BEACON LIGHTS FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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In the discussion of this subject we shall constantly bear in mind that the term “Lent” originally simply meant “springtime,” as is evident to anyone who has any knowledge of the German and the Holland languages. Compare the German: lente.

However, the term “Lent” gradually came to stand for far more than for one of the seasons; it came to stand for a “religious season” on the so-called church calendar. And as such it was closely associated with what is known as the “period of fasting, preparatory to the festival of Easter.” Since this period on the church calendar falls in the early part of the year, it became confused with the season, and thus gradually the word “Lent” was confined to this use.

And, again, we should notice that this season of “fasting” is preparatory to keeping the “feast” of Easter. It belongs to the preparatory, the “pre-requisite” works of Rome, and is in very deed a denial of the only sacrifice of Christ performed for us on the Cross of Calvary.

It is for this reason, that, in our formulation of our topic, we wrote: “Lent, Fasting versus the Passion,” that is, the suffering of Christ.

May we claim your attention for just a bit?

A survey of the practice of “fasting” in all cultures and climes of the world shows that this practice is universal in all religions under the sun, except in those who stand four-square upon the “foundation of Christ’s blood. Remember that I am speaking of fasting in the sense as above circumscribed.

Fasting is practiced by people of so-called “lower cultures,” appearing in variegated forms and usages in all heathenism, as for instance the Celts, the Teutons, the Ancient Mexicans, Peruvians. All of these make “fasting” a means of appeasement to the gods and for the cultivating of the “work of the law in their hearts,” that is, of accusing or of excusing one another.

Thus also there is the custom of “fasting” as prescribed rite in the so-called “intermediate cultures,” by all the “guardians” of the Mystic religions, an attempt to be unified with divinity, as was the case with the Cynics, Stoics, Pythagoreans and the Neo-platonists. Somehow, as we shall point out more briefly later, these all must placate the “gods” by their fastings, as do the Baal priest by their loud cries on Mt. Carmel.

It is claimed by many that the practice of “fasting,” as it has been prescribed by the Church of Rome and also by the
Eastern Greek Orthodox Church, finds its prototype in the fasting of the saints in the Old Testament, as well as in the fasting of Jesus himself, and his instructions that the church should fast.

However, this alleged ground for fasting cannot stand the test of good, sound exegesis of the Scriptures. In Luke 4:2 and Mk. 2:10 we read that Jesus “did not eat for forty days and forty nights.” What is the plain truth here? It is that Jesus is here our “Mediator,” who is entering into his suffering in our behalf; it is “propitiatory fasting,” it is an encounter with all the forces of hell, in order that He might be the Chief Captain and Finisher of our faith, being perfected through sufferings, that we might be brought to the glory that follows His suffering as His fruit and reward. And in Matt. 6:16 Jesus is not instituting “fasting” as a perpetual institution in his church, as he did with the Lord’s Supper, but he is simply warning against the false “fasting” which men were practicing in his day! And the day in which Jesus pronounced this saying concerning the “fast” was such, that he is here standing yet “under the law,” since he had not yet died on the Cross, and poured out the Spirit of Promise on Pentecost. And so it is pure sophistry to attempt to distill from the words of Jesus, or from His fasting a “fasting” as a corporate practice. And that Paul fasted certainly only indicates that “he became to the Jew a Jew,” in order that he might gain the more, and not that he instituted it as a rite in the church.

Hence, the “corporate” practice of fasting is nothing more than the gradual development of what was simply voluntary practice of individuals into a “canonized rite” in the Roman church, since they do not proceed from the biblical principle of “sin and grace,” but rather from the fundamentally heathenish, dualistic principle of the “natural” and the “super-natural.” Into the warp and woof of this dualism of the natural and the supernatural also the rite of fasting arose; it is the attempt of man by his “asceticism” to raise himself from the plane of the sensual-natural to the super-natural.

Such is the very bone and marrow of all “asceticism” with Rome, and with all heathenish cultures, who have fallen from the faith, having their conscience seared with an iron, speaking and teaching the doctrines of devils! For such is the principle of all who proclaim the touch not, taste not, handle not, marry not, eat not doctrines, which indeed are a religion of self-will, but do not hold on to the Head, Christ. (Col. 2)

For the term “asceticism” comes from the Greek term “askeesis,” and means: practice, bodily exercise, and, more especially, athletic training. Of this Paul says, referring to this bodily exercise of fasting, abstaining from marriage: “But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness: For bodily exercise profiteth little: godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation,” I Tim. 4:7-9.

Paul here refers, no doubt, to the asceticism, the fastings of the Gnostics of his day, who taught the works of the law of “fasting” as a means to purification, as penitential self-purification! The sin here is that this is the Pelagian lie, which looks for the root of evil everywhere except where it really is. It does not look for it in the heart of man, and all the good alone in Christ’s death and resurrection for us, and alone in us by the life-giving Spirit!

Such is also the fastings of all asceticism today—even in those who make of “Lent” simply, as they say, “prompted by the desire to do the will of God so that no personal element of self-satisfaction may enter in to vitiate this desire” (Catholic Encyclopedia).
Let this last sentence not be confused with the **two parts** of true conversion as given in Question 88 of the Heidelberg Catechism. For the “true conversion” is not asceticism, but is a claiming in joy in God through Christ, that all things are of us, we are of Christ and Christ is God’s. Only it deplores the fact that sin, the flesh, the “old man” always and again assaults us lest we walk in the works which are out of faith, according to God’s law and unto his glory! For, let it be observed, that “conversion” is not the same as “penance,” that is, the penance of the ascetic, whether this be Romish heresy, or whether it be one of those lower or higher planes of heathen culture.

When, therefore, we speak of “Lenten sermons” we do not take the term “Lent” in its accepted sense, but rather assume that it merely means: the suffering of Christ for His people.

However, we, who do not “keep days, ears, months, etc.” as a “rite,” a preparation for something, a certain prerequisite “work,” — we, I say, — should bear in mind the beautiful Question and answer in the Heidelberg Catechism, Question 44, where we read: “Why is there added, “he descended into hell? (answer) “That in my greatest temptations, I may be assured, and wholly comfort myself in this, that my Lord Jesus Christ, by his inexpressible anguish, pains, terrors, and hellish agonies, in which he was plunged during all his sufferings, but especially on the Cross, hath delivered me from the anguish and torments of hell.”

Nay, we shall not have an ascetic “contemplation” of the sufferings of Christ, but rather a believing reception of all the benefits of the Cross in our “Lenten-sermons”!

Thus only shall all flesh admit that no flesh is justified before the Lord by works of the law, but only by a living faith in the crucified and risen Savior.

G. L.
EDITORIALS

NEW FACES

You may have already noticed that this issue is somewhat different from preceding ones. It is true that the contents and appearance are still the same. However, there have been changes made as far as the various editors are concerned. Therefore, I think it is proper that in this editorial we bid farewell to those who leave, and welcome those who take their places. This we do on behalf of the Beacon Lights' Staff as well as the Federation Board of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

The first change which must be noted is that of Editor-in-Chief. Rev. J. McCollam, of Holland, has served faithfully over the past several years. I know that he very much enjoyed the task. He spent much time on Beacon Lights, and very gladly traveled the distance from Holland to Grand Rapids to lead the staff meetings. However, because of his many other duties, he felt that he could no longer put in the necessary amount of time and work, and therefore believed that he should resign. We are indeed sorry to see him leave, and wish to thank him publicly for all that he has done for Beacon Lights.

