



The Standard Bearer

***A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine***

“...Jerusalem was not willing that her children should be gathered together, but even though she was unwilling, He gathered together as many of her children as He wished: for He does not will some things and do them, and will others and do them not; but ‘He hath done all that He pleased in heaven and in earth.’” — Augustine

See “A Candid Confession of the Character
of a Conditional Covenant” — p. 221

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Meditation — <i>Herman Hoeksema</i>	
Given Over to a Reprobate Mind	219
Editorial — <i>Prof. David J. Engelsma</i>	
A Candid Confession of the Character	
of a Conditional Covenant (4)	221
A Cloud of Witnesses — <i>Prof. Herman C. Hanko</i>	
Abraham Kuyper: Dutch Calvinist (1)	224
Contribution — <i>Mr. Philip Climer</i>	
Archaeology and the Bible (2)	227
All Around Us — <i>Rev. Gise J. VanBaren</i>	229
Search the Scriptures — <i>Rev. Mitchell C. Dick</i>	
The Son of God and Sons of the Devil (II)	231
Day of Shadows — <i>Homer C. Hoeksema</i>	
The Fall of Our First Parents (cont.)	233
Contending for the Faith — <i>Rev. Bernard Woudenberg</i>	
Supralapsarianism	236
News From Our Churches — <i>Mr. Benjamin Wigger</i>	239

In This Issue ...

The Meditation, transcript of a sermon preached by Herman Hoeksema in the late 1930s, continues the exposition of Romans 1. Homosexuality, Hoeksema presents as God's act of judgment giving man over to lust and behavior "lower than the beast." Why? "If a man wants to worship the beast, why should he not become lower than the beast which he worships." "God is the doom of the sinner." Is there any hope? Only the gospel of Christ. For it is the power of God unto salvation to every believer.

Prof. Herman Hanko begins an account of the life and work of Dutch Reformed preacher, theologian, and statesman, Abraham Kuyper. Recognizing the greatness of the man, Hanko nevertheless faults Kuyper for giving up his office as preacher in order to enter politics. He suggests that that was the beginning of Kuyper's "loss of power."

Mr. Philip Climer concludes a two-part series on "Archaeology and the Bible." Addressing popular notions in evangelical America, Climer shows that it is both wicked and absurd to subject Scripture, which is God's own truth, to the criticisms of the science of archaeology, which is incapable of ever arriving at unchangeable truth.

Drawing on the helpful news service of Darrell Todd Maurina, Rev. Gise VanBaren keeps us abreast of developments in the case of Reformed Church of America minister Richard Rhem. An RCA professor laments that his church is "still doing heresy things." "Doing heresy things" with a minister who denies that Jesus is the only Savior! Comments VanBaren: "appalling." Read "All Around Us."

— DJE

Given Over to a Reprobate Mind

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

Romans 1:28

In my explanation of verses 24 and 25 I compared the way and development of sin to a smooth and slippery road upon which the sinner slides down to destruction. He is forced down by a power which the apostle described as the revelation of the wrath of God.

God is the doom of the sinner.

For this same reason we may compare the development of sin as described in these last verses of Romans 1 to an organic growth. Sin can never stop. It must continue to work until it has corrupted every relation of life. This is not due only to an inherent power of sin. But it is also due to the fact that God works in sin. God is not the power of corruption. But God is the power that is able to cause the sinner to corrupt himself unto the very end. God works in sin, causing the sinner to go down from corruption to corruption and to destroy himself.

The beginning was that man did not want to glorify and thank God. By that beginning man stands opposed to the ever present and ever living God. The ever present and ever living God stands

over against that sinner who will not glorify and thank Him, in His wrath. This wrath pushes the sinner down.

The apostle mentions three stages in this awful process. In the first place, the sinner becomes a religious fool, so that he bows down before an image made like unto corruptible man, and birds, and beasts, and creeping things. When man refuses to glorify and thank God, the first downward step is always that man becomes a religious fool, bowing down before an image. It makes no difference whether he carves this image in wood or stone, as the heathen did, or whether he carves it in his mind, as do the modernists of today.

The second stage, the apostle pictures in verses 24-27. God gave them over, the apostle says, to the stage that makes them lower than the beast. If a man wants to worship the beast, why should he not become lower than the beast which he worships? But wrath does not stop with this one sin. Sin does not stop. It goes on until it bears fruit in every relation of life, so that the third stage is that God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.

What this means is described in the following verses. When God gives the sinner over to a reprobate mind, three things happen. In the first place, this sinner becomes filled with all manner of unrighteousness, such as fornication, wickedness, covetousness, and maliciousness. Being so filled

with unrighteousness, he becomes filled with all vices, such as envy, murder, deceit, and malignity. The final result is that he begins to act. When God gives men over to a reprobate mind, they become whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, etc.

Is there any hope? What shall we do in such a world? Shall we build up institutions of education? With these institutions of education the world goes to hell.

Shall we reform this world? With this reformation the world goes to hell.

Shall we have federations? Men who slide down, when they federate, slide down together.

No, we shall say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation."

The Meaning

The mind is man's moral judgment. It is that faculty of man by which he is able to distinguish between good and evil. It is that faculty of man by which he can distinguish between the truth and the lie, between righteousness and unrighteousness. Not only does the mind distinguish, but also it is that faculty that counsels the will. We might say that the mind is our moral attorney. It tells us what we should do and what we should not do. This is the function of the mind.

Now the text speaks of a reprobate mind. The original uses a word meaning a mind "not approved." It refers to a mind that has been put to the test and has

Herman Hoeksema was the first editor of the Standard Bearer.

failed. It is a mind that has been condemned and rejected. It is a mind that does not function properly. The proper function of the mind would be to distinguish between what is good and what is evil. Having distinguished between what is good and what is evil, it is the function of the mind to persuade the will to determine that which is good. The function of the mind is not only to distinguish between good and evil. But the mind is also to persuade the will to determine what is according to the will of God.

A reprobate mind functions perversely. Suppose that one must give testimony in a certain case. A reprobate mind distinguishes between what is the truth and what is the lie concerning this case. But at the same time this mind compiles all kinds of lies and persuades the will to tell that which is the lie. That is a reprobate mind. A reprobate mind is a mind that distinguishes between good and evil, but persuades one to determine that which is evil. Of this mind the apostle is speaking.

To this reprobate mind, God gave man over. This "giving over" is not meant in a passive sense. The word does not mean, "to let go." God cannot let things go. A God who lets things go, we do not fear. But the word means that God takes the sinner and delivers him up to corruption, or, to change the figure, pushes him down from corruption to corruption.

God is the doom of the sinner.

When the text says that God gave man over to a reprobate mind, that is, when God gave him over to such moral judgment, the meaning is not that God made his judgment corrupt. His judgment is already corrupt. The mind is already corrupt, when man refuses to glorify and thank God. It is already the judgment of a reprobate mind that changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image of corruptible man and of beasts. God had already given him over,

when he fell into all kinds of bestiality.

But the text means that God gave man over to bear the fruit of sin to its fullest extent in every relation of life. There is a working of God in man's soul, in his mind, in his will, in his desires. This working is a working of wrath. God works in this mind in wrath. In what way? He causes this mind to bear all the possible fruits of sin.

What are the possible fruits of sin? The next verse tells us. God gave man over to a reprobate mind. The result is that he begins to bear every possible fruit of corruption, so that he becomes filled with every possible unrighteousness. He does not *become* totally corrupt. He *was* totally corrupt. But he bears every possible fruit of unrighteousness.

When God influences the thistle, it bears fruit. When God influences the good tree, it brings forth good fruit. When He influences the corrupt tree, it brings forth corrupt fruit. When God influences the sinner, he becomes filled with every form of unrighteousness.

What is this? The text says: fornication; wickedness; covetousness, that is, greed of every kind; and maliciousness, that is, the desire to do someone wrong.

When he has borne this fruit in its general motives, man bears still more fruit. He becomes full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity. Under the influence of God's wrath, the reprobate mind bears fruit.

So it was with the world of Rome. So it is with the world of today. If we scratch off a little of the varnish, what do we find? We find these things. These things are boiling at the fountain heads of the world.

The Result

What is the result? This is expressed in verse 28. Man does things that are unseemly. The in-

ner motives bear fruit in actions. The man that is full of envy, etc., begins to act. What does He do? He does things that are unseemly. Notice that the text says that this is the intended result. God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do things which are not convenient. This is God's purpose. This is the purpose of His anger. The purpose of God is not to hold the sinner back. The purpose is that the sinner become manifest in all his folly and corruption. If this is to become manifest, the sinner must do things. God will not let the sinner rest until he does things, in order that he may become ripe for judgment and that it may become manifest that God only is good.

They do things that are unseemly, that is, things that do not fit, the apostle says. The emphasis of the text is that these things do not fit with the way God rules things. If I put my hand in the fire, God keeps right on working in that fire. The result is that I burn my hand. So God causes man to do things that do not fit with the way He rules things.

What these things are, the apostle mentions in verse 29 and the following verses. Whisperers, the apostle says, that is, people who secretly talk about you; backbiters, that is, wagging of the tongue when you are not present; haters of God, literally in the original, hated of God; spiteful; proud; boasters; inventors of evil things, that is, inventors of things to do evil with; disobedient to parents, that is, setting aside all authority; without understanding; covenant breakers, that is, unfaithful in any relation of life; without natural affection, so that the woman can give up the child of her bosom*.

This is the result. This was the case in the Roman world. These sins came forth out of that

* in the 1930s; in the 1990s, "murder the child of her womb." — Ed.

one sin. These sins lie at the bottom of the woe of the world of today. It is these sins that destroy the home, that destroy society, that destroy the world.

What shall we do?

I will go a step farther. These sins are in your heart and in my heart. I do not mean to say that every one of these sins is in the heart of every individual. But all these sins are in the hearts of men in general, so that the one manifests this sin, and the other another sin. These sins are in your heart and in mine.

This is the doom of the sinful world.

God forces it down from corruption and into destruction, into hell.

The Reason

Why does God do this? The text explains it. "Even as," the apostle says. Even as is the sin, so is the punishment.

"Even as."

Even as what?

