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Taxes... with a Purpose
REV. B. WOUDENBERG

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And it came to pass in those days, 
that there went out a decree from 
Caesar Augustus that all the world 
should be taxed. (And this taxing was 
first made when Cyrenius was governor 
of Syria.)

And all went to be taxed, every one 
into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Gali-
lee, out of the city of Nazareth, into 
Judaea, unto the city of David, which 
is called Bethlehem;

To be taxed with Mary his espoused 
wife, being great with child.

Luke 2:1-5

TAXES! — to most people they are a 
scourge — the scourge of the human race.

Actually taxes are as old as civilization 
 itself, and its most unpopular part no 
doubt.

Originally taxes were very subtle. They 
were called gifts, and sometimes they really 
were. So we are told in Genesis that Abra-
ham gave tithes of all that he possessed to 
Melchizedek king of Salem. This was a 
will gift presented by Abraham because 
he recognized that Melchizedek was a priest 
of the most high God. His gift was a recog-
nition of the fact that all he possessed was 
his only by the goodness of the God whom 
Melchizedek represented. And there may 
well have been other instances also when 
gifts were given to the heads of other na-
tions or tribes merely as expressions of 
friendship or gratitude.

Usually, however, when these early gifts 
of tribute were rendered, there were other, 
ulterior motives behind them. The gifts 
so given almost inevitably flowed from the 
less powerful tribes to the more powerful 
ones. There were reasons for this. The 
small and weak tribes were always con-
scious of their inability to defend them-
seves from invaders. For them it was a 
matter of practical importance to establish 
friendships with more powerful neighbors 
who could stand by them and help them 
should an enemy appear.

It did not take long for the mightier 
rulers to discover that this could be a very 
lucrative source of wealth. As times went 
on the stronger tribes and nations more and 
more sent forth their armies into neigh-
broring lands to exact from them such trib-
utes or to threaten them with complete de-
struction. It became a way of life. Perhaps 
the most successful practitioners of this sort 
of taxation were king David of Israel and 
Solomon his son. Under the armies of David 
the boundaries of Israel and its tributaries 
were extended from the Nile to the Euph-
rates river. It was by far the largest kingdom
and the most wealthy that the world had seen until that day. Each nation subdued by David’s armies was compelled to present a yearly gift or tribute to the nation of Israel. It was from the great wealth so gathered that the famed glory of Solomon’s great kingdom was constructed. And, although the strength of Israel was undermined by the division in the kingdom, this method of conquest and taxation continued to dominate the world for many centuries.

It was not, however, until the Romans were ruling the world that an entirely new concept in taxation was introduced. It happened during the reign of Caesar Augustus while Cyrenius was governor of Syria. At that time there was levied a tax, not just upon the conquered nations as a whole, but upon every subject of the Roman empire individually, no matter to which nation he belonged. This was a tremendous, epoch-making event in the history of taxation. It meant that Romans had to go out and make records of every individual person in their realm. It meant that every individual person had to be contacted and the collection of his taxes had to be enforced. The complexity of that task must have been almost beyond comprehension in that day when it was introduced. This was perhaps the most significant innovation that was ever made in the long history of civilization and its taxation.

Unto this day the world still feels the effect of that innovation made by Caesar Augustus when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. There has hardly been an empire or kingdom since that time which has not followed this new method of taxation. Almost every person everywhere who has lived within the pale of civilization has been required to register for taxation after that method first devised when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. Although little is known about it, this was one of the great precedent practices of all time.

Oh yes, there is one other event which we should mention concerning that registration which was introduced by Caesar Augustus. Actually, of course, at the time it could hardly have seemed important. It was just one of those regrettable inconveniences which were bound to take place under a command as far reaching as that.

It appears that in Palestine all Jews were required to make their registration in the city of their fathers, regardless of where they happened to live at the time. This was an awkward requirement that meant that everyone who had moved into another territory had to travel back to the city in which his fathers lived. Sometimes this distance was considerable and the hardships could be very great. An instance of this was the case of a man who had to travel to Bethlehem in Judaea all the way from Nazareth in the province of Galilee. And what made this journey especially difficult was that his wife who traveled with him was about to give birth to a child.

We do not know any of the details of their journey, only that they came to the city as complete strangers unwelcomed and unknown. Actually they were both people of rather impressive backgrounds. They were both of the family of David, and the young woman was from the line of Israel’s kings. She represented the line from which according to promise the Messiah was to come forth. But in that modern day people, regardless of how religious they professed to be, were quite satisfied with things as they were and really did not care whether the Messiah would ever come. The line of David’s promised seed was ignored and forgotten. The young couple came to the city of David and no one cared. Because of the registration, the city was crowded when they came. They went from door to door, but wherever they went there was no room until finally they were left with no choice but to spend the night with the cattle in a public stable. It was during that night that Mary’s son was born.

This was one of the more unpleasant consequences of that new form of taxation which was introduced. In itself it was incidental and did not reflect upon the value of this form of taxation as such. And yet, if it were not for that birth, the tax innovation of Augustus during the governorship of Cyrenius would no longer be remembered. Although neither Caesar nor Cyrenius could have realized it, it was actually their epoch-making form of taxation that was really incidental. Finally, it was only a means to bring Mary to the city of her fathers that according to prophecy she might there give birth to her firstborn son.

