to walk. Always I am within hearing of their foolish talking. And they who know that I do not like it, seem to talk even in such a way that I do hear it. Yes, I have told them on many occasions that their talking is wrong. That I feel was simply my duty before the

face of God to tell them this. But it seemed to have no positive effect on them. And when I pray before my meal or read a portion of the Bible, the negative effect that my words had on them really becomes evident, for they look at me as though I am strange.

Yes, I am strange, am I not? That thought strikes home. I am different from all the rest. Not by nature of course. By nature I am no different than they are. By nature I too am not thankful. I too complain and grumble. And what is true of me by nature, I too see so much of in my life. Sometimes I do complain and grumble, and my attitude concerning the good things that God has given me is not at all as it should be. I am ashamed of myself! I pray for forgiveness and grace. Forgiveness for all the many sins and weaknesses that are such a part of my life. Grace to serve and love my God and walk as the child of light that God has made me according to the riches of His grace. I am reminded of the Word of God, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love"; and, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

That is my calling. I am light! By nature darkness, but by grace and through Jesus Christ, light! That makes me different from all the rest. Then in that light I must walk. I must walk as a pilgrim. A pilgrim is a person who has no abiding place here. He walks in the midst of a world which is a dry and thirsty land in which no water is. He can find no place in the midst of the world, as I could find no place in the midst of the factory, where he can be in the absolute sense of the word separated from this wicked world. Even if he finds such a place, he still carries with him his own sinful flesh. But he is a pilgrim nevertheless. As a pilgrim he walks. As a stranger he walks! He is not a part of this world. He is in it, but not of it, as God says, "Be not ye therefore partakers with them." Rather, he is a part of the blessed fellowship and friendship of the light of the ever blessed God.

This comforts me. Yes, I am strange, but if I may put it that way, *comfortingly* strange, for God has graciously made me that. He has fashioned me unto Himself. His grace and love He makes me share. And that is comfort. With that comfort I labor in my everyday life. It strengthens me to persevere, knowing that when the day comes to an end I can go home. And even more, when my life comes to an end I can really go home to heaven where my home is, to walk as a child of light forever.

*Read and Study  
The Standard Bearer*



## GUEST ARTICLE

# God's Sovereign Love For His People

*Rev. Steven R. Houck*

"God is love." When properly understood, these words of the apostle John are of great comfort to the people of God. For that God is love means that God is the God of our salvation. John tells us, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 Jn. 4:9). God is love in and of Himself. His very essence is love. But that great love He has also shown to us. God manifested His love to us by sending Christ to die for us in order that we might have eternal life. It is in His love that God saves us through Christ. In fact, we can even say that it is the love of God that saves us—saves us just as much as does the grace of God. For God's sovereign love is the source and cause of all that belongs to our salvation. Without that love, there could be no salvation.

How sad, therefore, that this love of God is so trampled under foot today. For man, in his quest to make himself King, has so gutted the true meaning of God's love that he has made it nothing more than a weak, impotent emotion that can not even accomplish what it wishes. For they tell us that God loves everyone. We hear this, not only from those who have historically been Arminian, but even from many who call themselves Reformed. To say that God does not love everyone is to incur the wrath of just about everyone.

But to say that God loves all is to make the love of God ineffectual and vain. For then God's love is so weak that it can not even save its objects. God loves all, but not all are saved. In fact, some who are loved by God are even now in the everlasting torment of hell. What kind of love is that? How can that possibly be the love of God? If I love my son, I do all in my power to keep him from harm and danger. Surely if the Sovereign God loves someone, He not only wills to save him, but He is able to and He does save him. The love of God is a sovereign love that always accomplishes what it wants, even over against the rebellious objections of wicked men. If God loves you, then God saves you.

For the Scriptures teach us that there is only one love of God and that love is always a saving, redemptive love. God saves His people both in the old dispensation and in the new, always because He loves us. "The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deut. 7:7 & 8). The sovereign cause of Israel's redemption was God's love for them. In Hosea 11:1 we find that same connection between love and redemption. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt." God loved His son, and because of that love, He called him out of the bondage of Egypt. In fact, the love of God for His people is so strong that He saves us even at the expense of others. He says, "Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life" (Isa. 43:4). God's love for us is of such a nature that it will destroy others (Egypt, Ethiopia, Seba-Isa. 43:3) in order that it might deliver us. For God's love does not merely wish for our salvation; it actually accomplishes our salvation.