What was the sin? The sin was that they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. That is, they did not want to keep the true knowledge of God in their mind.

They knew God. But they did not want to keep this knowledge of God in their mind. The original uses a strong expression. The original means: they did not think God worthy to keep in mind. They knew God. They considered whether they would keep God in mind. They came to the conclusion that God was not fit to keep in mind.

Why?

Did they not know any better? Was it an error on their part? No, but they wanted to live in unrighteousness. It was not an intellectual error. It was a moral question. They did not want to keep God in mind.

Even as they did not see fit to keep God in mind, so God gave them over to an unfit mind, to do things that are unfit. Why? Because it must become manifest that he who does not think God fit to keep in mind must run to destruction.

What shall we do? Nothing. Not if we want to reform the world.

What shall we do? We shall conclude that it is hopeless. It is the wrath of God that is at the bot-

tom of it all. It is the wrath of God that is at the bottom even of war, of the present confusion of the world, and of the depression.

What shall we do? Shall we call a prayer day? This is folly. Away with all that is of man! From the point of view of man, it is hopeless. Why? Because it is the wrath of God that takes hold of man and pulls him down into hell. Let us confess that it is hopeless.

What shall we do? We shall say: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." For what do we need? We need righteousness; we need holiness; we need a power to snatch us away from the wrath of God. The gospel is a revelation of the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Christ Jesus.

This gospel is a power. It is not an offer. But it is a power. It is a power taking man out of the power of sin and lifting him up into the glory of everlasting life.

Hopeless, from the point of view of man, and of the world!

Full of hope in the cross of Calvary!

The righteous shall live by faith. □

Editorial

A Candid Confession of the Character of a Conditional Covenant (4)

At the end of the letter in which he candidly confessed the character of a conditional covenant, Rev. Cecil

Tuininga appealed to several texts in Scripture in support of his doctrine. These texts are Matthew 23:37; Romans 10:21; I Timothy 2:3,

4; and II Peter 3:9 (see the *Standard Bearer*, Jan. 1, 1997, p. 150).

Although he presents no explanation of the texts, Rev. Tuininga

makes clear what his understanding of the texts is. For him, the first two texts mean that God loved every physical descendant of Abraham in the time of the old covenant, and willed to save them all. Since the fulfillment of God's love and desire to save depended on each Israelite's performing the condition of faith and since many Israelites refused to perform this condition, God's love was frustrated in many instances, and His will to save came to nothing.

He understands the last two texts exactly the same way, except that these texts extend God's love and will to save to every human who ever lived, lives, and will live.

In this explanation of these familiar passages, Rev. Tuininga is representative of all who hold a universal, conditional covenant, that is, a doctrine of the covenant with Abraham and his seed that cuts the covenant loose from predestination and that makes the covenant promise dependent upon the condition of faith.

Rev. Tuininga identifies his explanation of the passages as Reformed.

The rejection of his explanation of the texts by the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC), he brands as "hyper-Calvinism": "I would be very happy to see our Protestant Reformed brothers come to recognize and correct their hyper-Calvinism and become truly Reformed."

The defender of a conditional covenant of universal grace is confident. He challenges the advocate of the unconditional covenant of particular grace to explain the texts. If God does not love and desire the salvation of all those within the sphere of the covenant, why did Jesus say in Matthew 23:37, "How often I wanted to gather your children ... but you were not willing"? If God does not desire the salvation of all men without exception, "how do you interpret I Timothy 2:3, 4?"

He becomes bold in his confi-

dence, almost insulting:

Shall we do a little revising and say that by "all" God meant the elect? But then the Word of God would have said so! Shall we say that it means "all different kinds of people"? If that was the intention of the Holy Spirit, it would have been clearly stated. If this is not the clear message of Scripture, that God desires all men to be saved, then what does it say?

Any other interpretation than his explanation of universal grace and a desire in God that all without exception be saved must be "a little revising" of Holy Scripture. But the revising of the Word of God, whether little or large, is anathema to the Reformed Christian.

In response to this challenge, I will do two things. I will briefly interpret the texts raised by Rev. Tuininga, and I will show that the interpretation that I give has been the interpretation of these texts by the orthodox defenders of God's sovereign grace down through the ages.

Before I proceed with this agenda, two observations are in order. First, the texts to which Rev. Tuininga appeals are the very texts to which the enemies of predestination and salvation by sovereign grace have always appealed. Pelagius raised them against Augustine. Erasmus raised them against Luther. Pighius and Georgius raised them against Calvin. Rev. Tuininga can find the evidence of this in Augustine's anti-Pelagian writings; in Luther's *Bondage of the Will*; and in Calvin's treatises on predestination and providence in *Calvin's Calvinism*.

The second observation is that the appeal to these texts by the defenders of a conditional covenant, with the interpretation of the texts as teaching a universal grace of God in Jesus Christ, confirms the conviction of the PRC that the doctrine of a conditional covenant is

essentially the same error as that of the "well-meant offer of the gospel." This is the error of a universal grace of God in Jesus Christ dependent for its saving effect upon the will of the sinner. And this, we contend, is the "other gospel" of Galatians 1:8, 9 and Romans 9:16, the "gospel" of Arminianism which was exposed and condemned by the Reformed churches at the Synod of Dordt.

Now to the texts.

"How Often Would I have Gathered Thy Children"

Matthew 23:37 is the climax of Jesus' expression of indignation against the wicked rulers of Old Testament Israel: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

It was Jesus' will to gather Jerusalem's children. The gathering is certainly their salvation. But Jerusalem's children are not all the physical descendants of Abraham. The children of Jerusalem, mother of the people of God, are the same as the children of Abraham, father of the people of God. The children of Jerusalem are those who are in Jesus Christ by divine election, as the apostle teaches in Romans 9:6-13 and Galatians 3:29.

There is distinction in the text between "Jerusalem" and "thy children." Christ did not will to gather "Jerusalem." The reprobate rulers of the apostate institution with the hardened people whom they controlled, Christ willed to damn in just judgment (see vv. 33-36, 38, 39). He willed to gather specifically and only "thy children."

That Christ's saving will was particular is plain from the example that He employed: "even as a hen gathereth her chickens." No hen wishes in her instinctive way to gather all the chicks on the

farmyard, but only her own brood. Similarly, the Christ of God has His own "brood" among the Jews, as among the Gentiles. His "brood" is "all that which the Father giveth me" (John 6:37-39). It is "the children which God hath given me" (Heb. 2:13).

The right interpretation of Jesus' words in Matthew 23:37 insists that Jesus *did*, and *does*, gather Jerusalem's children. He gathers every one of them; not one of them is lost. He gathers them in spite of Jerusalem's opposition: "and ye would not." He redeemed all of them by His death. He effectually calls all of them by His Word and Spirit. He will raise all of them from the grave on the last day. Not one of Jerusalem's children, whom Christ willed to gather, perishes. The will of the Christ and the will of God who sent Him make this certain.

Messiah's Failure

Have Rev. Tuininga and the other defenders of a conditional covenant considered the implications of their explanation of Matthew 23:37?

1) The Messiah of God failed in His official labor on behalf of God. For surely Jesus speaks in the text as the Messiah. Many whom He, as the Messiah, willed to gather, perish.

2) The will of man overcomes the will of God's Christ, indeed, the will of God in our flesh. The Son of God wills to gather. Sinful ecclesiastical rulers will that He not gather. Their will prevails; His will is defeated.

3) Jesus Christ died for every physical descendant of Abraham. Whatever may be the *extent* of Christ's will to gather, the will that He expresses in Matthew 23:37 is carried out in His death a few days later. Jesus wills to gather Jerusalem's children in His cross, just as Jerusalem wills by that same cross, considered now as the evil deed of men, that He not gather her children. Jesus' gath-

ering of sinners is centrally His atoning death. Thus, and in no other way, He gathers. If now He willed to gather every physical Jew, He certainly died for every physical Jew. By their interpretation of Matthew 23:37, the defenders of the conditional covenant necessarily arrive at universal, ineffectual atonement.

Augustine on Matthew 23:37

The particularistic interpretation of Matthew 23:37 that I have given is biblical. It does full justice to the text itself ("thy children"; "as a hen gathereth her chickens"). It harmonizes with the grand theme of all of Scripture, that Christ the Savior, grace, and salvation are for the elect alone, by the will of God.

Rev. Tuininga dismisses this interpretation beforehand as merely the "logic" of hyper-Calvinists.

He should be more careful.

The interpretation that I have given was also that, in the main, of Augustine. The great church father gave this interpretation in his book, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*. "Enchiridion" means 'handbook.' Augustine wrote the book in A.D. 421 as a summary of his thought on the essential teachings of the Christian religion. It may be regarded as the first Christian dogmatics. Such a judge as Adolph von Harnack (no hyper-Calvinist!) regarded this work as Augustine's "matured exposition of the Symbol (the Apostles' Creed — DJE)" and as "our best guide" to Augustine's thought.

In section XCVI, Augustine taught God's sovereignty as regards sin. If we do not believe that God's sovereignty governs evil, Augustine wrote,

the very first sentence of our creed is endangered, wherein we profess to believe in God the Father Almighty. For He is not truly called Almighty if He cannot do

whatsoever He pleases, or if the power of His almighty will is hindered by the will of any creature whatsoever.

Immediately, in section XCVII, he continued:

Hence we must inquire in what sense is said of God what the apostle has most truly said: "Who will have all men to be saved" (I Tim. 2:4). For, as a matter of fact, not all, nor even a majority, are saved: so that it would seem that what God wills is not done, man's will interfering with, and hindering the will of God. When we ask the reason why all men are not saved, the ordinary answer is: "Because men themselves are not willing." This, indeed, cannot be said of infants, for it is not in their power either to will or not to will. But if we could attribute to their will the childish movements they make at baptism, when they make all the resistance they can, we should say that even they are not willing to be saved.