Our new editor is quite well acquainted with Beacon Lights. In his pre-marital state he spent many hours with the staff. And now, after being away from Beacon Lights for a few years, he has consented to come back and serve as editor. His name is Mr. Charles Westra, probably better known as Chuck. Under his guidance we hope and pray that, with God's blessing, Beacon Lights may continue to be a means whereby our young people may be edified and strengthened in the faith.

The second new addition to the staff is Tom Newhof, Jr., as Business Manager. He replaces Don Faber, who recently received a new job and, therefore, has been unable to take the time necessary for this task. We also desire to thank him for all he has done for Beacon Lights in the past as business manager.

Two of our regular contributing editors also found it necessary to resign, since they too thought that they did not have time to do justice to their departments. They are Dwight Monsma, editor of Nature Study, and John Haan, editor of Current Comments. They too deserve our appreciation and thanks for their many fine articles in the past.

The new editor for Nature Study is Miss Agatha Lubbers. Miss Lubbers teaches at our Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, and she is very much interested in the study of nature.

Jim Jonker takes over the rubric: Current Comments. Jim is now a student at Grand Rapids Christian High. He is a very capable young man and should supply us with many interesting and informative articles in the future.

There has been one other new appointment. Dave Engelsma, of our Hope church, replaces Miss Ruth Dykstra as the regional staff writer from Michigan.

Once more, we thank those who are now leaving, for doing their jobs so faithfully and so well. At the same time we welcome those who were willing to step in and take over.

New Departments

This has been the problem which has faced the staff as well as the Federation Board with regard to Beacon Lights. W
have felt for some time that Beacon Lights should again be expanded so as to include other departments. The main question is, what will they be? For this, we would ask your consideration and cooperation. Young People, it has always been emphasized that Beacon Lights is your magazine. Now here we present you with the opportunity to show how much you really think of it, and how much responsibility you feel toward it. Nor would we exclude our older readers. We ask all of you to consider the following.

Everyone must have some opinion about what they would like to read in Beacon Lights, outside of the departments which we now have. Talk it over with your friends, and by all means, write in to our Editor concerning your ideas. I know how easy it is to let Henry or John do it. Therefore I would suggest that before you forget, you sit down and write your impressions — and mail the letter. Show your concern about the future growth of Beacon Lights.

Of course, we are not without some ideas of our own. I would present them now and also ask you to comment on them. In the first place, we thought that a department treating some phase of education would be worthwhile. Here again the question would be what should be treated. Such a department could deal with the practical aspects of education, or with the true philosophy behind Protestant Reformed education. If you would favor such a department, whom would you desire to see as editor of it?

Another suggestion, which may contain great possibilities, was to include in Beacon Lights the department of Book Reviews again. The idea is not to do as was formerly done, that is, to review those 'tear-jerking,' pseudo-religious novels which can hardly be classified as either literature or as religious. Rather, the idea is to review only those books which every Protestant Reformed home library should have. Qualified men in our midst, probably our ministers, could individually list approximately twelve books which they consider necessary in our homes. From these, a committee would choose about six books which would be reviewed over the period of a year. The reviews then could be given by those best acquainted with the particular book. In this way you, our reader, would be guided in your choice of books in building your library. Questions as to what is the best commentary to have in your libraries, which books could best aid us in our society preparation, etc., would be answered to your satisfaction.

Of course, if such a department is desired, it would not end merely with reviews. We could follow up the reviews by offering the book to you, possibly at a reduced rate. Thus you would know not only which books to buy, but you would be given the opportunity to purchase them.

If you do nothing else, we certainly would appreciate your response to this last suggestion. For if we are to carry it through, we must know that you want it. Also we must know positively how many would be willing to take each book offered (unless you already have it in your library). If we are to begin a Reformed "book club," and offer discounts, we need a fairly large number of members.

It should not really be necessary to point out the values of participating in such a venture, however, here are a few. You would not be buying books haphazardly or arbitrarily. You would receive, at a discount, books you should have in your library. Also the reviews in Beacon Lights would guide you as to the best way to make use of such books.

If you are favorably inclined to this idea, then by all means write our new editor: Mr. Charles Westra, 1722 Alto, S. E., Grand Rapids, Mich. Remember, it would be a shame if you favor the idea,
Preparation

The Means Of Grace (II)

In our last article, we concluded the discussion with the remark that there was only one means which God used to give grace to His people; and that one means of grace was the preaching of the Word.

Generally the means of grace are considered to he of two kinds: the preaching of the Word, and the proper administration of the sacraments. Thus we read in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day XXV, 65 and 67, "Since then we are made partakers of Christ and all his benefits by faith only, whence doth this faith proceed? From the Holy Ghost, who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and confirms it by the use of the sacraments.

"Are both word cud sacraments, then, ordained and appointed for this end, that they may direct our faith to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, as the only ground of our salvation? Yes, indeed: for the Holy Ghost teaches us in the gospel, and assures us by the sacraments, that the whole of our salvation depends upon that one sacrifice of Christ which he offered for us on the cross."

So also we read in article XXXIII of the Belgic Confession, "We believe, that our gracious God, on account of our weakness and infirmities hath ordained the sacraments for us, thereby to seal unto us his promises, and to be pledges of the good will and grace of God toward us, and also to nourish and strengthen our faith; which he hath joined to the Word of the gospel, the better to present to our senses, both that which he signifies to us by his Word, and that which he works inwardly in our hearts, thereby assuring and confirming in us the salvation which he imparts to us . . ."

But even though it is certainly correct to maintain that God bestows grace to the elect by means of the preaching and the sacraments, nevertheless, the means of grace are essentially one, that is, the preaching of the Word. For it is indeed true that the sacraments themselves are also the preaching of the Word. They are such in a unique sense, for the Word is preached by means of visible signs, and the promise of that Word is sealed to the elect by means of these signs and seals. We shall have more to say about this in some later article.

In this sense, christian discipline also can be conceived of as a means of grace, for also christian discipline is part of the preaching of the Word. It is interesting to notice in this connection that the means of grace are identical with the marks of the true church as discussed in article XXIX of the Belgic Confession. It is true that christian discipline is not a means of grace to reprobate seed which are cut off from the church, but the purpose of the exercise of the key power is always to save. When a person is become the object of censure by the consistory, the elders have the purpose in mind to bring him to repentance. And therefore, if that purpose is attained, it is evident that God has also used key power to apply grace to the heart of one of His people. And in a broader sense of the word, key power and the exercise of it is also a means of grace to the congregation as a whole. For they come to a consciousness of their participation in the grace of Jesus Christ as it manifests it-
self in penitence and a sorrow after sin when they see discipline applied to those who do not repent of their sins. This is very beautifully expressed in the prayer of the Form of Excommunication: "O! Righteous God and merciful Father, we bewail our sin before thy high majesty, and acknowledge that we have deserved the grief and sorrow caused unto us by the cutting off of this our late fellow-member; yea, we all deserve, shouldst Thou enter into judgment with us, by reason of our great transgressions, to be cut off and banished from thy presence. But O Lord, Thou art merciful unto us for Christ's sake; forgive us our trespasses, for we heartily repent of them, and daily work in our hearts a greater measure of sorrow for them; that we may, fearing thy judgments which thou executest against the stiff-necked, endeavor to please thee;..."