Two
Editorials . . .

This age, in which man attempts to commercialize and corrupt all that is holy and godly, is nonetheless the age in which you, the youth of our churches, are called to be saints of God, vessels chosen unto His honor and endless glory. Pointedly, this is of keen interest to you as youth of His covenant, who, though young, nevertheless witness and perceive the atrocious carnality and wicked rebellion exhibited by Satan and all his hosts. Notice please, that you witness, not only, but also PERCEIVE the nefarious endeavors of Satan and his entire host of ungodly cohorts. You DO! For you too are His chosen in the Son. You too are called. You likewise are the recipients of His grace and Spirit, evidenced in conversion and possession of sanctified hearts and minds. And, hence, you too begin to discern the spiritual from the carnal, the truth from the lie, consecration from desecration.

You do well to take note of this mentioned above. Momentous basis for continued thanksgiving, isn’t it? Very significant, as well, when you see that such condition will unquestionably be reflected in your spiritual attitudes and re-actions toward all things. A child of the Kingdom of Light will re-act as a subject of that Kingdom, and not as he who revels in the kingdom of darkness! That first of all. No less true and significant is the resultant portion of those who, with you, are called by the name of Christ. As Christians, especially as Christian youth, you must, according to His own forewarning, expect to receive the billows of scorn, derision, oppression and persecution of His adversaries. This is your portion; “hated of all men for my name’s sake” (Matt. 10:22a). This is also the case, dear young people, as you find yourselves traveling day by day through the “special” days observed by the Church each year. Have regard for the day in the Scripturally-correct sense, and you will be labelled as “too pious,” narrow, out-dated. Just remember, in passing, that they make the same remarks about those versions of the Scriptures which do not de-throne the Almighty Sovereign of all in order that man himself may be exalted (see recent, timely articles in both The Standard Bearer and Beacon Lights; and note, too the response of some “foreign” clergy to said articles!)

The world endeavors to deny God in a multiplicity of ways. It tries brazenly or craftily to do so. Point is, do you perceive the endeavors for what they are? For example, you see a slogan in this present season, in which we are concerned with the celebration of our Lord’s birth, such as this: “Put Christ Back Into Christmas.” This was brought strikingly to mind this past week as it was emblazoned across the entire front of a dry cleaning establishment here in the Chicago area. What a thing; you say, for the world to take up and make known! For what reason should they take up the name of our Lord, and point out to the passers-by that there is something amiss in the trend of the celebration in this season? They, who have no concern for that which is holy, for that which is according to His Word, for that which is spiritual, are concerned with and strive for a “proper” celebration of this day? No, indeed.

Yet, this somehow leaves the impression that, if it is not correct that the ungodly should take up and utter this slogan, it might be quite proper that the child of God give voice in heart and word to such a plea. Yet, you sense immediately that there is in this slogan an element that is entirely false and dishonoring to our God, do you not?

This plea assumes a lie. And therefore, it becomes obvious that this phrase is not properly found upon our lips, as pious as it may sound. That lie mentioned is this: Christ is not in Christmas. That, young people of the Church of Christ Jesus, is the lie. Regard it as such. Still more. That is the lie that is brought forth by the evil, unquenched desire in the heart of the wicked. This is the desire of their rebellious minds. What would be more pleasing for them than to know that the Christ of God is really out of Christmas? Then at last God
would be the liar, and the serpent would not have bruised the heel, but destroyed the Seed Himself. Dangerous slogans? More than that. Abominations and lies! Nothing more than continued distortions of the beautiful, yet simple TRUTH of His Word.

But you as covenant youth perceive, do you not? The CHURCH only has Christmas . . . and rest assured that its Head, Jesus as the Christ, is in it. None other have Christmas. None other have Christ.

Does it appear sometimes that this is not so? Let this be asked: Where is Christ in all the spheres of worldly politics, labor, education, amusements, "religions," . . . in any of their spheres? Where is He? Scripture tells us that He is not in all their thoughts.

Yet He is present. To be sure, He is not there as the blessed portion of their souls and longing hearts. But He is there as the supreme, sovereign Ruler of all the complex society and interactions in the world. And that you perceive by His grace, too, don't you? In that knowledge and showered with abundant grace you are fortified to fight the fight of faith as the despised, scorned and ridiculed youth of His Church. H.W.K.

BOOKS

If Thou Shalt Confess
J. K. Van Baalen - Eerdmans - 65 pp. - $1.50

This booklet of 65 pages is intended for those confessing their faith in the bosoms of the Christian Reformed Churches. The author touches upon no less than eighteen topics, facets of the Christian life and experience. These topics are not in any way arranged logically to the subject which the book bears as title, nor are they in any way meant to be sub-titles.

The author, now admittedly advanced in years, gives many suggestions of a practical nature which are worthy of being stated, and equally worthy of being remembered. However, one fails to detect a strong Reformed orientation in the book, viewed against the back-ground of the three questions asked of the confessor 1. Concerning faith in the doctrine of the Old and New Testaments 2. The promise to reject all heresies repugnant to this teaching, and a godly life. 3. The promise to submit to Christian discipline. This lack of orientation possibly accounts for the terminology such as "joining church", and for characterizing the Church as being an "army" rather than that she is the "body" of Christ.