Then follows Augustine's interpretation of Matthew 23:37:

Our Lord says plainly, however, in the Gospel, when upbraiding the impious city: "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. 23:37) as if the will of God had been overcome by the will of men, and when the weakest stood in the way with their want of will, the will of the strongest could not be carried out. And where is that omnipotence which hath done all that it pleased on earth and in heaven, if God willed to gather together the children of Jerusalem, and did not accomplish it? Or rather, Jerusalem was not willing that her children should be gathered together, but even though she was unwilling, He gathered together as many of her children as He wished: for He does not will some things and do them, and will others and do them not; but "He hath done all that He pleased in heaven and in earth"

(Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love*, ed. Henry Paolucci, Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961, pp. 110, 111).

Augustine flatly contradicted the interpretation of Matthew 23:37 by Rev. Cecil Tuininga and, to be fair, the interpretation by hosts of professing Calvinists today.

Augustine regarded the explanation of the text by the defenders of a conditional covenant and by the defenders of a "well-meant offer of the gospel" as endangering

the very first article of the Christian faith, "I believe in God the Father Almighty."

How serious is their explanation of the text, in the judgment of Augustine, he indicated in the next line:

And, moreover, who will be so foolish and blasphemous as to say that God cannot change the evil wills of men, whichever, whenever, and wheresoever He chooses, and direct them to what is good?

Will the advocates of universal grace, whether in the sphere of the covenant or in the wide world, who love to appeal to Matthew 23:37, now call Augustine a hyper-Calvinist?

It is easy, and even popular in Reformed circles, to call the PRC hyper-Calvinists.

Dare they say this about Augustine, from whose interpretation of Matthew 23:37 and doctrine of sovereign grace we do not differ?

Augustine: hyper-Calvinist?

□
— DJE

A Cloud of Witnesses

Prof. Herman Hanko

Abraham Kuyper: Dutch Calvinist (1)

Introduction

Though it does not happen often, there are times when God is pleased to raise up in His church men of such outstanding ability and conviction that their work leaves an indelible mark on subsequent history. It is as if, by them, God alters significantly the course of events. Augustine was such a man. So was Martin Luther, and so was John Calvin. One hesitates somewhat to put Abraham Kuyper in such lofty company, and there are reasons why he does not completely fit. Nevertheless, Abraham Kuyper came close to being one of them.

Usually such men as God is pleased to use are men of extraordinary ability not only, but also

men of forcible personality. They are men towards whom it is impossible to be neutral. Every acquaintance either loves them deeply or hates them passionately. Augustine was such a man; Calvin and Luther also were hated by many and loved by many. Kuyper, perhaps more than any other person of his generation, was devoutly loved and profoundly hated.

And his shadow over the church is long. It reaches to the present.

Childhood and Youth

Abraham Kuyper was born in a parsonage on October 29, 1837 from Rev. and Mrs. J.F. Kuyper, in the small fishing village of Maassluis, the Netherlands. The Reformed churches in the Netherlands had fallen on bad times. Over the course of the centuries it had become thoroughly apostate. Modernists occupied thousands of

pulpits and held all the significant posts in the universities and seminaries. While Reformed people could be found and Reformed ministers still preached here and there, the church itself was in the hands of and was directed by those who had become enemies of the faith.

Abraham's father, a pastor in this denomination, was himself somewhere between liberal Modernism and orthodox Reformed.

Two significant reformatory movements had swept the Netherlands. The first was called *De Reveil* (The Renewal), a movement which was found in every country in Europe in which Protestantism had taken root. It bore, however, some marks of Humanism in the Netherlands; and it refused to engage in true church reformation, believing that the State church could be reformed from within. The second was called *De Afscheiding* (The Separation), of which De Cock was the leader. The

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movement had demonstrated powerfully that the common people thirsted for a return to Scripture and the confessions, to sound biblical preaching and a holy walk. It spread like wildfire through the Netherlands, but soon became the object of the persecution and oppression of the government. It was a movement that attracted thousands, but was composed mainly of the common folk, the simple and uneducated people, those on the lower rungs of society, those whom Kuyper himself was later to call "*de kleine luyden*" (the small folk). This separation was three years old when Kuyper was born. That hardly any mention of it can be found in Kuyper's writings in the first 20 to 25 years of his life is perhaps indicative of the fact that it was scorned by the educated and ignored by the majority in the State church — after all, the sophisticated leaders in the church could not take seriously a movement which attracted such lowly and despised throngs. None of the influences of *De Reveil* or *De Afscheiding* seemed to have touched Kuyper.

Bram (as he was called) did not attend grade school, but was instructed by his parents in his home. Particularly his mother was his instructor. From her he learned French. His father, fluent in German, taught him that language. Kuyper showed early in life an aptitude for languages and the ability to master any subject.

In 1841 the family moved to Middleburg, the capital of the province of Zeeland. This historic city was also on the sea, and while growing up here Kuyper developed a strong love for the sea and a strong desire to spend his life on board ship.

In 1849 the family moved to Leiden when Rev. Kuyper took up new ministerial duties. Abraham had access to excellent schools here. For six years, Kuyper attended "gymnasium," a school which was geared to the prepara-

tion of students for university studies. He graduated in 1855 and delivered the valedictory address, but delivered it in German and spoke on the topic: "Ulfilas, the Bishop of the Visigoths, and his Gothic Translation of the Bible."

Upon completion of his studies in the gymnasium, Kuyper entered the University of Leiden, a university 280 years old, with an enrollment of 500-600 students. Kuyper earned sufficient money to support himself during his three years of university studies by doing some private tutoring.

It seems as if all the influences on Kuyper at this time were bad, something not so strange when one considers the sad state of orthodoxy in the nation's universities. His most influential teacher was Dr. Matthias DeVries, professor of literary studies, under whom Kuyper learned the beauty and power of good writing and under whose tutorship Kuyper developed a unique and forceful style of writing that was to stand him in good stead all his life.

Kuyper graduated in 1858 *summa cum laude*, but a modernist from a modernistic school. What little orthodoxy his parents may have communicated to him was lost in the swirl of liberal thought.

In 1858 Kuyper entered the Leiden Divinity School to study for the ministry. Again the influences were uniformly bad. Dr. L.W. Rauwenhoff, committed to an evolutionistic view of history, taught church history. Dr. Abraham Keunen, a higher critic, taught Bible studies. Dr. Joannes Henricus Scholten, an arch-heretic who denied the bodily resurrection of Christ, taught Dogmatics.

In addition to these influences, two current schools of thought in the Netherlands also moved Kuyper in the direction of Modernism. One was the Groningen School of thought, which really was nothing else but a promoter of a Christian Humanism after the order of Erasmus, the Humanist

of Reformation times. The other school was the so-called Ethical School, which promoted an ecumenical religion of wide tolerance on the basis of an emphasis on the inner, ethical life of man.

It is no wonder that when Kuyper graduated on December 6, 1861 he came out of the school a rather thorough modernist. Yet even during these years God governed events in such a way that Kuyper's surrender to Modernism was not complete.

From divinity school, Kuyper went on to gain his doctorate, something which he accomplished in 1863.

Conversion and Early Ministry

God made Kuyper a powerful Reformed preacher and an amazingly effective defender of the Reformed faith. How did all this come about?

Three events in Kuyper's life can be described as elements in his conversion.

The first took place during Kuyper's university days. The University of Groningen was offering a prize for the best essay submitted on the subject of a comparison of Calvin's and à Lasco's view of the church. With characteristic thoroughness and zeal Kuyper devoted all his time and energy to the researching of this subject and the development of the thought. Not content with secondary sources, he scoured Europe's libraries to find the writings of à Lasco, but to no avail. Finally, in desperation, he went to the home of his old teacher, Dr. DeVries, who sent Kuyper to DeVries' father, now an old man, but one with a good library. The old minister was too old to remember what he did and did not have in his library, but asked Kuyper to return in a week. Kuyper, not expecting any help from this source, was astounded to find on the table a high pile of à Lasco's works. Kuyper considered this so wonderful, especially in the light of the fact that

this was apparently the only collection in Europe, that he received it as a special miracle, a miracle which forced him to consider the reality of God's providential direction of his life and the lives of men.

The second event was directly related to the first.

Kuyper plunged into his studies of à Lasco with such vigor that he hardly slept at all. The result was that, although he completed his paper (written in Latin), and although he won the coveted prize, he suffered a total nervous collapse from overwork. He could not read or write, but had to content himself with trying to build a model ship while vacationing in Germany in an effort to recoup his strength.

It was towards the end of this eight months of recuperation that Kuyper read Charlotte M. Yonge's book, *The Heir of Redcliffe*. The story of a proud successful man who is humbled and a poor and lowly man who is exalted had a profound effect on him. He himself said, "What I lived through in my soul in that moment I fully understood only later, yet from that hour, after that moment, I scorned what I formerly esteemed, I sought what I once dared to despise."

The third event came during Kuyper's ministry.

After completing his doctorate in 1862 (his thesis was a modification of his prize-winning work on à Lasco and Calvin), he took the call to a congregation in Beesd and married Johanna Hendrika Schaay, a girl from Rotterdam.

The congregation, a small village church, was composed of simple villagers, some of whom were themselves modern and worldly, but some of whom were orthodox and sincere. In an effort to get to know his parishioners, Kuyper visited each in turn. He was surprised and chagrined when one peasant girl of thirty, Pietronella Baltus, refused to shake his hand. Finally Kuyper prevailed upon her to do so, but she made it

clear she would do this only because he was a fellow human being, not a brother in Christ.

It is quite amazing that Kuyper had the grace and humility not only to inquire from her concerning her reasons, but also to return again and again to her home when she told him that he was preaching false doctrine and that his soul was in danger of eternal hell. It was here at the feet of these humble parishioners that Kuyper was led back to Calvin and the Reformed fathers, and from them to the Scriptures, the one great fountain of the Reformed faith.

The Preacher

Kuyper was a powerful and effective preacher. As he moved steadily towards the Reformed faith, his preaching reflected his commitment to the truth of Scripture and the heritage of the Reformed fathers. His sermons attracted others: some because they could delight in his oratorical skills and his masterful use of the Dutch language; others because Kuyper preached a gospel for which their souls thirsted and which was difficult to find in any other place in the Netherlands.

That Kuyper's influence upon his times and subsequent history was so great was undoubtedly due to the fact that he was first of all a preacher. God uses preachers: Augustines and Calvins and Luthers and Knoxes. The power of reformation in the church is above all else the power of preaching.