God may use many other things to apply grace to His people and to cause them to grow in grace. In the daily walk of a child of God in the midst of this world; his godly conversation, his conduct in relation to his family and friends and brethren in the church, his devotions with his family, his study of the Scriptures in private or in society, may all be a means to a greater consciousness of his salvation and the strengthening of his faith. But none of these things are means of grace apart from the preaching of the Word. Only as all of his activities are done in the light of, and are understood by means of the preaching of God's Word, will they be used to strengthen faith. For by the Word can we learn to know our proper conduct; by the light only of that Word can we understand that which we read by ourselves or in a society; with the guidance of that Word, and it alone, do we understand our relation to God as governing our devotions and our spiritual conduct in the home.

It is therefore, also possible that our study and reading of secular material may also be a means of grace. I do not have in mind all kinds of trash and filth which clutter the market today, but I refer particularly to our studies in school at any level of education, and our reading of books which others have written as well as reading of the newspapers and other news magazines. But again, this is only possible under the preaching of the gospel. For only in the light of that preaching can we properly interpret our secular studies and the history of the world as it is taking place about us. But as in the light of that Word, we also do interpret properly, so that these things may strengthen our faith.

And so in the broadest sense of the word, all things are means of grace, for God uses all things to save His people and bring them into highest glory. And although we can never consciously receive grace through all things while on this earth, nevertheless, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28).

H. Hanko

NEW FACES

(Continued from page 5)

and yet it is not realized because you and others failed to take the time to write.

Finally, I would give full credit and thanks to Mr. Al Heemstra who presented us with the suggestion of the possibility of such a book review department.

Gise Van Baren

Notice to all Contributors
The address of our new editor is:
MR. CHARLES WESTRA
1722 Alto, S. E.
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN.
Is Your God Sovereign?

Young people, may we ask you for a few minutes of your time to consider with us the most important question of your life?

No, we do not have in mind the question of your life’s occupation, nor the question of marriage, nor that of the church, however important these and other related questions may be. We have in mind a matter that supercedes the combination of all of these questions which have significance only for this present life and are, therefore, questions of temporal significance.

Our question is first because it is of primary importance and because all of these other matters can only be determined in the light of our answer to it. Furthermore, the question we have in mind is of such magnitude that, consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, we are unable to evade it and are busy every moment in some way or another expressing our answer to it.

That question concerns GOD! Although there are many possible formulations of the question, we would like to put it in a very concise and personal form and ask, “What is your God?”

From the point of view of our Confession we will all unitedly agree and without hesitation, declare: “The one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God, is ETERNAL, INCOMPREHENSIBLE, INVISIBLE, IMMUTABLE, INFINITE, AND ALMIGHTY.” (Belgic Conf. Art. 1) And to confess all of this more concisely, we may put it in the familiar phrase, “GOD IS SOVEREIGN.” Indeed so, and lest there be some misunderstanding as to our meaning, we will even add the qualitative phrase, “ABSOLUTELY SOVEREIGN,” and should this not suffice we will explain still further by pointing to the fact that GOD IS LORD over every creature, small and great, for everything He upholds and governs by His Almighty Providence so that His eternal and immutable counsel is executed with perfect exactitude. Not only does He rule over the brute creation and controls what we often refer to as “the powers of nature” but also the free actions of His moral, rational creatures are determined by Him. From the beginning to the end there is never anything that He has not purposed to be, and always all things are just as He would have them. GOD IS SOVEREIGN!

To acknowledge formally the truth of this confession and to admit freely that it can easily be proven from Holy Writ is one thing. To really believe it and to maintain it consistently, without compromise, in all of its practical implications is quite another. There are but few who are able to do the latter, but the former is so general among people of historically Reformed stock, that the saying, “God is Sovereign,” has almost become trite; and when it is used, many do not even know its plain meaning. Although they do not dare to come out and openly deny the truth of the Sovereignty of God, but prefer to pretend to believe it, an attempted discussion of the subject with them will uncover the alarming truths that:

1. They do not sense the beauty, experience the comfort, or know the power of this confession for . . .

2. They prefer not to discuss it but before they can be made to admit the perfectly legitimate conclusions that may
be drawn from the truth of the Sovereignty of God, they will hasten to distract your attention to what they call “other things in the Bible.” These “other things” are supposed to conflict with the truth of Divine Sovereignty and are intentionally cast upon the way in an attempt to block the drawing of clear inferences and legitimate conclusions from the truth. This is indeed a subtle attempt to force you to discard the truth and accept error. You have heard it in many forms. For example: “Man’s responsibility and Divine Sovereignty in the absolute sense are irreconcilable; the addressability of the Gospel cannot be maintained if absolute, double Predestination be preached, etc., etc.” Beware of this!

(3) When they are confronted with the alternative of denying God’s Sovereignty in the absolute sense as the inevitable result of their clinging to their erroneous conception of “other things in the Bible,” they do not hesitate to seek a refuge in the seemingly pious argument, “These things are a mystery.” And that stifles all further discussion.

However, that cannot be the end of the matter. Error is never suppressed that way. It is only given a footing from which it can now throw its poisonous fangs. Attention is immediately concentrated on those so-called “other things.” God’s Sovereignty is slightly or entirely ignored. Without an open denial of it in relation to the Counsel of Predestination, the gospel (?) is then preached as a well-meaning offer of salvation on the part of God to all men without distinction. While abstractly admitting that God sovereignly determines the destiny of His moral, rational creatures, it is maintained that in His intention, the Sovereign (?) God desires the salvation of all men. While claiming to maintain that the Promise of God is a solemn oath which God swears by Himself to show unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of His counsel, it is emphatically avowed that “God promises everyone of you that, if you believe, you will be saved.” Acknowledging that man is “dead in trespasses and sins” and, therefore, totally depraved, it is nevertheless insisted upon that “man’s act of conversion is a pre-requisite to entering the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Apart now from the theological absurdities involved in the above, we are at present solely concerned with the question “Where do these things lead us in answering the question, ‘What is God’?”

A God that offers salvation to all is nothing more than my equal. Salvation and the obtaining of salvation then becomes a bargaining process in which I and God stand in relation to each other as two equal parties in much the same way as I and my grocer. The latter may have some day-old vegetables which he has not been able to bargain off and offers them to me free of charge. I may take them or leave them as I see fit. Another possibility is that which makes a mockery of God, assuming God to offer that which He does not have to give. In that case the grocer may greet me at the door of his store and offer me all the pork in his meat-case while he knows that he has only beef. Such might be considered a cute prank, but to make a prank of the gospel is mockery. At any rate, a God Who degrades Himself to the level of man to enter bargaining relationships with him reduces Himself to man’s equal, loses His sovereignty, and, in that case, man can just as well worship and serve himself. Why not?

A God Who seeks the salvation of all men but Whose intentions and purposes are frustrated by man is less and weaker than Man. Likewise, He becomes a God, whose work is conditioned by, and dependent upon, the work of man. Such a God is surely unworthy of worship, service, and honor. If such is the case, the whole reality of the truth becomes twisted. Then Man, the greater, is ele-
vated to the throne and God, the lesser, becomes a servant, bowing before the throne and saying to man, “What can I do for you?” Such is also evident in the logical conclusion of such doctrine as seen in the modern altar-call. Have you not heard it? “God is willing, God is waiting, God is wanting so to save you... won't you let Him; open your heart to Him now and say to Him that you will accept Him (as your servant, of course).” If such is God, he is not needed; and man can better save himself.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN! There is only one God. There is none beside Him. GOD does, with all things, all of the time, all of His eternal good pleasure. He asks counsel from no one. He has no need of assistance. He is dependent upon none. As Elisha Cole said: “That whatsoever things are requisite to salvation are given of God freely to all the elect, and wrought in them effectually by the Divine power, in order that salvation to which He hath appointed them.” And again, “It (the covenant of grace) therefore runs not upon conditional or fallible terms, ‘I will, if ye will,’ but absolute and sovereign, ‘I will, and ye shall.’ This covenant does not only give life upon terms of believing, but faith also, and holiness as the necessary means of attaining that life, and this, not upon your ingenuous compliance, as some term it, or better improvement of what you have in common with other men, BUT OF GRACE.”