What the author insists as being the Biblical teaching concerning titheing simply is not true. Since this is the only point he argues in this booklet, and that, too, so very erroneously, we must utter just a word of precaution to the effect that Scripture most definitely teaches that tithing was an integral part of the ceremonial laws and ordinances. It was an integral part, the very warp and woof of the laws of the first-fruits of the harvest, the tenth part for the Levites, of which tenth part again a tenth was assigned to the priests proper. Confer Lev. 27:30-32; Numbers 18:24-28; Deut. 12:6, 11, 17; Neh. 10:38 etc.

To argue for "titheing" in the literal sense is not New Testamental. Here the rule is the principle of the "tithe", that in the tenth part the whole is represented, proclaiming that all belongs to the Lord. Hence the New Testament rule is "according to the need" and "according to ability" from a liberal heart.

With these reservations I recommend this booklet to those interested to read it.

And: sapienti sat!

Rev. G.C.L.
Philip

Melanchthon

DAVID ENGELMSMA

(3)

The final aspect of Melanchthon's life with which we will deal has to do with his position as the chief spokesman for the Reformation in its colloquies and consultations with the Romish Church. In this connection, his detractors hurl the accusation of "compromiser" against him. Usually, modern critics of Philip muzzle criticism as regards Philip's willingness to compromise with the Zwinglians and Calvinists since his concessions in this sphere were more or less correct. Melanchthon's own expressions about the Roman Catholic Church were contradictory. In 1539, thinking himself to be about to die, Philip wrote in his will, "I also enjoin upon my children to abide in our churches and to flee the churches and society of the Papists." In conflict with this avowed wish was his letter to the papal nuncio, Campeggio, at Augsburg in 1530. "We have no dogma different from the Roman Church . . . We are prepared to obey the Roman Church, if only she with the clemency which she has always used towards all peoples, would modify or relax some few matters which we, even if we would, could not alter . . . It is but a slight diversity of rites which seems to stand in the way of concord. But the canons themselves say that the concord of the church can be retained even with such diversity of rites."32

Philip's state of mind at the Colloquies of Frankfurt, Worms, and Regensburg (c. 1540) was anything but composed. He felt very keenly the responsibility of his position. His high regard for the visible unity of the Church and his awareness of the troubled condition of Protestantism since episcopal supervision was abolished induced him from the firm stand which was necessary. The want of discipline, the rapacity of the princes, and the furor among Lutheran theologians caused Melanchthon to overestimate that which the Romish Church offered and to underestimate the dearness of the truth of Scripture. Besides, Melanchthon was always ready to concede a sort of papacy by human right (jure humano.) But the entrenched Catholics would accept nothing but total surrender and the concessions of Philip availed not at all.

The Diet of Augsburg (1530) told the same story. The same Philip who could write "that the Pope is Antichrist seated and ruling in the 'temple of God'," failed critically to defend the faith just won with difficulty. As the immediate prospect of unity presented itself, Philip conceded some truths and minimized or ignored others. Generally, he was ready to find some lowest common denominator upon which the radically different Lutheran and Roman Catholic groups might merge. At Augsburg, Melanchthon insisted that the group he represented was not opposed to Catholic doctrines but only to some abuses of practice. In response to Melanchthon's anxious queries from Augsburg, Luther sent hasty reply, "I am wondering what you mean when you say you desire to know what and how much we may yield to the Papists. According to my opinion, too much is already conceded

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to them in the Apology."33* Time and again, Luther exhorted his colleague to stand fast, to dispense with philosophical anxieties, and to herald boldly the truth of Christ. At Augsburg as at the previous Colloquies, the Catholics refused Philip's generous concessions.

That which heaped the greatest obloquy upon Melanchthon, both at the time and long afterwards, was Philip's acceptance of the Leipzig Interim. The ill-fated Smallkaldian League (Protestant) had just been defeated by the Roman Catholic powers. The sturdy Luther had already died. To Melanchthon, now titular head of the Reformation, it seemed as if all Protestantism was about to perish. Imperial troops menaced the entire country. In the light of this, Melanchthon accepted the stipulations handed down by the Catholic powers. He was guarded in his view of the Augsburg Interim (May 15, 1548) but surreptitiously defended it. Much better it was, said Philip, to acquiesce in this "adiaphoristic" matter and wait for more advantageous times. Rather than risk the amiliation of the Lutheran movement, he would "mitigate a bad set of circumstances." The "adiaphora" which the Augsburg Interim demanded to be acknowledged were episcopal rule, seven sacraments, recognition of the pope as the interpreter of Scripture, transubstantiation, works of supererogation, invocation of saints, festivals, and various rites. Of this Interim, Schaff, an ardent supporter of Philip, has this to say, "It is very evident that the adoption of such a confession was a virtual surrender of the cause of the Reformation, and would have ended in a triumph of the papacy."34 The following Interim of Leipzig was fully as demanding and more openly supported by Melanchthon. Calvin's high estimation of and deep friendship with Philip did not deter the Genevan from sternly rebuking him, "You extend the distinction of non-essentials too far...you ought not to have made such large concessions to the Papists."35 And the Gnesiolumtherans under Falcius raged against Philip. From this point, two parties struggled within the Lutheran Church. The official decision of the Lutherans went against Melanchthon, as stated in the Formula of Concord (1580): "in time of persecution, when a bold confession is required of us, we should not yield to the enemies in regard to adiaphora."36