Kuyper soon moved from Beesd to Utrecht, a church of 35,000 members and 11 ministers. The year was 1867. It was a ministry of about three years, filled with many events. Here Kuyper met Groen VanPrinsterer and cast his lot once for all with the Anti-revolutionary Party. Here Kuyper became an editor of *De Heraut* (*The Herald*), a post he was to hold the rest of his life. And here his church reformation work really be-

gan, although at the time there was little evidence of it.

This latter involved the failure of the consistory to answer a questionnaire which was sent by a committee of the Classis and which was a substitute for the practice of church visitation. The consistory refused to answer, first, on the grounds that the work was not properly being done when done by questionnaire, and, secondly, that the work was hypocritical when an apostate body was inquiring into the spiritual health of a congregation. This refusal could have been construed as an act of rebellion, punishable by the Classis. But the broader ecclesiastical assemblies chose not to force the issue and backed down without requiring compliance.

In 1870 Kuyper went to Amsterdam, a church of 140,000 members, 136 officebearers, 28 ministers, 10 sanctuaries, and four chapels. It was the most prestigious church in the country, the most influential, and the most venerable. It was a strategic place for Kuyper to continue his work.

Kuyper was without any doubt the most popular minister of his day, and he drew throngs of people whenever and wherever he preached. Not only were his sermons powerful defenses of the Reformed faith, but they were masterpieces of literary style and oratorical delivery. Yet always his preaching was directed towards the common folk, the *kleine luyden*. Kuyper had that ability to address his preaching and teaching to everyone — an ability which great preachers have. He could teach the children in catechism in a way which would pull them to the edges of their seats. And he took the time and made the effort to visit regularly the orphanages, where the orphans could also be taught the Word of God.

Not only were his sermons powerful and masterful, but his liturgical work in the pulpit was meticulously done and carefully

delivered. His prayers were eloquent and led the soul of the humble saint to God. His reading of Scripture was an experience in itself. One fellow professor, Dr. Rutgers, said once that hearing Kuyper read, just read, Psalm 148 was clearer exposition of that Psalm than most sermons preached on it, and brought tears to his eyes.

It was during his work as minister in Amsterdam that he strove mightily for the renewal and reformation of that church. It was a time of struggle and bitter infighting, but the result was that the church in Amsterdam became a strong Reformed church, with the majority of the elders and ministers supporting Kuyper. This did not mean that the modernists and liberals were expelled from the church: this was impossible in a

State church. But it did mean that the orthodox were in the majority and could control the affairs of the church, so that Reformed preaching and instruction became the order rather than the exception.

Polarization was, however, the result. When Kuyper preached a sermon on "The Assurance of Election," a modernist minister followed immediately with a sermon on "Let Anyone Who Comes With Another Gospel Than That Christ Died For All Men Be Accursed." Nevertheless, for the first time in years and years, the Reformed faith and the truth of the confessions were being proclaimed and defended from the pulpits in Amsterdam.

Because of Kuyper's great ability as a preacher, it is more than sad that he laid down his office so

soon to give himself to politics.

Personally I can never understand this move of Kuyper. One who is called to be a minister is called for life, and this highest of all callings has such a grip on the soul of the faithful ambassador of Christ that to leave it is impossible. Paul himself struck the only possible note: "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." Kuyper resigned in 1874. He had been elected to Parliament and he could not take his seat in that body without leaving the ministry.

A case can be made for the fact that Kuyper's departure from the ministry was in some respects the beginning of his loss of power. That may strike some who have read his biographies as strange and untenable. It is arguable however; and we shall take a closer look at some aspects of this question. □

Contribution

Mr. Philip Climer

Archaeology and the Bible (2)

Returning to archaeological excavations in the lands of the Bible, let us review the case of Joshua and the battle of Jericho. The current secular view is that no battle took place there, and no walls existed. The proof is in the pottery, so to speak. But the final word is not in, and it never will come in. This is not the conclusion of a religious fanatic defending Scripture, this is the method of the science of archaeol-

ogy, as demonstrated in the search for Troy, and it has nothing to do with Christianity or any other religion.

The skeptic may think that I am merely playing with word meanings in reaching this conclusion. Perhaps he would say that the present theory of "no walls at Jericho" is *substantially* true, and that later excavations in the area will "fine tune" it. The skeptic would be wrong. In archaeology any theory, no matter how well established, can be turned on its head by the next shovel full of dirt at the next excavation. The *Time* article provides us with just such an example.

Many secular archaeologists questioned the existence of King David, because there are no extant manuscripts by or about him dating from the time of his rule (traditional dates 1025-985 BC). As with Joshua and the conquest of Canaan, these scientists speculate that the legend of David may have been added by a scribe recopying documents at a much later date, trying to "improve" the history of Israel. But in modern Israel in 1993 an inscription in stone dating from about 900 BC was found containing the phrases "House of David," and "King of Israel." That one inscription was enough to turn skeptical opinion around; now it

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is generally accepted that David really existed.

A monument and inscription from 1200 BC commemorating Joshua's victory at the mighty walls of Jericho would similarly turn the archaeological world's theory of the Hebrew conquest of Canaan on its head. Does such a monument exist? I have no idea. But I am certain that the archaeological truth about Joshua and Jericho will not be the same fifty years from now as it is today, just as today's theories differ from the conclusions of fifty years ago.

The reader may wonder at my phrasing in saying that the truth of a past event is going to change every fifty years. How does the truth of the past change? Obviously, it never does.

We have an account in writing of Joshua and the Israelites conquering the walled city of Jericho. Now that event either took place or it did not take place. The same can be said for any recorded event. The Greeks sailed to Troy to get Helen, or they did not. David reigned in Jerusalem, or he did not. The theorizing of modern day archaeologists does not change one jot or tittle of history, because it has already occurred; it is out of our grasp, we can never re-live or recall those events. Even if an archaeologist constructed a theory that was absolutely accurate in explaining the Trojan War, or Joshua and the battle of Jericho, no one would ever know it was absolutely accurate, because we cannot go back in time and test the theory against the reality.

This may all seem very basic, but it demonstrates that archaeological research fails to give us historical truth not just occasionally, but consistently. No theory of history based upon archaeological research has ever been true. New theories will continue to pour out of the excavation pits, but none of them will ever be true either. Naturally this conclusion includes written records also. We do not

know if those indestructible clay tablets of the Assyrians or Hittites are true or not, and we never will. The same can be said for the Egyptian Hieroglyphs and even for our friend Homer. He tells a wonderful story, but we will never *know* if Achilles and Hector really fought outside the walls of golden Troy.

Biblical Truth

Scientifically, we do not now know if the Bible is true, and we never will. But by faith every believer knows that it is completely true.

Scripture teaches that from eternity past God predetermined everything, everyone, every action, and every moment. By His Spirit and His Word He executed His eternal plan and brought the universe and time itself into existence. Since He precedes creation, including time, He stands outside of it and is therefore unchanging. When He inspired the prophets and apostles to write down that portion of His eternal plan which He chose to reveal to us He directed them to write His *unchanging* Word describing His *unchanging* plan. When it comes to the past, how could anyone possibly imagine a more authoritative history than the Word of the One who determined that history and then brought it to pass?

Revisiting Joshua and Jericho one last time, let us pose the same question to the biblical narrative that we did to the archaeological theory. How do you know that the scriptural account of the battle of Jericho is true? Because the Bible says so. No theory here, just truth, from the God of truth, who not only observed the events at Jericho, but predestined them before creation itself. To doubt the veracity of any historical event in Scripture is to doubt the very nature of God Himself.

The "moderate majority" will discount this argument as an evasion, circular reasoning, and

double talk. It is simply unscientific to believe that the Bible speaks truthfully on historical matters because it says it does. It must be checked, or "verified." But what can Scripture be checked with? Archeological methods of research can provide us with mountains of information about the type of pottery and spears used in ancient Israel, and we should respect that information and the scientists who work so diligently to extract and study the artifacts they find. But any theory they come up with concerning any part of biblical history is by definition false, and one cannot verify any narrative with a false theory. The "moderate majority" can't test biblical history with scientific methodology, and I do not see that they have any other candidates to verify it with, so they must either receive it in faith or reject it for no good reason.

The reader may wonder why I have confined my discussion of archaeology and the Bible to the Old Testament, and why I have not considered the subject of miracles. Aside from time and space constraints, there are two main reasons that I have limited the evaluation: 1) The New Testament manuscripts are now generally accepted, even among skeptics. (A few generations ago they were not accepted as genuine, but someone came up with a new theory and now they are). The skeptics do not believe what the manuscripts say, but they do accept them as dating from the apostolic age. 2) Archeological methods of research cannot give us even one true theory of any period of history that does not speak of miracles. Given that failure, how can archaeologists even begin to comment with any credibility upon a part of Bible history that does contain miracles?

"Fact vs. Faith"

The notion of "fact vs. faith," as *Time* puts it, now can be seen

in all of its silliness and absurdity. To test any scriptural historical account by means of any theory of archaeology is to test that which cannot be false by means of that which cannot be true. It is the height of nonsense.

The Bible is the means by which God reveals His plan of redemption to His people. As such, it is primarily concerned with spiritual matters, and when we read it we should also be primarily concerned with the spiritual knowledge it contains. But the great drama of redemption is being played out upon the stage of the physical universe and history. We cannot fully appreciate the scope and grandeur of God's plan of salvation if we neglect the plat-

form upon which it is presented. We must not take lightly the denial of the accuracy of biblical history by modern archaeology. If we do not proclaim the truth about Joshua and Jericho or King David or any other historical narrative in Scripture we are guilty of not proclaiming "the whole counsel of God." We are in a battle for truth, and we must look to the heroes of the faith for patience and courage to see our way through it.

When the youthful David visited his brothers on the battlefield, he heard Goliath taunting Israel. He was indignant, declaring "... for who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (I Sam. 17:26). He immediately volunteered to face Goliath in combat, and slew

that blasphemer. David had to battle the enemies of Israel physically. Our war with the enemies of the church is spiritual and intellectual in nature, but it is just as real, and just as deadly.