And grace is Sovereign for GOD is Sovereign. A God that is less in any degree than ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGN is unworthy of praise, honor, and glory.

“What, then, is your God?”

G. Vanden Berg

A CHRISTIAN

Is Possessed of a Purifying Hope:

We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. 1 John 3:2, 3

Has a Spiritual Love for the Brethren:

We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. 1 John 4:1

Tests every Teaching by God's Word:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 1 John 4:1

Has a Life of Victory over the World:

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God. 1 John 5:4, 5

Has the Confidence of Answered Prayer:

And this is the confidence that we have in Him, if we ask anything according to His will, heareth us. 1 John 5:16

TOWARD CHRISTIAN GROWTH

If by divine grace you have “been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,” even “by that word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever,” not only in the world and the Church, but in particular souls in which it is sown; you will “as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” And though, in the most advanced state of religion on earth, we are but infants in comparison of what we hope to be, when, in the heavenly world, we arrive “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” yet, as we have some exercise of a sanctified reason, we shall be solicitous that we may be growing and thriving.

—Philip Doddridge
II. The Martyrdom of Stephen:
   A. The Occasion: 6:9-12
      1. The dispute with Stephen:
         a. What is the significance of the word “then” in vs. 9? Does it give any
            indication of the real nature of the dispute and of the subject of the dis-
            pute?
         b. Who were the disputants?
            1) Identify these Libertines, Cyrenians, etc.
            2) Why did they have separate synagogues in Jerusalem?
            3) Why should Stephen come into contact with these particular men?
            4) Who began the dispute, they or Stephen?
            5) Is there any possible association between Saul and “them of Cilicia?”
         c. What was the outcome of the dispute, vs. 10?
            1) Why could they not resist Stephen?
            2) Was this, then, a case of intellectual misunderstanding, of failing to be
               convinced that Stephen was right, or was it again a spiritual, ethical
               issue, in which they knew and understood the truth, but hated it and
               the man who proclaimed it?
      2. Stephen captured and brought to the council, vss. 11, 12:
         a. The suborning of men:
            1) Why did they use other men as their tools in this matter?
            2) How is this testimony of these men to be explained? Did these men
               deliberately falsify Stephen's words, or were they men who possibly
               actually believed that Stephen spake differently of Moses and God
               than he should have, and of whom the leaders took advantage?
            3) Does this accusation of vs. 11 indicate anything of the contents of
               Stephen's preaching and answer to the disputants of vs. 9?
         b. The stirring up of the people:
            1) Why did they stir up the people and the elders and the scribes? Why
               not simply themselves go to the council and register a charge against
               Stephen?
            2) Did the stirring up of the people have anything to do with the inciting
               of the scribes and elders?
            3) To what “council” was Stephen brought? Why was he not brought
               before the Roman authorities at all?
         c. Why was Stephen the object of their persecution at this time instead of
            one of the apostles?
   B. The Trial of Stephen. 6:13 to 7:57.
      1. The charge:
         a. What charges were brought against Stephen? Is there any essential dif-
ference between the charges mentioned here and those in vs. 11?

b. In what sense were these witnesses false?
   1) Was the content of their testimony false?
   2) Or was their interpretation of Stephen’s teachings false?

c. To what do they refer in vs. 14 when they accuse Stephen of saying “that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place?” Cf. Matt. 24; Mark 14:58; John 2:19.

d. What was the charge in connection with the “customs” of Moses?
   1) What were these customs?
   2) Cf. Matt. 5:17; Matt. 15:1, ff.

e. Again, do these charges reflect anything of the content of Stephen’s dispute in vs. 9?

f. Was there any truth in the charges? Was there actually contradiction between the position of Jesus and the Old Testament order of things?

2. The appearance of Stephen, 6:15:

   a. What is meant by the fact that Stephen’s face was as the face of an angel? How did he look?

   b. How is this appearance to be explained?
      1) Was it a natural occurrence, — the glow of a fanatic’s face, the light of natural calmness?
      2) Or was it a wonder of God?

   c. What was the significance of this wonder? A wonder is also a sign: what was here signified?
      1) Was this merely in general a heavenly testimony of approval upon Stephen publicly?
      2) Or was it a reflection of the glory of “Jesus of Nazareth” and the glory of Moses? Was it also therefore a testimony of the “vail upon their heart?” Confer II Cor. 3:13-18; Exodus 34:29-35.

   d. What should have been the reaction of the council (as those who claimed to be faithful to Moses) when they received this striking testimony? Did this aggravate their guilt also? Could they claim ignorance and innocence in the face of such testimony?


   Note: It is almost impossible to treat this defense of Stephen verse by verse, lest we spend too much time on details. We may notice that:

   a. Stephen follows the historical line, and gives a thorough review of the history from Abraham over Moses and David to Christ.

   b. Stephen traces:
      1) The positive line of the covenant and the great wonderworks of God in the old dispensation.
      2) The negative line of those who always rebelled and disobeyed and resisted the Holy Ghost,—the fathers of his accusers, who killed the prophets.
c. He does not ignore the accusation brought against him, but also traces the idea of the true worship of God, the idea of the tabernacle and the temple, the apostacy of their fathers from that tabernacle and temple, and lays much emphasis on Moses and the history connected with him, showing at once that he does not oppose, but honors Moses.

We will divide the passage into various sections, and ask a few pertinent questions. For the rest you may raise various questions concerning the details in your societies.

a. The history from Abraham to Joseph. 2-16.

1) Harmonize the historical data given in 2-4 with that of the Old Testament, Genesis 11 and 12.
   a) Did the appearance of God mentioned here take place in Haran or in Ur?

2) How is the promise of God and the faith of Abraham emphasized in this passage? What has this to do with Stephen's defense against the accusations made?

3) Why the emphasis on the "covenant of circumcision" in vs. 8? Cf. vs. 51.

4) Joseph:
   a) Why the emphasis on the envy of the brethren? With what does it stand in contrast? vs. 9, 10.
   b) Vs. 14 mentions 75 souls; the Old Testament, 70; How is this to be explained?
   c) What has this history to do with Stephen's defense?

b. The bondage and deliverance through Moses. 17-43.

1) Show how Stephen emphasizes the disobedience of the fathers to Moses.

2) Does this passage indicate anything as to Stephen's own attitude toward Moses?

3) Trace the realization of the promise in this period?

4) Was there any temple when God appeared to Moses? Was the revelation of God and the true worship of God limited, then, as to its essential nature, to an earthly tabernacle or temple? Was the place where God appeared to Moses nevertheless holy, a sanctuary? 30-33.

5) Does not Stephen show that the temple as such was not essential to salvation, and that the promise and salvation were long before the Old Testament temple and tabernacle? God appears to Abraham; He is with Joseph in Egypt; He saves Israel through Moses,—all without a temple.

6) What is the idea of Stephen in vs. 37? Why the reference to the promise of a prophet like unto Moses?
7) In the light of vss. 39-43, how must the sin of the golden calf be character-
ized,—was it an isolated instance of idolatry, or a principal departure from
the service of God that haunted Israel all through their history, and de-
veloped?