The pernicious ingredients inculcated through Melanchthon into the Reformation have devastated a large part of the movement. Yet, to cast the blanket judgment of "evil" upon the Reformer is to do him an injustice. One may very well suspect that Luther and Calvin were too moderate with him but one must still reckon with the fact that both of those perceptive and fearless theologians were moderate with him, although they knew his opposition to several of their chiefest doctrines. His talents and zeal played a large positive role in advancing the cause of the Reformation and everyone knew this well.

As far as concerns Melanchthon's incessant compromising, the heart of the trouble is revealed in this reproof of Philip by Luther. Melanchthon was inextricably enmeshed in the aberglaube of dreams and astrology. Before he would engage in important work he must investigate the favorability of the stars. At first, Luther let the superstition pass as a mere foible. Finally, however, the impatient Luther roared that it did not matter if the stars were favorable, what counted was that Christ was favorable.37 The assurance, the confidence, the faith that moves mountains was not Melanchthon's. He wavered, he vacillated, he conceded, to the detriment of the gospel and the defaming of the name of God.

*At this same time, Luther sent a letter to Spalatin in which he went to the heart of Melanchthon's willingness to exchange the birthright of the Reformation for the Catholic mess of potage (external unity and carnal security): "our friend Philip Melanchthon will contrive and desire that God should work according to and within the compass of his puny notions: that he may have somewhat whereby to glory. Certain (he would say) thus and thus it ought to be done; and thus and thus would I do it". But this is poor stuff: 'Thus I, Philip, would do it.' This (I) is mighty flat. But hear how this reads: I AM THAT I AM, this is his name, JEHOVAH; He, even He, will do it. But I have done. Be strong in the Lord, and exhort Melanchthon from me, that he aim not to sit in God's throne, but fight against that innate, that devilishly implanted ambition of ours, which would usurp the place of God; for that ambition will never further our cause."
At the very core of all Philip's spiritual ailments lay the heresy of synergism with its host of concomitants. Essentially, there is no difference between synergism and Pelagianism, as there is none between Pelagianism and Arminianism. Man is naturally good. Man is able to assist God, no, God must wait for and depend upon man's acquiescence. Synergism dethrones God and replaces Him with the creature. With this comes the denial of God's absolute sovereignty. He does not elect and reprove according to His own good pleasure. Melanchthon carried the Lutheran Church with him on this score. The central position of Luther, who stated that the only truths he ever wrote were to be found in his Bondage of the Human Will and his Commentary on Galatians, finds little expression in modern Lutheranism. At the very outset of the mighty liberation of God's people from papal bondage, the false doctrines were present which were to harass the forces of truth continually, up to the present moment. There need be no repetition here of the occasions when the serpent of co-operation in salvation reared its ugly head against the truth of sovereign grace.

Philip Melanchthon was a hard-pressed figure in harsh times. He was ambivalent, paradoxical, and contradictory. As person, he does not lend himself to judgment. Nor is that the calling of theological critics. But his teachings, his doctrines, his beliefs must be weighed and found wanting, both as they appeared in the 16th century and as they reveal themselves today. Nor will they be found in the church alone. For Melanchthon was highly influential in the establishment of the school movement. Wherever it be found, however it be clothed, by whomever it be sounded, the doctrine that denies "by grace are ye saved" is the doctrine that does not lead to the glory of God the Father.

32. Hildebrandt, op. cit., p. 61
33. Manschreck, op. cit., p. 195, quoting Luther
34. Schaff, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 603
35. Schaff, ibid., p. 39, quoting a letter of Calvin (1550)
36. Quoted by Manschreck, op. cit., p. 292
37. Hildebrandt, op. cit., p. 70

Recapitulation and Resolution

NANCY HEEMSTRA

The year 1962 is almost history, and we see in retrospect many events and happenings, both pleasant and unpleasant, that have affected us. The passing year had different meanings for various people. For some it meant graduation, a new job, or attending college; for others it meant taking up residency in a different part of the country, fulfilling armed services duty, or marriage. Still others may have been bereaved by the loss of a relative or friend.

The world situation certainly did not improve. The leading world powers stood trembling at the brink of war, each fearing what the other might do. In our own country after the excitement of the United States' first orbital flights diminished, reverberations of excitement were heard from the South. They were sounds of a different nature, however—sounds of bitter racial disruptions and violence. Stock market speculators became extremely anxious as their investments rapidly declined to their lowest ebb in over thirty years.

In 1962 the Roman Catholic Church held what it considered to be its most important ecumenical council in its history, and various church councils discussed unification with other denominations.

During the past year it pleased the Lord to take from us Rev. G. M. Ophoff, professor in our Protestant Reformed Seminary. In 1962, also, two of our ministers who were regularly contributing editors of the Beacon Lights considered the truth that God has entrusted to us too insignifi-
cant to uphold and maintain. So they left.