As Christians, let our posture be one of righteous indignation against this giant of skeptical archaeology that slurs the history of the church of Almighty God. Who are these archaeologists who think they can disprove Scripture with a piece of broken pottery dug out of the mud? What is the "moderate majority" that dares tell us what parts of the Bible are "reasonable" to believe in? The battle is joined. Let Reformed believers step forward and speak the truth, in love. □

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ Visits of the Virgin Mary — And the Millennium

Recent news reports speak of a reflection said to be of the Virgin Mary on the windows of the Seminole Finance Corp. in Clearwater, Fl. The account brought to mind similar reports made in the past.

I recall being in a campground, years ago, tenting next to a Roman Catholic family. The man joined us at our campfire and promptly began telling of his own encounter with the Virgin Mary. He claimed to have been at a site where the Virgin Mary had repeatedly appeared. While he was there, it had happened. The Virgin Mary came and spoke to certain individuals who were sponsors of this event. How did he know that the Virgin Mary had in fact appeared? He did not see her — but there was the smell of roses.

And the rosaries of those present had turned into gold. Sadly, the man had forgotten his own rosary. It lay in his dresser drawer. But when he returned home, lo, the rosary also had changed into gold!

The old tales are still being repeated — and with increasing frequency. The *Denver Post*, December 21, 1996, records details of one of the latest incidents:

Some say that when the Virgin Mary comes down, they smell roses. Some say they see the sun wheeling in the sky. When she appears, some see her blue robe shimmer.

Some say she turns the chains of their rosaries to gold.

When the Blessed Virgin comes to Donna Pendleton, the young mother from this rural part of Maryland says, Mary just slips quietly into her heart.

Nothing "like a lightning bolt," says Pendleton, whose face is radiant as she stands on the dark sidewalk outside St. Joseph's Church.

Her visit feels like "a tingle," says Pendleton, who wears her little boy's crystal rosary around

her neck, inside her ski jacket. Then "everything opens up and becomes clearer."

Snow may or may not come this night to Emmitsburg, a town with one street light, surrounded by farms. Pendleton thinks not.

But the Virgin Mary will be here, because this is a Thursday and she comes every Thursday night, believers say. Pendleton is one of the many who regularly flock to this gray stucco church to hear her weekly message and feel her mysterious presence.

With incense and candles burning, they gather in the sanctuary and murmur "Hail Mary" after "Hail Mary," the beads of their rosaries slipping through their fingers as they wait.

In these times of sin and confusion, in these days of approaching millennium, believers say the Mother of God is visiting Earth with increasing regularity.

"Oh yeah," says David Zappardino, a musician and a regular here at St. Joseph's Church, "...she is part of the plan."

...The Bible contains sparse references to the mother of Jesus, but that has not stopped scholars from delving the Scriptures for

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clues to her character. And it has not stopped generations of devotees from shaping her to their disparate needs.

She's been portrayed as both virgin and mother, saint and fertility goddess. She's ridden to battle with the Crusaders and rallied the followers of labor organizer Cesar Chavez. She is Notre Dame, lady of all the cathedrals of France, and La Morenita, the dark little Virgin of Guadalupe, midwife of peasant mothers throughout Latin America.

She is the patroness of legions of unchurched spiritual searchers and she also receives the daily devotions of Pope John Paul II. The pope says that in 1981, Mary saved him from an assassin's bullet, noting the attempt on his life came on the anniversary of her 1917 appearance to three children in Fatima, Portugal....

What is striking is not so much the increasing number of "appearances" of the Virgin Mary as this millennium comes to its close, but the increasing number of people who *believe* such things. Many see the "image" of Mary on windows of buildings; they "smell the roses" when Mary shows herself; individuals claim that Mary speaks to them and reveals secrets of future events.

This surely is another of the signs of the end, when people are ready to believe that which is so very contrary to Scripture. The *Post* itself remarks upon the fact that "the Bible contains sparse references to the mother of Jesus...." Those who know Scripture ought to recall the emphasis of the apostle Paul, who insisted that he "determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). No mention of "roses" or "golden rosaries" or secret messages from the blessed Virgin. Scripture emphasizes not Mary but Christ. It has been the design of the devil to turn people from the cross to some alternative. But even the Virgin Mary is no alternative to the cross.

There is but one way to God and that is through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

■ The Bible a Wax Nose?

Darrell Todd Maurina of the *United Reformed News Service* reports that the Rev. Richard Rhem, pastor of Christ Community Church in Spring Lake, Michigan, made the statement, "The Bible is a wax nose," at a conference hosted by the RCA's Regional Synod of the Mid-Atlantics. Here Rhem publicly expressed his position:

"The question is not whether non-believers can be saved, the question is whether salvation is through Jesus Christ alone," said Rev. Richard Rhem.... "When you tell me I must say it is through Jesus Christ alone I don't know what to do with the Jewish believers I have become so fond of...."

"I have been hesitant to engage in biblical discussion because the biblical answer is divided," said Rhem. "The Bible speaks with more than one voice."

Rhem noted that the November 9 event was the first time he had spoken publicly on the controversy surrounding his views, said he did so with trepidation, emphasized that he was not trying to be a "crusader," and said he was surprised that his views had created such a controversy. "I cannot believe that this issue is of such interest that it would get on the front page of the *New York Times*; I think perhaps it is reflective of the church being reflexive and afraid," said Rhem. "I don't think I have said anything new; I don't think I have said anything well."

"I found that in the early church there was a strong strain of universalism, of the ultimate triumph of the grace of God," said Rhem, also noting that some "high Calvinists" historically taught election to universal salvation.

Rhem acknowledged that the Bible included some apparently clear teaching on salvation through Christ and that such

teaching would have been expected given its context as a book of proclamation. "I don't think we should try to whitewash this book and say there is no possibility of constructing an exclusivist view of the church; the only thing I would argue is this is not the only voice," said Rhem.

According to Rhem, it is inconsistent to say the Bible is clear on salvation apart from Christ when Scripture also appears to be clear on such matters as the immediacy of the return of Christ and the ordination of women. "How can we honestly say that when we realize those documents were written by those who honestly believed they were at the end, and they were not at the end?" asked Rhem. "We are not seeing the death of the great religious traditions, we are seeing their resurgence and their renaissance."

"...Has human experience taken precedence over Scriptures?" asked Rhem. "Yes, I hope so, and that's why I am in trouble. I don't think you can understand the Bible apart from human experience, and I don't think you can understand human experience apart from the categories of Scripture."

In responding to Rhem's speech, Dr. Paul Fries, professor at the RCA's New Brunswick Theological Seminary, commented:

"The Bible says more, is more complex on these issues than our theology has often allowed," said Fries. "I've had secular people who know about the situation in Spring Lake who can't believe the church is still doing heresy things in this day. This is not helping our witness."

One must truly be appalled that the case of Rhem should be termed a "heresy trial" which both unbeliever and "believer" consider out-of-place in our present age. More appalling still is that this is regarded as "not helping our witness." What witness? Does this not confirm the witness that Christ is the Way, the only Way, of sal-

vation? Or, is now the witness of the church to be that there is universal salvation — and that too, through any form of religion? One recalls the challenge of Elijah to the people of Israel, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." But to-

day some would condemn Elijah for such heresy hunting. Rather, many would have Elijah declare, "Follow Jehovah or follow Baal. Either way will bring you to glory."

The situation of Rhem seems murky at present. Is he, or is he not, still a minister in the Reformed Church of America? He

severed his relationship with that denomination. An agreement was made by the RCA classis to have such a separation. But now other charges evidently have been raised against Rhem — which the Classis believes must first be dealt with before he can be released from the RCA. □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Mitchell Dick

The Son of God and Sons of the Devil (II)

John 8:37-59

He's got you 'n me, brother, in His hands. He's got the whole world in His hands...." Such are words of a song popular years ago. The words betray a religion. It is the religion of the universal brotherhood of man. It is the religion of the universal fatherhood of God.

But Jesus does not sing that song. This we-are-all-one-family religion was never His.

Jesus' denial of the universal brotherhood of man, and His denial that God is the Father of all, are seen clearly in His clash with the Jews in John 8:37ff.

The Jews claim a pedigree, a blood-line, which entitles them to

the greatest honor among men, and even to the salvation of God. Jesus acknowledges that the Jews have a noble natural line. Of course! There were great advantages to being of the natural seed of Abraham (cf. Rom. 3:1, 2; 9:1-5). But Jesus refutes the Jews' claim to be *true* children of Abraham. For if they *were* true children of Abraham, they would do Abraham's works (v. 39). And this means they would have Abraham's faith. And this means they would believe on the promises of God which are fulfilled in the Christ whom Jesus is! The Jews, in other words, if they were Abraham's true children, would rejoice to see Jesus' day, just as

Abraham did (v. 56).

Jews who do not believe in the Lord Jesus are not true children of Abraham. They are not, therefore, true children of God! They have another father, even the devil (v. 44)!

Such is Jesus' word about the sonship of some of the most religious people in the world — of some, even, who ardently claim *Jehovah God* to be their God and Father. This too is Jesus' word about the sonship of *all* who refuse to believe on Him: they are sons of the devil.

About the Father? Jesus sings this: "He has the whole *Church* in His hands!" To the praise of Father's electing grace!

For Study, Meditation, and Discussion

That Ye Might Believe!

☛ The Jews thought that being of the *natural* seed of Abraham was being the *true* seed of Abraham. What do the following texts say are the source and characteristics of being a true son of Abraham, a true Jew, and therefore a true child of

God: Romans 3:28, 29; 4:11, 12; 9:6ff.; Galatians 3:7, 28, 29; 4:21-31? In this passage in John 8, what does Jesus say characterizes true Jews?

☛ The Jews went so far as to say that they had God as their father (v. 41). Scripture indeed does teach that God is the Father of Israel:

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Exodus 4:22; Jeremiah 31:9; Deuteronomy 14:1, 2; Malachi 2:10. Explain how God could call an entire nation His "child" or "son" when not all, but in fact only a small remnant, were truly His own?