8) Is that apostacy outside of God's control, or is it, according to vss. 42, 43,
according to God's own judgment? Cf. also Rom. 1:24, ff.

c. The tabernacle and the temple. 44-50.
1) What is the main thought of this passage?
   a) Is the earthly temple essential? What was its function in the old dis-
      pensation?
   b) Or is the emphasis on the One Who dwells in the temple, and who
      "dwelleth not in temples made with hands."
2) How does Stephen prove his point here?

d. Conclusion: 51-53.
1) Is the accusation of Stephen in 51 a sudden and disconnected outburst, or
   does it follow from his speech?
2) How does he connect the fathers' slaying of the prophets and his accusers'
   slaying of the Christ? Why is Christ here called the "Just One?"
3) Why does Stephen add the thought of vs. 53? Does the O. T. speak of this
   "disposition of angels?" Cf. also Heb. 2:2, Gal. 3:19.

4. Stephen's death. vss. 54-60.
   a. The end of the trial. 54-57.
      1) What brought the sudden end to their willingness to hear Stephen? Is this
         characteristic of unbelief?
      2) Did Stephen have a vision, or was this an actual appearance of Christ to him?
      3) What was the purpose of this revelation? In the light of 6:15 could the
         council believe Stephen's testimony that he saw the glory of God and the
         person of Jesus?
      4) What is the meaning of the fact that Stephen sees Jesus "standing" instead
         of "sitting" at the right hand of God?
      5) Was there a formal end to the trial? Why not? Of what is this sudden
         and informal end of the trial an indication?
   b. The stoning of Stephen. 58-60.
      1) How is it to be explained that the Roman permission to execute a man
         was not obtained?
      3) Who was present at this stoning, and what part did he play in it? 7:58, 8:1.
      4) Of what does Stephen's prayer in vs. 59 remind us?
      5) Why does Stephen pray "with a loud voice," vs. 60?
      6) Explain this last prayer of Stephen. Is it an instance of obedience to the
         injunction of Christ in Matt. 5:44, ff.? Does Stephen pray here in the same
         way that Christ prayed on the cross?
      7) Was this prayer answered? Proof?
      8) What does it mean that Stephen "fell asleep?"

H.C.H
A Would-Be Weather Prophet

February 2. What does it make you think of? February 2 naturally turns my thoughts to the significance of this day in the folklore of our country, especially in the eastern part of the country. The day is “Ground-Hog Day.” On this day the ground hog or woodchuck, as he is commonly called or even whistle-peg because of the whistling sound he makes when annoyed, supposedly awakens from his winter sleep, comes out of his burrow and observes the surroundings. If the sun is shining so as to cast a shadow, as it undoubtedly will in the North Temperate Belt on February 2 because of the un, the animal is frightened by its shadow and immediately goes back into its den where it remains for an additional six weeks. Its retirement is supposed to be followed by six more weeks of winter. This legend is connected with the idea that a warm February prognosticates a late spring. There are many people who still judge the approaching spring by the weather on “Ground-Hog Day.” We would hesitate to say that the woodchuck is a false prophet but rather say that he is not a prophet at all. It is quite a safe prediction to make on February 2, especially in our N. E. States, that we can expect about six more weeks of winter. This is true whether the sun shines or not in our N. E. States on February 2.

This folk tale calls our attention to an interesting habit on the part of some animals going into hibernation. Some of the animals that hibernate in one way or another are bears, skunks, dormice, squirrels, prairie dogs, badgers, and bats. Toads, frogs, and some reptiles have similar long periods of inactivity. A few butterflies and many other different kinds of insects also hibernate. The ground hog is a good example of this particular animal activity. This activity is particularly characteristic of those mammals and rodents which eat herbs and vegetables.

The woodchuck is a small mammal of North America. The common ground hog of the Eastern states and Canada is typical of the group. It is about fifteen to eighteen inches long and has long, coarse fur, which is blackish or grayish above and chestnut-red below. Its legs are short and thick, and its tail is bushy. It has a broad, flat head and long whiskers. The woodchuck usually makes its home on the edge of a sparsely wooded place, and digs its burrow so that it has several compartments. It digs with its front paws and scrapes the dirt out of the burrow with its hind feet. The woodchuck is a pest when it lives near farms because its favorite foods are such crops as red clover, alfalfa, and early garden vegetables.

During the late summer and early fall, we can see this little animal scurrying about seeking all types of vegetation. He is not hoarding a stock-pile of food like many other rodents but he is busy stuffing himself with clover, vegetables, and gnarled apples. He piles up a great padding of fat around his shoulders and tawny chest and a heavy accumulation of fat on the axils of his legs. In the intervals of his munchings and nibblings, he sits blinking on his earth mound to warm himself in the slanting rays of the autumn sun that turns him to a golden chestnut, or he pads heavily down the burrow mouth carrying stray bits and wisps of hay. These are to line his sleeping place far away down below the frost
line. Week by week he becomes plumper and with the shortening of the days his scamper slows down gradually to a somnolent waddle.

When the temperature consistently goes below 50 degrees it is time for a woodchuck to go to sleep. Not that temperature is the only determining factor, because also the factors of diminishing light and a lack of food are causes for this habit. And we must not forget that behind this all, the all controlling providential hand of God is operative. A stray woodchuck can be seen as late as December but commonly by the time October comes the woodchuck (Marmota monax) has withdrawn for good.

In the security of his nest chamber underground below the frost line where the temperature remains nearly constant and it is always dark the woodchuck lies scarcely moving. Gradually he dozes, then sleeps heavily, and finally slips into the deeps of hibernation. His plump furry body is curled up almost in a ball and he lies in a comatose state. This is hibernation.

The word hibernation means winter sleep and comes from the Latin word for winter, hibernus. During this period of hibernation the vital processes are reduced to a minimum; the heartbeat down to a 20th of its usual rate, respiration down to the almost imperceptible point of only 10-12 times an hour, and body temperature down from the normal temperature of 97 degrees to the almost death-like temperature of 40-50 degrees. The woodchuck lies in a sleep that is as deep as nonbeing as can come to any creature. The reserves of fatty tissues, built up during the summer months furnish sufficient nutriment for a long period of inactivity and lethargy.

As we have mentioned earlier in the article, tradition has it, that woodchucks wake up on “Ground-Hog Day,” February 2. This is not true but it can be made so if one goes out on “Ground-Hog Day” to look for an emerging woodchuck. He can usually find him. No matter how deep the snow, some burrow site can be found where some woodchuck has been obscurely moved to wake up and scrape the snow away and peek out for a look around. This of course is also true on the day before “Ground-Hog Day” or any day after it. For some reason, no one knows why, an occasional woodchuck may awaken and come lumbering forth.

Whatever an occasional woodchuck may do, most of the woodchucks in this area emerge from hibernation about the middle of March. The process of awakening in the woodchuck is not nearly so gradual as his falling asleep in the fall. It may occur within an hour. Woodchucks awakened too fast have been known to die, however.

He stirs in his den, uncurls, stretches and gets drowsily to his feet. His temperature immediately begins rising toward normal and may even run considerably past normal for a while until it levels off as his body economy stabilizes. Marmota monax, wobbling and teetering a little comes yawning to his burrow mouth, looks out over the March pasture, and very shortly sets out to find something to eat and a mate. And so the woodchuck is able to begin his season of activities, because of the wonder of hibernation. Who can find it out? Only God has the answer. Glory be to His Name!