Thus we can go all the way back to our eternal election and find behind that blessed decree of God, His everlasting love for us. We were chosen to salvation because God loved us. If we read Ephesians 1:5 the way many would have us, then we have there a direct statement to that effect. We read, "In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." God predestinated us unto the adoption of children in the sphere of His great love for us. Election is the choice of love. The same idea is found in Romans 8:29: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did pre-



destinate to be conformed to the image of His Son...." Here the word "foreknow" has in it the idea of love (see Amos 3:2). Those whom God foreknew in love He also predestinated unto salvation in Christ. God's love always wants our salvation and therefore it determines to bring us to that salvation.

God's love, however, does much more than simply will our salvation. That love sees to it that we are actually saved. In fact the apostle Paul makes it clear that God's love for us is the cause of our regeneration. He says, "But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. 2:4 & 5). We by nature are dead in sin. We have no spiritual life whatsoever. But God quickens us; He makes us alive. And He does that, according to the apostle, on account of His great love with which He loved us. Just as surely as we are chosen in the sphere of God's love, so too that love is the cause of our spiritual birth into the kingdom and family of God. The apostle John confirms this by telling us that we are sons of God on account of God's love. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God" (I Jn. 3:1). If you want to see the kind of love with which God loves us, then consider the fact that it is God's love that makes us His sons. We who by nature are the children of wrath, are called the sons of God because God loves us and out of that love makes us His children.

That is a very powerful and wonderful love—not something weak and ineffectual; always wishing but never able to bring it to pass. It is a sovereign love that saves its objects. It is the cause of all our salvation from election to our final glorification. In the words of the apostle, "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37). The God Who chose us and regenerated us continues to work within us until finally He has brought us to our eternal glory. Then we shall be more than conquerors in a most blessed and perfect way. And all because He loved us. No wonder we read in II Thessalonians 2:16 & 17, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts...." For the love of God, the sovereign saving love of God, is surely a very comforting love and a love that gives us good hope.

The sovereign character of God's love is demonstrated even more when we consider the relationship of that to Christ and the cross. After all, if love is the sovereign cause of our salvation then it must be very closely connected to Christ and His death. And indeed it is. For in the first place, the

Scriptures make it clear that God loves us only and always in Christ. Thus we read, "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 1:14). God loves us always because we are united to Christ. He does not love us as we are according to the flesh. For we are sinners. But He loves us as those who, from all eternity, belong to Christ. He even loves us with the very same love with which He loves Christ. Jesus Himself teaches that in John 17: "...and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.... And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (vs. 23 & 26). The love with which God loves us is no less than the very love He showers upon His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. For we are one with Christ. We are His body. We partake of all His blessings, including God's love. There can be no love of God for anyone outside of Christ. Such a thing is utterly impossible. For love is the bond of perfectness. Unless God sees you, from all eternity, as righteous in Christ He has no love for you.

That idea is confirmed by the fact that the love of God can be found only at the cross. Even the everlasting love of God that elected us unto salvation, is a love that is founded upon the cross. For it is at the cross that Christ shed His blood for the remission of our sins. It is only in the cross that we are lovable. Thus we often find the idea of love and the cross together in the Scriptures. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). The cross is the grand display of God's great love for us. It tells us more about the love of God than does anything else. Jesus says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13). And that is exactly what God did. In Christ He laid down His life for us. That is the greatest love. There is no love anywhere that can match what God has done for us. John says, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (Jn. 4:10).

All this can only mean that God's love is a sovereign love that is limited to God's elect people only. For the scope of God's love can be no greater than the scope of the cross. If the cross is the great display of God's love, then only those who are comprehended in the death of Christ have anything of the love of God. The Scriptures teach us that Christ died only for His people (Eph. 5:25, Jn. 10:11). Therefore we must conclude that God loves only His people. All others have no part in the cross and the righteousness of Jesus Christ and therefore have nothing of God's love. Thus we read, "The



Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul hateth" (Ps. 11:5).

No, God's love is not weak. It is not impotent. It does not wish for what it can not have. It is sovereign, all-powerful, and therefore particular. When God loves a man, He does not leave him in hell. But He blesses him with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. He redeems him from destruction. For God's love sent forth His only begotten Son to die on the cross that we might have life. And that pur-

pose of God's love is surely accomplished. We can make the same confident confession as the apostle when he declares, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38-39).