☛ What the Jews were teaching was that, through things and rites "natural" (blood, circumcision), spiritual blessings were communicated. Roman Catholics teach a similar error. There is, according to them, grace worked in the sacraments, regardless of faith. How can this myth be perpetuated among us today, that salvation is rather an "automatic" or "natural" thing, due to outward relationships and ceremonies? What about the good gifts of God's providence? Is having these an evidence that God is your Father? Think, in this connection, on what Asaph discovered when he went into the sanctuary (Ps. 73)!

☛ Clear proof of the Jews' not being Abraham's true seed was their relation to Jesus. They did not truly believe Jesus (vv. 30, 31), for Jesus' word had no place in their hearts (v. 37). Besides that, rather than rejoicing to see Jesus' day (cf. v. 56 and my comments on the same in the article prior to this), they sought to kill Jesus (vv. 37, 59)! True sons of Abraham and of God would continue in Jesus' words (v. 31), would love Jesus (v. 42), and rejoice in His day (v. 56) — just as Abraham did! Why is loving attachment to Jesus necessary for one to be a child of God (cf. John 3:16, 17; 5:36, 37; 8:18, 27, 29; 10:36; 11:42; 12:49; 14:6, 10; 17:3, 8; I John 5:1)?

☛ In verse 43 Jesus gives the reason for the Jews' failure to understand Jesus' speech: it was because they *could not hear* His word? Explain this inability to hear.

☛ In verse 47 Jesus explains that the fundamental reason for one

hearing or not hearing God's words, and therefore being a child of God or not is whether that person is "of God" or not. What does it mean to be "of God"? When is one "of" God? How and for what reason does this occur (cf. texts such as John 3:3, 5; 5:44; 6:44; 8:47; 10:26)? How does this exclude boasting for those of us who believe? Does being "of God" mean that God's elect were never children of the devil, even before they were converted? What of Ephesians 2:3 which speaks of us as being by nature children of wrath, even as others?

☛ The father of the unbelieving Jews is the devil. Jesus minces no words. "Ye are of your father the devil," He says. "And the lust of your father ye will do" (v. 44)! Here, among other things, Jesus establishes the truth of the *existence* of the devil! The devil is real! He is the prince of this world, the prince of darkness! Using a concordance and good Bible dictionary list the names the Bible gives to the devil. What is the history of the devil? What are some of the things he does? What three occupations of the devil does Jesus mention here? Give some examples of the devil "in action" from the record of Scripture; from our own experience in the world today. How are the devil's characteristics and purposes seen in his children?

Having Life Through His Name

☛ Jesus' mission is to give life (v. 51). *In Him* is life (John 1:4). He is given that whosoever believeth on Him might have everlasting life (3:16). He promises life, for He has the words of life (6:63, 68). He is the way, the truth, and the life (14:6). Think on this life: its source, its nature, its length, and our knowledge and enjoyment of it. Here in John 8:51 Jesus promises that one who keeps His saying shall never see death. How is this to be explained, seeing that all

but a few of God's people die in their bodies? (In this connection, think on the few who did not and will not die in their bodies. What are the purposes of God in having some never see bodily death?)

☛ Jesus promises that the life He gives is enjoyed by those who "keep" His saying (v. 51). What is the "saying" one is to keep? How does one keep it? How does Jesus' promise here of life through (and only through) obedience harmonize with the gospel that we are saved by grace only, and not by our works?

☛ There is urgency here! Jesus is speaking to people who were pretenders to true religion. They who went about seeking to establish their own righteousness were in fact lost in sins, slaves of the devil, bound for hell. If they did not repent, woe to them! So we must be warned, lest we be found to be sons of the devil (cf. Ps. 2:12; I Cor. 9:27)! In this connection, think of five fruits of being a true child of God. Are they evident in your life? Is your life and is my life a rejoicing in Jesus' day? How?

☛ In this age of "tolerance," and amid the prevailing religion of the universal brotherhood of man, how do we show our *distinction* from the sons of the devil? Is there any place for *cooperation* between the church and the world in "common causes"?

☛ Church! True sons of Abraham! Sons of God, through faith in Jesus Christ the eternal Son! Preach! Rejoice: God *has* the whole world, and all history, in His hands! To execute destruction upon the devil and his children! To save and to preserve His own by sovereign grace! Live the life of Father's true sons! Blessed sons. Holy sons. Praising sons! □

Chapter 6

The Fall of Our First Parents

(cont.)

The Temptation and Fall

We are now ready to give our attention to the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve as recorded in Genesis 3:1-6. In this simple and brief historical record of the temptation and fall of our first parents there are various easily discernible steps. The first of these is described in the first three verses of Genesis 3: "And he (that is, the serpent) said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

First of all, we must notice that the tempter addressed himself to the woman, not to the man. And the question may be asked: Why?

The answer to this question cannot lie in the possibility that the woman could be more easily tempted because she was morally weaker. This is not true. Adam and Eve both stood in moral integrity as they came from the hand of their Creator. Eve was no more inclined to sin than was Adam. There was no weakness in Eve as

God had created her. But, in the first place, there may indeed be something in the fact that Adam, not Eve, had received the commandment *directly* from God, although this cannot be of great importance.

In the second place, we must remember that Eve was not the head and thus did not bear the responsibility which Adam had. This is not to say that Eve was not personally responsible; she certainly was. But because Adam was the head, not only of the woman but of the entire race, his position was the more responsible.

In the third place, if we bear in mind the possibility that the woman's nature was more susceptible to an appeal to the senses than that of the man, that her nature was closer to the occasion of the temptation, that the devil, in order to create the lie, had to impress upon the tempted the beauty and desirability of the tree through an appeal to the senses, and if we add to this the possibility that Adam could more easily be tempted through his wife than by the tempter in person because of the close proximity of Eve to Adam, then we can somewhat understand this approach of Satan. We may add that this manner of approach is quite in keeping with his deceitful and wily nature.

In considering the tempter's approach to Eve, we must remember that there is a considerable difference between the temptation of Eve and our temptations today. The devil confronted a difficult

problem, much more difficult than when he tempts us. We are fallen. The inclination to doubt, to unbelief, to lust, to pride, is present in our very nature. Because sin is already present in us, in heart and mind and will, waiting, as it were, to be appealed to, we are easy victims of the temptation of the Evil One. But Eve was pure of nature, as was also Adam. She was without sin and without any inclination to sin. The spiritual attitude of her inmost nature was one of perfect integrity. Only she had the peculiar freedom and power to change this perfect integrity into an attitude of corruption and sin by an act of her own will. Eve was not morally perfect in the highest sense, so that there was no possibility of sin for her; but she was fallible.

Hence, the devil's problem was to play upon Eve's will in such a way as to make her desire the very object forbidden by God, so that she would choose it rather than God's way. To obtain this result, the forbidden fruit had to be presented to her mind as above all things desirable. And in order to achieve this purpose the devil had to create the lie about the tree of knowledge of good and evil; he had to contradict the truth of God.

Let us see how this was done.

The devil begins by attempting to sow doubt in the soul of Eve; and he does so by means of a very subtle question, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

Let us understand the intent

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of this question. It was not the devil's purpose to create confusion in Eve's mind as to the meaning of God's command and to attempt to change God's word in Eve's mind. That would have been a foolish attempt on the devil's part. For not only was the commandment of God so simple and plain that there could be no confusion about it; but also such a question would exactly call to mind God's rich goodness. They had already eaten of the fruit of the other trees, and death had not come. Moreover, in that case the devil succeeded not at all: for in the strongest terms Eve denies that God had forbidden them to eat of every tree. Besides, we must remember that sin is exactly not based on mental confusion and lack of clarity with respect to God's commands.

No, the devil by means of this question very subtly purposes to create an introductory basis for his argument. He wants to bring home to Eve's mind the idea that that tree will not kill her, that the tree will make her like God, and that there is a reason why God forbade her and her husband to eat of that one tree. To accomplish this purpose he calls attention to the general fact: trees do not kill; in fact, by the fruit of the trees you live; for has not God permitted you to eat of every tree of the garden? He means to arouse in Eve's soul the question: if we may eat of all the trees in the garden, what possible harm can there be in eating of this one tree? This the devil does, not by means of a forthright statement, but by a subtle question, a question designed to make Eve ponder the answer and to come to the devil's conclusion. In this question, he already brings in God? This is above all necessary. The hidden intent of the question is to make Eve say within herself: "I wonder why, if trees would kill, God did not forbid us to eat of all the trees? And how can it be, if the other trees are good for food

and do not kill, that partaking of this one tree can possibly be bad for us?"

How well the devil succeeded with his introductory question becomes evident immediately. For Eve begins to yield.

Evidence of her yielding may already be seen in the fact that Eve takes up the discussion of the matter with the serpent. For one thing, there is at least the indication of pride already in the fact that she ignores Adam. If we remember that the probationary command had a unique significance, if we bear in mind that the future of the whole race was involved, if we keep in mind the fact that Adam, not Eve, was the head of the human race, if we remember also that Adam was the head of the woman, and if, finally, we remember that Adam, not Eve, had received the command of God directly, then there is reason to believe that pride already motivated Eve when she presumed to discuss the matter without Adam. She should have said, "Just a minute; let me call my husband." Moreover, her only reply to the serpent, should she give one, should have been a rebuke, for there was criticism of God in the very question which the serpent asked her.

But it is important to notice Eve's reply. For in her answer there is clear evidence that she yielded to doubt. Eve answers: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." In this answer there are four distinct points in which Eve misquotes and misrepresents God's command. In the first place, Eve uses the plural, "Ye," while God had used the singular "thou" and had addressed Adam alone when He announced the command. She presumed to speak for her husband.

Secondly, she avoids mentioning the name of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil; instead she designates it as "the tree which is in the midst of the garden."

In the third place, she exaggerates and twists the command of God when she adds to it that they might not even touch the tree. God had never said this. Not only is this exaggeration a sign of weakness, but it leaves the impression that the devil had certainly succeeded in making Eve think of the tree itself in terms of its being a death-dealing tree.

This last is certainly the impression left by the fourth misquotation: "lest ye die." Here Eve betrays the fact that she is thinking of the possible consequences of eating of or touching the tree, rather than of obeying God's command. For she presents death as the result of eating of the fruit of the tree, or of touching the tree, rather than as the punishment of sin.

Especially this last is very important.