God has provided in a different but interesting way for the winter safety of His creatures. Man has the ability to meet the crisis of winter by dressing more warmly. Birds have the migratory instinct to escape the icy blasts of winter. To mammals, who cannot migrate so easily, God gives other means of preservation. Many are, consequently, supplied with a heavier coat of fur and remain active during the cold of winter. To the woodchuck and many other of his kind

(Continued on page 22)
Another Civil War?

No doubt all will remember that in the not-too-distant past, the United States Supreme Court made a unique decision, a decision that greatly affected the South. This decision, which stirred up waves of southern protest, forbade segregated public schools, that is, separate schools for white and negro children. To most southern negroes, this meant that the gates of opportunity were no longer closed. To most southern white people this meant the gates of chaos were opening. And the whites, used to segregation in almost everything, including golf-courses, buses, restaurants, were swift to fight back in language and actions reminiscent of Civil War days.

In the Virginia Senate a rather novel plan was introduced. A constitutional amendment was proposed which would affirm the Supreme Court’s power to desegregate schools. Then, the South confidently hopes that this amendment will be defeated, since it is necessary for three-fourths of the states to approve it in order to make it law. With twelve fairly solid Southern negative votes, only one more state would be needed.

The Alabama legislature passed a much more rebellious resolution, stating that until the issue was decided by submission to the states of a constitutional amendment, “The legislature of Alabama declares the decision and orders of the Supreme Court of the U.S. relating to separation of the races in the public schools are, as a matter of right, null, void, and no effect; and the legislature of Alabama declares to all men that, as matter of right, this State is not bound abide thereby.” Any history student certainly remembers that the doctrines of states’ rights and nullification were also boldly defended by John C. Calhoun shortly before the War between the States.

In Mississippi, newly inaugurated governor James Coleman, flatly opposed to the Supreme Court’s order, stated, “Those who propose to mix the races in our public schools might as well try to dip the Atlantic dry with a teaspoon.” Later, however, he said, “I believe in preserving segregation but I don’t believe in making war over it. . . I am a Southerner, all right, but I am also an American. . . ‘Our Federal Union must and shall be preserved.’ That’s what I believe.”

In the early part of February at the State Capital in Richmond, Virginia, four governors, namely, Stanley of Virginia, Coleman of Mississippi, Timmerman of South Carolina, and Griffin of Georgia, proclaimed a pattern of opposition to the Supreme Court. The governors recommended to their state legislatures, “That there be adopted a resolution of interposition, or protest in appropriate language, against the encroachment of the central government upon the sovereignty of the several states and their people.” Griffin of Georgia, whom many sports fans will recall as the one who tried to prevent the Georgia Tech and University of Pittsburgh bowl game because of a second-string Negro half-back on Pittsburgh’s team, wanted to use stronger language. He insisted that interposition implied (1) a state’s right to nullify federal laws, (2) a state governor’s right to call out state forces to defend states’ rights. But Griffin’s reckless bluster was not yet the tone of the South’s leaders. The other three governors reflected the
painful tension of serious Southerners who are unable to face the prospect of desegregation and yet are reluctant to defy the authority of the U.S.

Demonstrators, 250 strong, appeared at the State Capital in Nashville, Tennessee, carrying banners reading, "TENNESSEE BETRAYED, SEGREGATION OR WAR, and GOD, THE ORIGINAL SEGREGATIONIST." Governor Frank Clement, showing his intelligence and sense of responsibility, heard out the demonstrators who wanted to have the Supreme Court's order also declared "null and void," but said he did not approve of their agitation and "pressure tactics" and refused to give them the action they wanted.

After a long fight in court Autherine Lucy, a 26 year old Negro, finally won admittance to the University of Alabama. She was, however, under restrictions and might not sleep in any university dormitory or eat in any university dining room. She was trailed by a policeman constantly, for her own protection, for her fellow students soon started violent demonstrations. Crosses were burned in Ku Klux Klan style, cries of "To hell with Autherine" and "Keep `Bama white" filled the air, cars were mobbed and wrecked, eggs and stones were boldly thrown. Finally the Board of Trustees succumbed to mob rule and suspended Miss Lucy for her safety and the safety of others at the university. Although contempt of court charges were filed by her lawyer, whatever the legal outcome, Autherine faces an uncertain future at the university. The police had done little against the mob and university officials seem unconcerned. But Miss Lucy won't give up. "I merely wanted an education," she said, "I will keep fighting until I get one."

This racial segregation issue, much to the Democrat's dismay, will undoubtedly be a campaign issue also this year. This puts them in a quandary since the South is, for the most part, Democratic and yet 80% of the Northern Negroes vote their way. If the party platform favors segregation, they quite probably will lose a lot of northern support while if desegregation is favored, it might cost them their "Solid South." This question could easily cause a severe split in that party, practically guaranteeing a Republican victory. The Democrats, thus far, have tried to bypass the issue but the Republicans, of course, chose not to ignore it.

Aside from the possible election results of this fight, people are wondering what its outcome will be. The courts and the federal government are unrelenting in their action; yet the South is just as staunch and persistent in maintaining their cause. Could this lead to another civil war? It could, I suppose, but that prospect is very, very doubtful. For one thing, there is a greater feeling of unity and nationalism pervading our nation. Although some extremists talk Civil War language, the serious thinkers both pro and con would hate to fight. There are many northerners who would not push the desegregation order and many southerners who firmly believe in preserving the Union regardless. But—"somethin's gotta give." What will it be? Your guess is as good as mine.

Every state in the union is bound to abide by the U.S. Constitution. And according to the Constitution, the Supreme Court's decision is the correct and logical thing, for segregation is definitely unconstitutional. Since the Constitution maintains that all men are created equal and all citizens have equal rights under law, the Negro is entitled to the place which Southern whites refuse to give him. Although the Constitutional principles are contrary to Scripture, there is no Scriptural basis for segregating the Negro and the white in public educational institutions.

Jim Jonk
The Rule of True Beauty in Scripture

Beauty — What do you immediately think of when you see this word? Certainly this word is familiar; don't we hear it every day, does not the world try its utmost to convince the people they can beautify themselves with various means? The branch of philosophy, namely aesthetics, which deals with beauty, tries to explain what beauty is and how it may be recognized. The term comes from a Greek word which refers to impressions received through the five senses. However, we do not consult the world for our meaning of beauty, as Scripture is our only source.

Throughout Scripture much emphasis is put on real beauty. For example, the beauty of Zion's mountains, the beautiful house of our God, "The woman was beautiful to look upon, the maid was fair and beautiful." What does all this refer to? Physical beauty is a becoming form, the meek and modest form of a woman and the strong and brave form of a man. Someone who is well-formed is beautiful. Gen. 29:1-7, "Rachael was beautiful and well-formed."

True beauty is glory. In the Old Testament, the beauty of crowns and jewels was considered glorious. The beauty of God's house, where is the perfection of beauty, is His Holy Place! There was also the beauty of God's flock, beauty of worship, prayer, and thankfulness, and the beauty of the lamb. The Bible very often speaks of the beauty of nature as well as of his creatures which we also might make mention of in this article. God reveals himself through the beauty of nature. God is praised and glorified in nature. The heavens sing His praises, the floods clap their hands, and the hills are joyful for His name's sake. Much emphasis was placed on the beauty of the temple, especially that of Solomon. God often caused His people to praise Him through beauty of music and musical instruments.

The beauty of the bride adorned for her husband is repeatedly stressed as an example of the Church and the New Jerusalem.