## Book Reviews

**THE NEW TESTAMENT STUDENT AND HIS FIELD**, John H. Skilton, Gen'l Editor; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Phillipsburg, N.J. 310 pp., \$9.95 (paper); reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

This is Volume 5 of a series of books under the same title. The general editor is Dr. John H. Skilton, professor emeritus of the New Testament department at Westminster Seminary. This is not a book by one author on one subject, but a collection of essays and articles by many different writers. Neither is it a book for general readership; it is intended for New Testament scholars and students and is in several instances highly technical in nature. Most of the articles are on a wide range of New Testament subjects—on text, archaeology, discourse analysis, tradition criticism, etc. Some of the articles go beyond the New Testament field proper.

As might be expected of a volume of this kind, the quality and value of the essays differ widely, due to the wide variety of subjects treated and even more due to the wide variety of writers.

A general impression which I received in connection with several of the essays is that there is far too much attention given (and respect paid?) to the theories and fruits of higher critics and higher criticism. This reviewer is singularly uninterested in these matters, afraid of the tendency mentioned, and of the opinion that the believing New Testament scholar can spend his time and effort on far better matters which will also be of concern and interest and profit to the church as well as to the New Testament student.

This is not to say that there are not some worthwhile essays in this volume. I found the first essay, written by Dr. Skilton himself, on "The New Testament Text Today," to be a rather sane and level-

headed approach to the so-called textual question, a question on which some have tended recently to take radical and untenable positions. J. P. Versteeg ("Old Testament Citations In The Gospel According to Matthew"), Thomas L. Wilkinson ("The Man Of Lawlessness in II Thessalonians"), and Robert H. Countess ("Thank God For The Genitive!") also contribute articles which drew my interest.

**HOW TO HANDLE TROUBLE**, Jay E. Adams; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Phillipsburg, N.J.; 60 pp., \$1.95 (paper); reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Dr. Adams is well-known for his theories and approach in Christian counselling, and he has written many book in this field. I have no doubt that he has made a significant contribution in this area. Neither do I doubt, however, that this area of a pastor's work has tended to be much over-emphasized, frequently at the expense of quality preaching, which is, after all, the chief and all-important work of a pastor. Perhaps Jay Adams' books have contributed to this over-emphasis by virtue of their sheer numbers.

This little book is, as its title suggests, a "how to" book. I have always been of the opinion that such "how to" books are the least helpful and the least valuable in the work of pastoral care. It is much more important for a pastor to understand Biblical and Reformed principles and methods. All kinds of manuals and "How to" books will never teach a man to be a pastor. Neither will they be of actual practical help, for the simple reason that every "case" is an individual case and must be dealt with as such.

Not of great value.



**YOU ARE INVITED . . .**  
 To the Annual Spring Lecture  
 To be held, the Lord willing, at  
 First Protestant Reformed Church, Corner Franklin and Fuller,  
 Grand Rapids, Michigan  
 The Speaker — Rev. M. Joostens  
 The Theme — "The Churches' Calling in Missions"  
 Thursday, May 5, 1983 — 8:00 P.M.  
 Plan now to attend — and bring your friends.  
 The Lecture Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches  
 The Lecture Committee

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan, expresses its sincere sympathy to its brother officebearer, Elder John Bodbyl in the passing of his father, JOHN BODBYL.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Cor. 5:1).

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.

P. Schut, Clerk

#### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 1, 1983, our parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. GERALD CNOSEN celebrated their 39th wedding anniversary.

We, their children, thank our Heavenly Father for them and the Christian love and guidance that has been ours as their children.

We pray that God will be with them in their future years together.

"He hath remembered His covenant forever, the Word which He commanded to a thousand generations" (Psalm 105:8).

their children and grandchildren

Michael and Helen Cnossen  
 Cynthia  
 Michael  
 Audra

Bret and Debra Dykstra  
 Nathan  
 Amanda  
 Alisha

Mark Cnossen

Beth Anne Cnossen

#### SCHOLARSHIP FUND APPLICATIONS

The Scholarship Fund Committee is taking applications for future teachers/ministers for the 1983-84 school year. If you are interested please contact Michael Lotterman, 1382 Su-Lew Dr., Walker, MI 49504, for application forms. An essay of 300 words or more is required on the topic 'The Calling of the Minister (or) Teacher in the face of Philosophy and Vain Deceit (Col. 2:8).' Deadline for applications to be received is June 1, 1983.

#### NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on May 11, 1983 at the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least three weeks prior to the convening of this session.

Jon Huiskens, Stated Clerk

#### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa, takes this opportunity to express their sincere sympathies to one of their fellow members, Mrs. Don Aardema, on the death of her father, MR. JAKE MANTEL.

Our prayer is that God may be her comfort in her sorrow and we rejoice with her in remembering that "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. M. Kamps, Pres.

Barb Hunter, Sec'y.

## Report of Classis West

March 15, 1983

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Church met in South Holland, Illinois on March 2 and 3,

1983. Classis welcomed Rev. T. Miersma (Edmonton), Rev. J. Smith (Edgerton), and Elder O. Gaastra (Redlands) as first-time delegates to Classis. Rev. R.



Moore led Classis in opening devotions. He spoke to the delegates on Matthew 5:1-5: "Judge not, that ye be not judged," etc.

Rev. Slopsema was president of this Classis.

The Reading Sermon Committee (Edgerton Consistory) reported that our reading sermons are being used by a Reformed church outside of our denomination and by the Protestant Reformed Fellowship of New Zealand, and asked for more, new reading sermons. Each minister in the West is to write at least one reading sermon a year, due at the September Classis. The Taped Sermon Committee (South Holland Council) suggested that the churches keep the cassettes that they receive and that Classis be billed for them. This was adopted.

The Church Visitors reported on their visit of all the churches of the West in the past year. They emphasized the work of the elders, this time. Classis thanked them (Rev. J. Kortering and Rev. G. Lanting) for their labor and gave them the mandate, "to give special attention to the discussion of the pastor's salary with the various consistories this year. Grounds: A. It appears to us that some of our congregations are balancing their budgets at the expense of the pastor's salary. B. In our judgment, some of the pastors' salaries are quite low."

Classis treated several overtures. It disapproved an overture of Hull "that Article 2 of the Domestic Mission Committee, entitled 'Constituency,' be altered so that the constituency of this synodical committee be placed once again exclusively in Classis East." It adopted the overture of Redlands "that the meeting of Synod be changed from June 1 to June 8, 1983," on the ground that the early date conflicts with the school term in Redlands and possibly other areas. Classis sent this overture on to the calling church of Synod, 1983.

Trinity, Houston overtured "that Classis West advise the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, meeting at Hope Church (G.R.), June, 1983, to instruct the calling church for the Jamaican Mission Field to call a missionary and to begin working in Jamaica as soon as possible." Classis decided that the overture was not legally before Classis, because the requirement of Article 46 of the Church Order had not been met.

Classis also treated several appeals of members against decisions of consistories. It turned back two appeals either because the deadline of Classis was not met or because the matter was not finished in the minor assembly (Article 30 of the Church Order). Classis entered into two appeals and rendered its judgment.

Classis approved the subsidy requests for 1984 of Edgerton, Edmonton, Houston, Isabel, and Pella, in the amount of \$71,051. It also approved Edmonton's request for additional subsidy in 1983 in the amount of \$2,580. Classis approved Lynden's request for release from \$1,364 in synodical assessments in 1982, according to the synodical rule that assessments may be adjusted if a congregation loses 10% or more of her families.

Results of the elections were the following:

- Classical Committee:

- 1) Rev. R. Cammenga for a three year term.
- 2) Rev. J. Smith for a two year term, to fill the unexpired term of Rev. J. Slopsema who resigned at this Classis.

- Delegates ad examina:

- 1) Primus: Rev. J. Slopsema.
- 2) Secundi: Rev. W. Bekkering for a three year term; Rev. R. Moore for a two year term, to fill the unexpired term of Rev. J. Slopsema.

- Church Visitors: Rev. J. Kortering and Rev. G. Lanting.

- Primi minister delegates to Synod: Bekkering, Engelsma, Kamps, Kortering.

- Secundi minister delegates to Synod: Cammenga, Koole, Lanting, Slopsema.

- Primi elder delegates to Synod: E. Bruinsma (Loveland), W. Buys (Edgerton), L. Regnerus (South Holland), M. Smits (South Holland).

- Secundi elder delegates to Synod: J. den Hartog (Lynden), R. Ezinga (Loveland), A. Hendriks (Edgerton), P. Meulenberg (Houston).

Classis adjourned at midnight on Thursday evening, having decided to meet next in Edgerton, Minnesota on September 7, 1983, the Lord willing.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk  
Classis West