Yes, 1962 was full of changes. The state of affairs certainly did not improve in 1962, and one would be inclined to fear what 1963 will bring in the light of 1962's history. But the child of God has no reason to fear for he has an unchangeable God to cling to. God reassures us of this in Mal. 3:6a, "For I am the Lord, I change not." We have no reason to become alarmed by the happenings around us or by what the forces of evil might do to us for He that pilots our ship also controls the sea about us. What a comfort!

At the beginning of 1962 many people made New Year’s resolutions for a better course of life. I think quite a few people who made New Year’s resolutions would not be able to remember off hand that their plans did not materialize because of certain incidents which came up and on which they had not counted. For the most part, these New Year’s resolutions are foolish. Man forms a purpose and sets out to accomplish it on his own strength and ability, and they are intended selfishly for his own good.

We, as Christians, should have a resolution, but not one that changes from year to year. Our resolution is, or should be, one that is permanent. It should not be made at the beginning of the new year, but every day. This resolution is to love the Lord, our God, with all our being and to resist that which is evil. This is not such an easy resolution to keep, and it would be futile to make such a resolution on our own strength. Instead, we must ask God every day for grace that we might love him, serve him, and walk in his ways.

Joshua tells us of his resolution in Joshua 24:15b, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Although God would not permit him to build the temple, we learn in Ps. 132 that David made it his purpose to build a house for the Lord and that he would not rest until he had done so. He made it his chief concern to be busy in the work of the Lord. Barnabas, while in Antioch, exhorted the people "that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord."

What does the future hold for us? We do not know, but we know Who holds the future. We may have to go through suffering and trials, but we are given this precious promise in Jas. 1:12, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

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The Unnoticed, Noticed

DARYL HUISKEN

Last October I had a most interesting and enlightening Christian experience.

While approaching the doors of First in Grand Rapids I halted and looked up. There above the three sets of twin doors were three engravings projecting from the lintels. These provoked me to take a longer and closer look — which I did with great interest. The first on the extreme left was an engraving of the two tables of the law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The second and central engraving was an open book representing the Word of God. The last engraving on the far right was that of a cup and a small morsel of broken bread representing the communion of saints or Holy Communion.

After I had observed the above several questions came to my mind.

(1) Why are these engravings on a church?
(2) Why are they arranged in this order: Law, Word, Communion?
(3) What do they mean to us?
With my limited amount of knowledge on ecclesiasticity, I proceeded to answer these questions in my own mind and now I present them to you.

Why are these three engravings on a church building? Many of you will remember that in catechism we learned that the church had three distinct marks, viz, the administration of Christian discipline, the true preaching of the Word, and the administration of the Sacraments. Therefore one sees very readily in these three engravings: the Law representing Christian discipline; the open Word representing the true preaching of the Word; and the Sacrament of Communion representing the sacraments.

Why this order, Law — Word — Sacrament? Since we are children of Western Civilization we read, write, and set up graphic scales on a left-to-right basis because our numerical and alphabetical systems progress in such a manner. In the same turn, these engravings were set up — first the Law written in the Old Dispensation stands at the far left; next the Word, i.e., Jesus Christ according to John 1:1-14; and last the sacraments which were instituted by Christ before His ascension to the right hand of glory.

Now that we have considered the left-to-right order, let us look at this order from a little different perspective.

The Word (Jesus Christ) is the center of this trilogy because it (He) is intrinsically related to both the Law and the Sacraments. The Word not only states the Law on the pages of Holy Writ, but also fulfills it in its minutest detail. The Word not only preserves the Sacraments on its pages but it also instituted them “a remembrance of Him.” The entirety of the Word gives meaning to both the Law and the Sacraments and preserves them, through the divine work of the Holy Spirit, for future posterity.

What is this supposed to mean to us as Protestant Reformed Youth? Basically it can only mean this: defend, witness, and adhere to the preaching of the Word, accept Christian discipline prayerfully, and commune with the saints for that is the closest thing to heaven we know.

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CRITIQUE

AGATHA LUBBERS

TO PAY OR NOT TO PAY

Coming as immigrants into the American colonies along with other aliens in the 17th century were groups of German-speaking people known as Mennonites. In general these Mennonites were a sect organized in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525. They had split from the Roman Catholic Church and they were a branch of the Anabaptists. It is the Anabaptist who is most commonly known for the erroneous doctrine that certain things are in themselves sinful. The name Mennonites is derived from that of Menno Simons, a Catholic priest who became the leader of the Anabaptist movement in northern Germany.

Near the end of the 17th century members of this sect settled in America in Germantown, Pennsylvania, because of the promise of religious liberty. They were fatigued with the persecution in Europe and the
promise of a measure of peace in the new land induced them to move. They settled in Pennsylvania and spread westward through the forests and fertile farm country setting up commune-type communities as they went.

Today there are more than 17 branches of Mennonite groups in America and there are more than 200,000 members in these groups. The watchword of all these Mennonite groups is commonly known as “separation from the world.” By this the Mennonite means physical separation from the world.