From what source does beauty come, and how is it bestowed, and upon whom is it bestowed? In the Psalms we read that God will beautify the meek with salvation, joy, and glory. The source therefore, is God; and He bestows beauty to His people; the meek, the elect. The world is not beautiful because it is defiled, and to the defiled are all things unpure; but to the pure all things are undefiled. Beauty is pureness, holiness. The Holy Spirit purifies our hearts and makes us holy before God. Beauty is obedience; and a most perfect example is the beautiful obedience of Christ in so much that he entered the depths of Hell and God's wrath for His people. Obedience to parent, teacher, husband, and all those in authority is the beauty that the child of God must put on. Such is the beauty we must desire.

However, the Bible also speaks of the beauty that we must not desire as described in Proverbs 6:35, "Lust not after her beauty neither let her take thee with her eyelids." The undesirable beauty is the attire of a harlot who deceives her prey and causes him to walk in lasciviousness. To trust in one's beauty can prove very fateful: Christian women must not follow the example of Delilah, Jezebel, Zeresh and Herodias, but of Miriam, Ruth, Hannah, and Elizabeth. "Favour is deceitful and Beauty is vain." Covenant people are called to flee from deceit and hatred and to put on the beauty of the new man. That beauty is honorable and a woman that feareth the Lord shall be praised. That is the beauty we must desire.

Beauty is virtue, wisdom, meekness, and humility. To walk in the midst of the world, whether that be in the office,
factory, or even in school, being a living testimony of true beauty, is the calling of the Christian. A child of God who is patient amidst strife, and who loveth those who love God, is beautiful.

For that reason true beauty can not be known by the world because it walks a life that praises the devil instead of God. Its very mind and conscience is defiled. They are and will forever seek the undesirable beauty which is that of hatred, idolatry, deceit, and falsehood.

The Bible speaks in different passages of the way a woman should dress. I Timothy 2:9, “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness, and sobriety not with braided hair, gold or pearls or costly array. A becoming woman is one who professes godliness.” This means that in all ways whether that be in thought, word, deed, or apparel she show that she belongs to the great throng. That is true beauty. Beauty is sobriety. Does this mean that we as young people in order to be beautiful must be sober in such a way that laughter and gaiety be prohibited? Not at all; but let not our gaiety and laughter be that of the world, but that in our joy we may profess godliness. Beauty is devotion. A woman who is truly devoted to her husband in all spheres is thought beautiful in the eyes of her husband. Beauty is silence—“Let the women learn in silence with all subjection.” Beauty is faith, and charity. Proverbs 31:28, “She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.” Beauty is graciousness which retaineth honor as strong men retain riches. A God-fearing person who obeys God’s law is beautiful before God. A self-sacrificing and hospitable child of God is to be desired.

However, on earth we have but a very small beginning of the real beauty that shall be expressed in the new heavens. All the beauty before mentioned is that which falls away and returns to the dust of the earth. We have only the first fruits of the spirit and prayerfully we wait for the full and eternal beauty of heavenly glory. The beauty on earth is imperfect, polluted, and very often unattained; however our comfort is that in the notable day, we shall all be changed and made beautiful. Then only shall we taste the perfect and full beauty. As for now, we taste but a small beginning of true beauty.

Fran Flikkema

Racial Unity

During the past year and especially in recent months we have heard and read much in regard to the question of rights and treatment of certain racial groups. On the international scene this has found expression in such areas as South Africa and Indo China in the Far East where these racial groups have been fighting for their independence from European control. While at home in America this question has been given the spotlight by the recent decrees of the United States Supreme Court requiring all public schools to discontinue segregation in education.

Specifically in this later incident, the daily news we receive brings us many new developments in the problem, especially in our southern states. The attempt of these states to avoid compliance with court decree, individual incidents in schools attempting desegregation, the cry of social reformers against injustices to the southern negro are only a few of the news items we receive daily.

The question must arise, what has this to do with us as Protestant Reformed young people? What direct relation do these incidents have to our life as the children of God? In most cases we as a group are isolated from the problems involved in these events and they are not of direct concern to us in our daily life, although we should take note of them as historical facts and their place in the plan of God.
In this article I would rather not dwell on the problems and principles concerned in these events, but rather use them as a stepping stone to the question of our racial and national relationships as members of the body of Christ.

Accompanying all these struggles on the question of racial equality and rights are the various arguments and solutions for the problem. Many appeals have been made to the right of all men in a democratic society as a basis for this racial equality. The cry of the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of all men have been used by many of the reformers. With respect to these arguments we do not wish to concern ourselves at this time because this would involve some evaluation of the basic principles behind such arguments which really are the philosophies of this age.

In a recent national publication the churches of America have been criticized for their actions when confronted with a problem of racial mixture among their congregations. In this criticism the churches were confronted with their profession of championing truth and justice in words and not living up to these standards in deeds. This certainly is not a commendable situation, not because it is a denial of democratic principles, but for other reasons that will become apparent in this discussion.

The present world division on lines of race and nationality can be seen as a division founded at the time of the building of the tower of Babel when God confounded their common language, forcing the people to scatter abroad because of linguistic barriers. (Gen. 11:1-9). This was done, according to verse six, to restrain them in the fulfillment of their imaginations. Until our present day we can see the results of this; the world has not been united, which will be necessary for the coming of Antichrist.

We must not stop here and merely say that these racial differences are come by the will of God and we are not to concern ourselves with it any further. As I mentioned before, we as a denomination are not directly concerned with this problem because of our small number and the absence of different racial groups. At the same time this should not excuse us from facing the issue. What I think is the real answer to this question is a confession that each of us makes every sabbath when we affirm, “I believe the communion of Saints.” In our church life this certainly must be our answer to the problem.

As believers we confess that we are in common partakers of Christ, and as a result of this common partaking of Christ and His benefits we know it to be our duty to employ these gifts of Christ to the advantage and salvation of other members of the Body of Christ. On the basis of this confession we can have no problem of racial differences in our church because we are no different but are joint members of a common body. We can not exclude a part of that body or try to exist separate from that body since our life is dependent on being a part of that whole, apart from the body there cannot be spiritual life, just as a part of our body can not have life separate from the body as a whole.

This should be the relationship that exists in the Church in all differences among the members: educational, economic status, talents, etc. These differences should not bring divisions in the Church, but these different characteristics should be superseded by the unity of the Church in Christ. In this sense racial difference also is one characteristic that can not come before the principle of unity. Just as in the body all parts are not the same but all have their various characteristics, yet they are all necessary in the total body.

One can see this unity in our churches. We don't have any problems of racial dif-
ference, but in other differences that tend to make separation among people of the world (such as wealth, education, nationality) we find that in the Church these differences become unimportant and are replaced by a commonness among the members. That is why I said earlier that the churches in America that practise segregation, and yet claim that they are partakers of Christ, are not to be commended for they are not living in the communion of Saints.

But one may ask, “We can see this to be and ought to be the case in the Church, but what about our daily life in the world when we meet these problems?” Here I must admit that I can come with no ready made answer as to what to do, and what not to do. This essentially is a problem that one must settle in his own conscience, remembering that in all things we are called to live that new life that is within us, and flee the old man of sin. We can certainly do well to call to mind the parable of the good Samaritan, and ask ourselves also, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:25-37) 

John Buiter
Grand Rapids, Mich.

A WOULD-BE WEATHER PROPHET
(Continued from page 16)

God gave the gift of hibernation to escape the perils of winter.

We say then with Christ Jesus, whose word is true, “Be not therefore anxious saying, What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or, Wherewithall shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:31, 32, 33.