The devil had succeeded. The seed of doubt had already struck root in Eve's soul. She was thinking within herself, "We may eat of every tree, but this tree will supposedly kill us. How can that be?"

Now the devil moves in boldly. The second stage of the temptation is described in verses 4 and 5: "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God (not: as "gods"), knowing good and evil."

Notice now that the devil's word is a flat contradiction of the Word of God. He is the liar from the beginning. He boldly contradicts God and replaces the truth of God by his own lie. This lie is based on the argument implied in his first question. The devil perceives that the heart of Eve has been prepared for this bold contradiction. She has yielded to the doubt of the first question. The

devil had, in effect, argued, "Trees do not kill, do they? This tree will surely not kill." Eve shows that she has yielded by continuing to listen to the devil; she shows that she is ready to be convinced.

But this is not enough. Eve's mind is ready for another evil master stroke of the devil. For there must have been a reason why God forbade them to eat of the tree. Of this situation the devil takes advantage in order to slander God, first of all. He connects his lie with the tree. He speaks an apparent truth: "Ye shall know good and evil. Your eyes shall be opened."

To this he adds *the* lie of all lies: "Ye shall be as God." Thus he ascribes evil motives to God. "God doth know this," he says. He pictures God as a God who does not seek the highest good for His creatures, but their evil. He presents the true good of Adam and Eve as lying in the direction of disobedience. He presents the end of sin as a good to be desired: "Ye shall be as God." Here the devil is revealed in his true character as the adversary of God, who opposes and contradicts the Word of God, and as the slanderer of God, the liar, who always speaks of his own and lies. Here sin is revealed in its deepest principle: It is to negate God, to deny God and His sovereignty. Sin means that man will be his own god, determining for himself what shall be good and evil.

Eve believed the devil. She goes on listening. She contemplates what the tempter says. This is the same as believing him. The elements of this attitude of Eve are very plain. In the first place, there is in Eve doubt and unbelief with respect to God's Word. She is open to questioning and even to contradiction with respect to that Word of God. She is no longer minded to accept that Word unconditionally. In the second place, there is in her a repudiation and disavowal of the love of God. For otherwise she could not have lis-

tened to the slander of the devil. Moreover, she is swelled with pride: she will be like God and independently determine what is good and evil.

Then comes the third step. The devil has done his evil work, and what is now successfully implanted in Eve's heart and soul must only bear its fruit: she surrenders to lust. This is described in verse 6: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat."

Eve now beholds the tree entirely apart from the Word of God. She beholds that it is good for food. This must certainly have been true in itself. But in the light of the Word of God, it was the lie. But the power of sin had already darkened Eve's understanding spiritually. She sees food value in the fruit. How could it possibly kill? Here is manifested the "lust of the flesh" mentioned in I John 2:16.

Secondly, Eve beholds the tree as pleasant to the eyes. This also was undoubtedly true, apart from the Word of God. That tree was not in itself ugly. But in the light of God's Word it was a temptation, of vanity, from which her eyes should have been turned away. Now, however, the tree began to be attractive to her. Here is manifested sin's "lust of the eyes."

In the third place, Eve now beholds the tree as "desired to make one wise." She sees the violation of the Word of God as the way to true wisdom and the tree as a means to make her wise. This is because she views the tree from the viewpoint of the devil's lie, "Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." That tree could instruct her and open her eyes! She sets aside the Word of God and already prefers her own judgment. Here is

manifested sin's "vainglory of life."

It could but follow, then, that Eve committed the actual deed of sin and ate of the forbidden tree. It could also only follow that she tempted her husband. She had plunged herself into misery, and she knew it. She herself was motivated by enmity against God and by the love of darkness rather than light, also in her attitude toward her husband. She could not tolerate the fellowship of the sinless, holy, righteous husband; she therefore sought immediately to bring him down with her into death. In this she succeeded — apparently, if we may judge from Scripture's brief statement of it, without much of a struggle. The devil had calculated correctly when he plotted to tempt Adam through his wife.

In conclusion, let us take careful note of the fact that all that is involved in the sin of our first parents is a matter of their fundamental, spiritual, ethical viewpoint, proceeding from their inmost nature. Their nature was penetrated by the lie of the devil. Their nature — heart and mind and soul and strength — was changed spiritually and became sinful. From the viewpoint of that sinful nature, the lie looked to be the truth, evil appeared good, the way of death appeared to be the way of life, the way of misery appeared the way of happiness. Here lies the deepest root of sin. Let us remember this. Sin is not a matter of the mere intellect, not a matter of objective evidence, not a matter of argument. It is not any of the former that makes the world of sinners believe the lie. The trouble is with the nature. In the deepest sense, it is with the heart, from which are the issues of life. That heart, and the entire nature with it, is corrupt. To that corrupt nature the lie looks good, and the way of sin is attractive, beautiful, desirable to make one wise.

For the same reason, salvation is not a matter of education or of

reformation. It is a matter of a divinely and sovereignly wrought, radical change of the heart: a change that is powered by the crucified and risen Lord, a change from death unto life. That marvel-

ous change of regeneration — a change through which all things, God, self, sin, the truth of God's Word, appear different, radically different — that change is before all else the work of God's grace.

That wonder-work of regeneration is a resurrection from the dead: and it is the work of God alone, through the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified and raised.

(to be continued) □

Contending for the Faith

Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

Supralapsarianism

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

Ephesians 1:5

A few days ago I received from Mr. Roelof Jansen of Inheritance Publications a copy of a new book he has published which includes within it a translation of Dr. Klaas Schilder's booklet, *Extra-Scriptural Binding — A New Danger*. This work appeared originally as a series of articles in *De Reformatie* criticizing the "Brief Declaration of Principles" soon after it was drawn up by the Protestant Reformed Synod of 1950. I read through it with a high degree of fascination, finding it to be for me a most dramatic illustration of the difference between the thinking of Dr. Schilder and that of the Rev. Herman Hoeksema.

Had I received it earlier, before I wrote my previous article on infralapsarianism, I would no doubt have begun comment on it immediately; but now, for the sake of continuity, it is perhaps best that I first finish this treatment of basic doctrinal differences between us and the Liberated, and then re-

turn to comment on this work.

In dealing with the lapsarian controversy we are dealing with the subject of the counsel of God and the order of its decrees.

The counsel of God is His eternal thought or plan concerning everything that takes place in time, as He says of Himself in Isaiah 46:9, 10, "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, 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." Clearly God is speaking here of His own distinctive nature, that which sets Him apart from every other being. He tells us that all things which exist apart from Him are known and ordained by Him in a totality of thought which was completed entirely before any of these things ever came to exist. But the important thing for us at this point is that, according to the Scriptures, there was a relationship which God had ordained between the various parts of this plan, that is, between the various decrees which constitute the elements of His counsel.

In our last article we took note of the fact that there are many passages in Scripture which speak of election in what might well be considered an infralapsarian way; that

is, they speak of individuals being chosen or elected by God as they exist in time and are fallen into sin. Their election comes to them, therefore, *after the fall*, which is what the word *infralapsarian* would seem literally to mean. The thing to note, however, is that not one of these texts is speaking of the counsel of God, but they all speak rather in terms of the experience of man in time. But what we want to take note of now is that there are other passages in the Bible which do speak of the counsel of God, and give to its order quite a different perspective.

Among these passages there is, perhaps, none more basic than that which we find in Ephesians 1:5: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Actually it was John Calvin in his *Institutes* [III:24:5], who first pointed to this text when dealing with the subject of what is primary in the counsel of God.

The point is that here, at the beginning of this most important chapter concerning the predestination of God, Paul is speaking of the first purpose of God; and he tells us that it is to be found in the will of God to have a people who may be adopted to be His children in Jesus Christ His Son. This is God's first or original decree.

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God's first purpose in creation was not simply to have a world, or to demonstrate His ability to make such a world. Neither was it, as was commonly thought Calvin taught, that God made a world primarily so that He would be able to demonstrate that He was a God of mercy and of justice. God's first purpose was that He should have a people who would in the end be adopted into His own circle of Triune life, or, as Peter expressed it, II Peter 1:4, "that ... ye might be partakers of the divine nature." This is, in turn, the essence of election, for God knows from the beginning who these people personally and individually are.

Nor is this text unique in teaching this. It runs all through the Bible, as when Moses, as the ambassador of Jehovah, said to Pharaoh, "Israel is my son, even my firstborn. And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me" (Ex. 4:22, 23). And in Hosea 11:1, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." All through the Old Testament the nation of Israel, as representative of all God's elect people, is looked upon as those who were chosen to be the children of God. And so, when we come to the New Testament, we have that beautiful doxological chorus found in Romans 8 and centering in verses 14-17: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." It is this appointment to be adopted as children of God which lies at the heart of Christianity, and runs throughout the Scriptures as God's primary viewpoint toward those

whom He is bringing to salvation, much as we read in Isaiah 43:21: "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." It is what election is all about.

Nowhere, however, is this brought out more dramatically than at the conclusion of that great prayer of Jesus in John 17:22-24: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." In this chapter we are brought into the inmost circle of the divine life as the Son speaks in the Spirit to the Father and tells us of the first and foremost purpose of the divine mind. God from the beginning wills to have a people whom He may bring in the end into His inmost sacred circle of divine fellowship and love. And it is for this that He sent forth His Son.

Moreover, once we have grasped that truth, we begin to see that there are many passages of Scripture which explain the whole of human history in relation to this. All of history is related to this first purpose as a means relates to its end, much as Rev. Hoeksema explained in his *Reformed Dogmatics* (pp. 164-165):

We must emphasize not so much what is first or last in the decree of God, but much rather place ourselves before the question: what in those decrees is conceived as purpose, and what as means? What is the main object in those decrees, and what is subordinate and subservient to that main object? In this way we first of all escape the danger to leave the impression that there after all

is a temporal order in the decrees of God. And, in the second place, open the way to find an answer to the question: why is there a reprobation? ... We, therefore, would like to present the matter of God's counsel of predestination as follows. God conceived and willed all things in His eternal decree for His own name's sake, that is, to the glory of His name and the reflection of His divine, infinite virtues and life. And as the highest in God is His own covenant life, He willed to establish and to reveal His covenant in Christ; and all other things in the counsel of God as related to that main purpose of God as means.