The Mennonite groups are characteristically the same with slight variances. Some of the characteristics are: 1. opposition to all ecclesiastical control. 2. autonomy of the churches. 3. freedom of conscience. 4. separation of Church and state. 5. practical piety. 6. devoid of dogma but a world and life view manifested in domestic and economic virtues.

Some of the external tokens that distinguish these Mennonite groups are: 1. adult baptism. 2. avoidance of taking oaths. 3. non-resistance. 4. closely knit social order. 5. refusal to purchase insurance. 6. refusal to adopt the modern modes of transportation.

Some of the Mennonite groups who settled in this country are more commonly known as Amish folk. They derive this name from Jacob Ammann, a Swiss Mennonite leader. The most conservative of this sect call themselves the Old Order Amish. The Old Order Amish congregations are necessarily small because they do not build large meeting houses. They worship in dwelling houses and barns. They are of the opinion that one place cannot surpass another in sanctity. There must in the New Testament dispensation be no other house of God than His true spiritual house, the Church. “Various usages permitted under the old covenant such as resistance by force, the taking of human life, the swearing of oaths, and divorce, were abolished by Christ, who fulfilled the whole law.” (The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge.)

These Amish may be said to live in a voluntary semi-communism. Their clothing and houses are kept exceedingly plain and unassuming. Reader’s Digest in one of its recent articles refers to these individualists in a society which predominantly conforms as the “Plain People.” The point of reference in this article is the “revolt” of these Amish folk who object to the enforcement of a federal regulation with which they for conscience sake cannot comply. They are opposed to all insurance and will not comply with federal stipulations laid down by the Social Security Commission which collects the premiums from all employees of business establishments with more than three employees and now from self-supporting farmers. Because of a recent amendment to the Social Security code premiums can be collected from self-supporting farmers to be applied to the “Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance” managed by the Federal Government. To such insurance the Amish folk object.

Valentine Byler is the tall, quiet Amish farmer who has been selected by the Internal Revenue Service agents as the trial case in this present “revolt.” Some day soon the horses and buggies of these Amish folk will be hitched to the parking meters in downtown Philadelphia and the case of Valentine Byler versus the United States of America will open.

Many schemes have been used to force the payment of $214.43 in back-payment to the Social Security Commission, but none of these was such a flagrant violation of man’s rights as the confiscation of Byler’s horses in spring plowing time. These horses were sold and after all expenses were paid Byler was sent a refund of $37.89.

Because the Amish do not want their interdependence on each other to shift to an outside source as this would result in the eventual break-up of their order, they have begun proceedings to maintain rights which they consider to be vital to their religious beliefs. Going to court has always been taboo in Amish circles but it was finally agreed that “it is not shameful to go into a court of law; it is only shameful to go for a shameful purpose.” Reader’s Digest, November, 1962) Attorney Shepherd Kole has been engaged to argue the case against the United States of America. If the case is lost in court the Amish must depend on bills currently being held in congressional committee. If they lose in Congress then what? The Amish buggies may have to retreat to some other land.

Even though we are tempted to smile at
the seeming insignificance of this ripple on the current of world events it is worth a few moments of our time and worth some consideration. These "plain people" are in a certain sense to be envied. They certainly have retained outwardly a principle that the church formerly practiced more than is practiced today. The principle, that when one member suffers all the members suffer, is at least outwardly practiced by these Amish folk. In the past the task of the care for the poor and the aged did not fall upon the shoulders of the welfare state but was the decided responsibility of the church. In this way the church was blessed and evidenced the work of salvation which had been wrought in them through the operation of the Spirit of grace. Again I say that even though we differ radically with the Amish as they attempt to flee things we can still appreciate their attempts to maintain the social order and the religious principles they have established as this right is guaranteed to them by the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of this land. We must be reminded, however, that no group can establish a little heaven here on earth. The nature of man precludes all such possibility. Even the most holy has only a small beginning of the new obedience.

Making a value judgment is always difficult but the Calvinistic world and life view has never advocated world flight. We are in this world even though we are not of it. We seek a better country. Yet the position of one who is truly Reformed and is Biblically orientated is that the question in point is one of those adiaphora or indifferent things. Participation or nonparticipation, when that is possible, is a choice left to the individual Christian because participation does not directly involve a denial of one's faith in the Christ of the Scriptures. Making one's calling and election sure (cf. II Peter 1:10) is not dependent on one's choice to pay or not to pay for "Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance." Putting one's trust and hope in the mammon of sin does involve such a denial of the Christ of the Scriptures.

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**FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY**

**MISSIONARY NOTES**

**REV. G. C. LUBBERS**

**THE OFFICE OF THE MISSIONARY**

It is a comforting thought that God, according to His infinite mercy, has chosen a church unto everlasting life, and gathers it by His blessed gospel unto everlasting life out of every nation, and from all peoples and tongues, unto the fellowship of His Son, in the unity of true faith.

If it were not for the truth of election there would be no church gathered by Christ; now where two or three are gathered in Christ's name He is in their midst!

If it were not for this work of the Son of God, who gathers, defends and preserves to Himself a church unto everlasting life - there would be no work for a minister to perform in a local congregation, nor would
there be "work", an office, a task, for a missionary, either among the "heathen" or among the "dispersed".