Agatha Lubbers

Youth and Marriage

The holiest things in life are most deeply profaned in a world of sin. This is especially true of marriage and all related matters. So much so, that, even in the church, those who contemplate marriage hardly seem to realize, and those entering into marriage take little time to consider, and those who are married must frequently be reminded that marriage is, after all, a sacred matter. It is an institution of God that did not even arise out of the fact of sin, but dates back to the very dawn of history, when God created man. Moreover, marriage is a God-given symbol, an earthly picture of an eternal, spiritual, and heavenly reality.

Not the opposite is true, that in heaven we find a spiritual resemblance to those things that are basic realities here; but, as is always the case, the earthy is a picture of the eternal, heavenly reality. In fact, marriage is a divinely appointed means whereby God realizes His covenant with His people in Christ. For marriage is a symbol of Christ and His Church. Eph. 5:25-33.

Therefore, for a proper discussion of marriage, we must always begin by reminding ourselves that God is a covenant God. He lives His own glorious covenant life of intimate fellowship within His own Being as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In those three persons there is an essential likeness, and yet a personal distinctiveness, so that they are united together in harmonious communion of life by the bond of love.

But God also takes man into His covenant. God refers to Himself in Scripture as the Husband and to the church as His Wife. He joins Himself to His church in eternal, spiritual wedlock. That is, He loves her with an undying love in Christ, makes her holy as He is holy, takes her under His protection, associates with her in intimate fellowship, confide
to her the secrets of His heart, and makes
her capable of responding to His love
with complete devotion, perfect trust, and
deepest reverence.

Thus the Scriptures speak of Christ as
the Bridegroom and the church as His
Bride. In paradise, Adam's relation to
God was a pre-figure of that eternal mar-
rriage of Christ and His church. There-
fore when sin entered into the world,
it brought its bitter consequences of grief
and woe, but it also opened the way for
the eternal wedding feast of the Lamb.
As far as we are concerned, we have al-
ways revealed ourselves as the unfaithful
wife. Scripture compares our sin to that
of an adulterous woman, who forsakes
her husband for vain idols, and commits
every conceivable abomination right at
the doorstep of her Husband's house. And
yet God remembers His covenant for
Christ's sake. He never serves His wife
with a bill of divorcement, even though
there are times in the history of the
church when He causes her to experi-
cence the dire consequences of her adul-
terous living. But even though Israel goes
to Babylon, and the church goes through
constant purgings, the Lord never forgets
His vow and His devotion to His people.
He reconciles her unto Himself through
the death of the cross, and gives her an
engagement ring to seal His promise on
Pentecost. Even in our personal lives we
experience that God is merciful and com-
passionate, slow to anger and abundant
in mercy, for though our sins are as
scarlet, He makes them as white as snow.
Always He is preparing His Bride for
the great wedding feast of the Lamb.

Of this we have a very beautiful sym-
bol in the holy state of matrimony in
the church. When God created the ani-
mals He created them in pairs, male and
female. But when Adam came forth from
the hand of the Creator, there was no
partner found for him. He was alone, the
only one of his kind, and he realized at
once that there was a very definite lack,
a great emptiness, even a certain lone-
liness in his life. Only then did God cause
a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and
formed Eve from one of his ribs. When
he awoke he realized that this was the
exact counterpart of himself that he need-
ed to make his life complete. There,
Scripture informs us, was the institu-
tion of marriage, the beginning of the home,
of the family, and of the church.

Marriage is a union of two persons
who are especially intended for each
other.

Eve could be a perfect life-mate for
Adam because God has especially formed
her for that very purpose with infinite
wisdom and care. She was flesh of his
flesh and bone of his bone. They were
both image bearers, both possessed knowl-
dge, righteousness, and holiness. Both
saw and understood alike, spoke the same
language. Both had similar thoughts,
desires, impulses. How they must have
delighted in their companionship. And
there was also a marked difference. Adam
was male; Eve was female. Adam was
her husband; she was his wife. Adam
was king of the earthly creation; she
was his help. Adam "loved and main-
tained" her; she "loved, honored and obeyed"
him. How perfectly matched they were;
fitted to glorify their Maker together.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if every God-
fearing young man received a "hand-
picked," "hand-made" wife from the
Lord? But what am I saying? God does
thus "bring as with His own hand" unto
every man his wife. Two individuals are
born at appointed times of different cir-
cumstances. But by a strange chain of
events, God causes these two people to
meet, to be attracted to each other by
common interests, likes and dislikes,
similarities and yet differences in char-
acter. In some ways they are much alike,
in others they are like opposite poles of
a magnet. God brings them together and
joins those two in holy wedlock.

Marriage is a union of two persons,
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but also the knitting together of two lives. How can two young people who have taken a liking to each other know whether they are proper mates? For serious covenant youth, love is not blind, nor do they dash blindly or madly into marriage. They prayerfully seek the guidance of the Lord, also in their courtship. They realize their own imperfections, and also consider the faults of one another. They are governed by their minds as well as by their hearts, by calm deliberation as well as by their feelings. They enjoy one another’s companionship, and they come to a growing realization that their lives will never be complete without the other. After marriage they also will have to bear with one another’s weaknesses, often meet together at the foot of the cross of Christ, and not live unto themselves, nor simply for one another, but together unto God according to their God-given calling. As the years pass by, they only learn to understand and appreciate one another better, until two elderly people even seem to look alike, because the expression of contentment on their faces is so very similar.

Let me underscore in passing, that marriage is for life. If the vows that are made mean anything at all, they are binding for life, no matter what happens! That is necessarily the case. In the first place, because marriage is a symbol of the everlasting covenant between God and His people. But also, in the second place, because only death can break the marriage vow. God has purposely willed, that even in cases where the tragedy of divorce enters in, these two individuals remain unmarried to leave the way open for reconciliation, as long as these two shall live. Therefore Scripture always condemns remarriage by either party as long as the other party is living. Covenant youth may well consider this in all seriousness before these vows are spoken.

I mentioned that marriage is the joining of two persons, and the union of two lives. Now I add a third: the harmonious unity of two loves. Love is always reciprocal; it can never be one-sided. God has loved us in Christ, but always as a holy people, so that He spreads His love abroad in our hearts, whereby we can and do love Him as our God. That love to God is basic for true love between husband and wife. No man actually loves his wife, except in the Lord. And the same holds true for the wife, of course.

C. Hanko

(To be Continued)

PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

Jesus, with Thy Church abide;
Be her Saviour, Lord, and Guide,
While on earth her faith is tried:
We beseech Thee, hear us.

Keep her life and doctrine pure;
Grant her patience to endure,
Trusting to Thy promise sure;
We beseech Thee, hear us.

Save her love from growing cold;
Make her watchmen strong and bold;
Fence her round, Thy peaceful fold:
We beseech Thee, hear us.

May her lamp of truth be bright;
Bid her bear aloft its light
Through the realms of heathen night:
We beseech Thee, hear us.

—Selected

Notice to all Contributors

The address of our new editor is:

MR. CHARLES WESTRA
1722 Alto, S. E.
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN
WHAT did the guards tell? Hear Rev. R. Veldman speak at the Spring Mass Meeting, Tuesday, March 27, 7:30, at Hudsonville Church. And that is not all: there are going to be special numbers, an interesting after-recess program, and lunch (cafeteria-style). THIS IS ONE MEETING YOU MUSTN'T MISS!

... and ...

A SPECIAL Easter singspiration at Fourth Church, Sunday, April 1, at 9:00. Everyone welcome. Join those who enjoy singing. If you have no way to get there, call Jim Schipper, GL 2-1945. (Fourth Church MUST be filled if we are to have a good singspiration.)

Will YOU be there?