There is always order and relationship in the works of God. His counsel is not a number of scattered decrees more or less loosely related to each other. Rather, as God Himself, it is one (Deut. 6:4), all the parts of His counsel are related together as a logical whole, serving that purpose which is first.

In the Old Testament one of the most beautiful texts relating this is Isaiah 43:4-7: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." Israel was God's chosen people, a nation representative of His elect in all ages; but Isaiah came to them in a most depressed situation. Among the nations of this world, few appeared to be of less importance than they. And yet Isaiah's assurance to them was that they were still first in the purposes of God. In fact, all of the other nations, which seemed to be great in themselves, were there only to serve the

cause of Israel's salvation. It is a thought that runs through the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures, and sets forth the underlying design of the whole counsel of God.

No one, however, could translate this more succinctly into New Testament terms than did the apostle Paul, as when he said in I Corinthians 3:21-23, "Let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." In Corinth, of course, there was a great deal of division which had arisen among various factors in the congregation over the question of who was most important; and each sought to establish his own pre-eminence by claiming association with a figure he thought most important in that early church. But Paul comes back in this text to scold them for their foolishness. All these people, he points out, who seemed so important to them, were but servants. Their purpose, like all other things in this world, is to bring salvation to those who are chosen of God. If one be a child of God, all things are there for his sake; for there is nothing more important to God than that His people be brought into the communion of His inner circle of love. All things are there for those who belong to Christ, even as Christ belongs to God.

Nor is this greatly different from what Paul says even more poetically in II Corinthians 4:15: "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God." Once again, Paul distinctly lays it out that in the overall plan of God concerning this world, His first purpose is in His people. They have been first from the beginning; and all other things are there so that they may share eternally in the glory of God.

In a somewhat different way, it is this also that is brought out by Paul in Romans 9:22, 23: "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." This passage is important because it is one of the relatively few passages in Scripture that speak particularly of reprobation, the fact that there are other people who are altogether like the elect except for the fact that God has not chosen them. They from the beginning were ordained for a different purpose. This purpose is not in them; God is not a sadist who created a people simply so that He might cast them into hell. Rather, they too, in that great mystery of the wisdom of God, like all other things, are there "that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." Even the reprobate serve the salvation of the people of God.

But possibly no text lays out this design of the counsel of God more beautifully and practically than the last part of Romans 8. There we have verse 28, which so often has been a comfort to so many of God's little ones: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Here is that same thought again; all things are there for those who are chosen by Him. But the thought does not end there. Paul goes on to explain, verses 29, 30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

When Paul speaks here of "whom he did foreknow," he undoubtedly has in mind that great first purpose of God, as in the divine mind He envisions the end from the beginning (Is. 46:10), that goal of having a people adopted "by Jesus Christ to himself" (Eph. 1:5). And so, accordingly, He predestines them "to be conformed to the image of his Son." It is this that He is bringing about with the "all things" of verse 28. And so He calls them, justifies them, and finally brings them into glory. It is simply the outworking of his original love with which He loved them.

And the surety of that love Paul goes on to exalt in that final triumphant refrain, verses 35-39: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 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."

If then this is true of "all things," it certainly includes also the fall into sin. We certainly don't understand all the workings of God; but the plan is clear. The fall, like everything else, was ordained to bring about God's first decree. In fact, as we have seen, even the reprobate are there for that purpose. Election is above (*supra*) the fall (the *lapsus*). Supralapsarianism is found directly laid out in the Scriptures when it speaks of the counsel of God.

And with that we have one of the most beautiful truths of the Bible, introducing us to a dimen-

sion of existence which we could never discover by ourselves (Job 11:17). Behind this world which we observe, there is another reality which brings it all together, the counsel of God. And in that there is a direction and purpose that comprehends all things, and does so in a way that serves the pur-

pose of "them that love God, ... the called according to his purpose." It alone brings meaning to this world, and to those who are being prepared unto eternity, as Paul so beautifully expressed it (Rom. 11:33-36): "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his

ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Minister Activities

The councils of two of our vacant churches presented new trios to their congregations, from which they were to call a pastor. Hope PRC in Walker, MI was to call from a trio of the Revs. R. Cammenga, S. Houck, and K. Koole; and the congregation of the South Holland, IL PRC would call a pastor from a trio made up of the Revs. A. denHartog, S. Key, and K. Koole.

Denominational Activities

The regular semester for our Protestant Reformed Seminary began on January 21. Three students, D. Kleyn, J. Laning, and M. VanderWal are in their final semester at the seminary. They will continue with regular course work to complete their requirements for graduation, but they also will begin preparing for synodical exams in June, the Lord willing.

We are also happy to note that Seminarians Gary Eriks (2nd-year student) and Nathan Brummel (3rd-year student) have been licensed by our Seminary to speak a word of edification in our churches.

Remember these men, as well as M. Kortering (1st-year student), who study for the ministry of the Word in our churches.

A fourth senior, Mr. D. Thole,

is training for the ministry in the OPC.

Congregational Activities

Having mentioned this year's up-coming synod in June, we are reminded that the Building Committee of the Grandville, MI PRC, this year's host for Synod, was busy asking for donations from their congregation for much needed kitchen supplies, so that all would be ready later this year when synod spends some time at their church. Synod at Grandville will give many from outside the west Michigan area an opportunity to see firsthand the recently completed additions to our Grandville Church.

On Friday, January 3, the installation service and welcome for Rev. C. Terpstra, new pastor at the First PRC in Holland, MI, was held at the Hudsonville, MI PRC.

In order that they might be "well read" in the Word, the congregation of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI was encouraged to pick up a Bible-reading schedule from their pastor, Rev. M. Dick. Although the schedule was not written by him, he did recommend it in the hope that it would serve to give some direction and discipline to reading the Bible for the coming year.

A new monthly newsletter, entitled, appropriately, "Bethel News," was introduced to our Bethel congregation in Itasca, IL in January. This letter was started in the hope of providing a way of making known the needs and joys

of fellow members. It also will provide a way of giving updated information on evangelism and will create an opportunity for Bethel's members to contribute poems and articles.

The congregation of the Randolph, WI PRC was treated to a combined bulletin for their Old Year's night and New Year's morning services. Not only did it include Rev. Key's sermon titles for those two services, it also included a wide variety of appropriate quotes from such men as Matthew Henry, Augustine, Charles Spurgeon, and John Calvin. It also provided a look back at congregational statistics for 1996, including births and baptisms, new members, confessions of faith, those who left by transfer, those who left for other churches, and those who entered into glory. A nice way, we thought, to bring the year to a close.

School Activities

The Hope Foundation of the Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI is once again this year sponsoring a Travelogue Series as a way to generate some income for their foundation. Their goal is, of course, to accumulate a large enough balance that an annual disbursement of earned income will have a positive effect on the operating budget of Hope School. This year there are four travelogues scheduled to be held at Grandville High School. The first one, entitled "Pacific Coast — Top to Bottom," was presented by Ken

Mr. Wigger is an elder of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

Lawrence on January 18, with three more coming in February, March, and April.

We are also happy to report that the "storm of the century," which literally shut down the town of Lynden, WA, only slightly damaged our Covenant Christian School there. And we applaud the

efforts of some of the men of the Lynden, WA PRC who took advantage of the heavy snowfall to raise funds for the school. They organized and went door-to-door in Lynden with shovels and heavy equipment, offering to clear walks and driveways for a donation to Covenant Christian School.

Food For Thought

"You may take one step from Paul to Augustine, then from Augustine to Calvin, and then — well you may keep your foot up a good while before you find such another."

— Charles Spurgeon □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TEACHER NEEDED!

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School is accepting applications for a junior high teaching position for the 1997-1998 school year. Those interested should contact Ron Koole at (616) 453-9717 (school) or (616) 735-1816 (home) or send an application to the school, 1545 Wilson Avenue SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49544.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thanksgiving to God, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. ALVIN DE YOUNG,

celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary on February 14, 1997.

We give thanks to our heavenly Father for our faithful, covenant upbringing, and pray that He will continue to bless them and keep them in the years to come.

"And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13).

- * Dan and Laura Schipper
Bradley, Nicholas, Erika
- * Todd and Lisa Groenendyk
Ethan

Jenison, Michigan

ATTENTION TEACHERS!

East Side Christian School of Grand Rapids, Michigan will be opening on September, 1997, D.V. The Board is seeking one administrator/teacher and two teachers for our multi-grade classrooms ranging from pre-K to grade 9. Part-time positions will be considered. A supportive environment will be provided, including experienced teacher-aides.

Contact Dr. Dwight Monsma at 2141 Jefferson Dr. S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49507 (616) 241-0823 or FAX (616) 942-9894.

NOTICE!!

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School will graduate its 50th class in June, 1997. To commemorate this milestone a celebration is being planned for the evening of April 18, 1997. Please plan to join us.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Junior Mr. and Mrs. Society of Hope PRC (Walker) express Christian sympathy to Jeff and Kathy Terpstra and their children in the death of her father,

HENRY VANDER VENNEN.

May they be comforted in His word and be sustained by God's grace. "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Psalm 29:11).

Prof. R. Dykstra, President
Brenda Langerak, Secretary

ATTENTION TEACHERS!

Hope Christian School of Redlands, California is in need of an administrator/teacher or teacher for the 1997-1998 school year. Grade assignments are negotiable. For more information, interested persons should contact the school principal, Mr. Ed Karsemeyer, at the school at (909) 793-4584, or Doug Pastoor at (909) 792-9392, or Glenn Feenstra at (909) 794-5859.

NOTICE!!

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee Secretary, Mr. Larry Meulenberg (Phone: 453-8466). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, March 4, 1997, D.V.

Student Aid Committee
Larry Meulenberg, Secretary

CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies for the 1997 - 1998 academic year in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches should make application at the March 20, 1997 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

A testimonial from the prospective student's consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith, and upright in walk; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and high school and college transcripts must accompany the application. Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school.

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 20 meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee,
4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, MI 49418.

Jon Huisken, Secretary

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The Protestant Reformed Seminary admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.