All would be so much vanity, a beating of the wind, a vicious circle leading nowhere, but only affording vexation of spirit: it would be a vast tread-mill bringing one nowhere.

Now, however, the missionary's task, his work and office, is firmly anchored in God's elective purpose, His wisdom and power in Jesus Christ. His task is simply: preaching the Gospel in Jesus Christ with all that this implies. Such was the primary calling of Paul. 1 Cor. 1:17. It is preaching the Gospel, the Word of the Cross, which, indeed, is to those perishing foolishness, but to us, who believe, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. The Lord Himself says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and to bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void but shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

What a glory: the Word does not return void!

He who preaches the Word of God, the Word of the Cross, preaches a Word which is foolishness to those perishing, but to all who are saved by this same Word it is the power and wisdom of God.

Principally the Home Missionary's task is to preach the Word. He must be urgent in season and out of season preaching the Word amongst those who are dispersed and scattered. He must preach according to their needs, but he must always preach the Word, the full counsel of God. He must reprove, rebuke, with all longsuffering and teaching. He cannot and may not so "stream-line" his preaching that it is adaptable to itching ears; he must stand out in strong contrast to all such preachers who make merchandise of the Gospel; out of God in Christ he must speak before the face of God!

The "thus saith the Lord" must reverberate in every sentence which he utters: he must be truly a servant of the Word, a servant of God. Only thus is he strong and courageous, and is he assured that in spite of all the baffling circumstances and seemingly insurmountable odds, he is victorious. Being overcome by Christ, chained to the victory wagon, the triumphal procession of the Lord of glory, he is victorious. Yes, he dies daily and bears about the dying of the Lord Jesus in his body, that others may live who hear and believe! Once when very lonely, the writer of these lines was told by a very understanding sister in the Lord, "Rev. Lubbers. you are very lonely, and sometimes discouraged and seemingly beaten; but you are such for Christ's sake. It is given us in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe, but also suffer for Christ's sake." That put him "on the beam" once more.

Churchill, during World-war II, when Britain had suffered her Dunkirk on the shore of western France, and the bombs of the Luftwaffe were nightly falling on London, said, "I offer you nothing but tears sweat and blood". However, Christ says to His faithful ministers, in the world you shall have tribulation for the word of God and the testimony of my Name. But when He calls an erstwhile persecutor of the church to be the greatest apostle to the Gentiles, He causes him boldly to preach His, whom He first persecuted.

What was Paul in prospect? His office, his task to stand before kings of the earth, before a Nero finally, to die for the faith, looking for the appearance of the blessed God in Christ on that Day! Through "blood, tears and sweat" he enters into glory. And with this hope upon God he magnifies his office. He considers himself in the victory-march of Christ, the triumphal entry into the heavenly Jerusalem, under the chief Captain, the Author and Finisher of our faith, the faith of all the elect unto glory. He endured all things for the elect's sake.

Such is the office of a preacher, or a Home Missionary, either to the heathen or to the dispersed.

Here the lines too have fallen into pleasant places; it is a goodly heritage, this office, this task assigned by Christ.

Will you too join these ranks of a preacher, a missionary, my youthful Amice?
A WORD ABOUT UNITARIANISM

The first distinctively liberal movement in America was the Unitarian movement. Aside from any movement, unitarianism was and is to be found in Arianism, Deism, Humanism, Judaism, Modal Monarchianism, Mohammedanism and Socinianism. We might say that today the Christadelphians, Christian Scientists and theRussellites are really unitarian. Still we do not wish to concede the entire right and proper use of the term "unitarian" to those who reject the doctrine of the ontological trinity. For, strictly, this designation is not to be thought of as inherently antithetical to trinitarian. For we who are thoroughly trinitarian do contend as strenuously as any other denomination for the divine unity. However, we generally use the term to indicate deviation from and repudiation of the orthodox doctrine of the trinity. Besides Arius and Socinus, other classical protagonists of this error were Servetus, Calvin's enemy, and Erasmus, Luther's opponent. Latest developments have it that the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America voted to merge and form the Unitarian Universalist Association which has about 845 local bodies and 200,000 members. It is well that we have so much and for so long opposed Arminianism. It is also well that we see how the connection of this heresy is a direct line to unitarianism. Now Arminianism is a semi-Pelagian defection from historic, orthodox, Calvinistic Christianity which has taken humanism for its gospel and smuggled the same into the church. It is a rationalistic system which does not think analogically, does not think God's thought after him, but tries to think autonomously. Although it claims to credit the principle of supernatural revelation, it nevertheless proceeds on the basis that human reason is the only sufficient God-given rule for determining what is truth and error. Arminianism is fundamentally liberalism. (In this connection I agree with A. Fringle and A. M. Toplady who said, respectively, "Arminianism is the religion of the fallen nature." "Arminianism is Atheism." ) In keeping with the pagan principle of "God helps those who help themselves," it recommends following the dictates of natural, innate and acquired, reason in the interpretation of Scripture, which God will either reward with assistance to discover the truth, or with pardon if the effort fall short of it. This paved the way for eventual denial of
the church's doctrine of the trinity.

In England, Arminianism began to grow from a nucleus of apostate Presbyterian and Anglican ministers who had secretly departed from the Westminster Confessions and the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. In defence of themselves, the Apostles' Creed was said to be adequate basis for church membership. Today, the Creed is regarded as outdated as the Stone Age, and although it may be sung as an old battle-song of by-gone conflicts, it may not conscientiously be said, as it is wholly irrelevant to faith for today. In this country, this deviation goes back to the Protestant Episcopal Church in its 1785 revision of the Book of Common Prayer which eliminated the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. It is to be added, however, that by strong objections from the Church of England, the Nicene Creed was reinstated in 1789, but a restoration of the Athanasian Creed was refused.3 (It should be remembered that according to our Belgic Confession, Art. IX, "we do willingly receive the three creeds...the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian..."

Further Episcopal revision is certain to follow in the direction of a shorter communion service, in the elimination of theological conceptions and eschatological phrases "which few people now accept."4 There are "archaic expressions once regarded as essential to proper interpretation" now outgrown, which we no longer hold. Bringing liturgical and confessional language up to date is always extremely difficult, so it is said, and, it is further alleged, in the case of the Apostles' Creed, proves impossible. But the church must reach mature comprehension by compromise with the latest scientific and cultural developments, and by harmonizing itself with the national instinct.

The Church of England has not been able to reach this lowest of common denominators, viz., the having of no other test for doctrine, discipline and worship than a debilitated, emasculated and enervated Creed. For it is an established state church governed by Parliament. Steps are being taken, however, to obtain from the Crown right to make variations in the liturgical forms. This is said to be necessary, since there can be no ecumenical unity unless there be secured first liberty for revision of liturgy and for modernization of the Prayer Book. The aim is for eventual and complete freedom from creedal bondage. Only then, we are informed, can the church expect to present a united Christian front to the people of the world. In this way the once true church apostatizes and gradually becomes more and more conformable to the principles of atheism so popular in the modern world. While the cancer spreads, we never, or rarely, hear a word said about the doctrine of the trinity, but all the other essential doctrines of the Christian, Protestant faith are undermined, attacked, changed and dropped. If all church liberals were honest enough, they would admit that, from their point of view, to attain ecumenical unity we must become unitarian.

One contributory cause to the influx of this error into American thought was the works of Voltaire. He was a follower of 18th century Deism, and had great influence on the opinions of American college students. He was said to be no atheist, but was horrified at religious (Romish) persecution and religious stupidity. He did not attack belief in God. "If there were no God," he countered, "it would be necessary to invent one."5 Deism did just that; it invented a finite god, and regarded the trinity of God as a figment of "religious stupidity." Tom Paine, similarly appraised, is defended as no atheist, but merely the inveterate enemy of the God of the bellicose Bible. As a result of these anti-Christian influences, human reason assumed sovereignty over divine revelation. Naturally, then, the doctrine of the trinity was tacitly condemned.

Many of the once best churches are confused with vague, misty, anti-doctrinal faith which characterizes its members, as, for example, when a woman in a neighboring Presbyterian church commented publicly that Christian unity does not inhere in creeds, for we must have "No Creed, But Christ." What ignorance of what it means to be Presbyterian! This cliche is not only very un-Presbyterian, but very un-Christian. For a careful study of Scripture will show that the Westminster Confessions are full of Christ and the teaching of God's Word. It is faith which binds us to Christ, but it is the creed which marks us as Christians.
The Scripture is God’s infallible Word; the confession is man’s saying the same thing with God.

The Unitarian movement is not a Christian movement. It may be an ethical or philosophical society movement. But it is not Christian. It makes this plain when it honestly admits that it does not hold to “the Christianity of the apostolic church nor to any ecclesiastically controlled scheme of salvation, but rather to the teachings concerning human relations in the religion of Jesus.” Jesus himself was merely “a normal man . . . endowed . . . with powers differing in degree but not in kind from those of other men.” Denominational Unitarianism has no creed. It is a free-thinker’s society established for the purpose of developing human character in the name of “love” and “liberalism.” Whereas Episcopalians and Anglicans have regarded the modernization of the Apostles’ Creed as, up to now, an impossibility, the Unitarians have accomplished the modification in the blasphemous cynicism of Charles Edward Park, former pastor of the First Church of Boston:

“I believe in (a single, eternal, all-inclusive, all-pervading Life Principle whose source and perfect embodiment is God, who finds varying degrees of embodiment in all forms of life, who is the prototype of every grace, power and nobility found in his creation, and whom I call) God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, (not) his only Son, (for whose son am I? But) our Lord, (because he is more nearly perfect embodiment of the Life principle than any one I know;) who was (neither) conceived by the Holy Ghost, (nor) born of the Virgin Mary, (but was conceived and born exactly as we are all conceived and born; and who) suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into (no) Hell, (for, as hell is not a place but a spiritual condition, he never saw the outer doorman of hell). The third day (the eager women found his tomb empty, and jumped to the conclusion that in the night) he arose again from the dead; he ascended into (no) heaven, (for heaven is not a place but a spiritual condition, he never left heaven,) and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty (if it is any comfort to you,) From thence he shall come (if he is not already here) to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost (whom I call Holy Spirit, the spirit which God works:) the holy catholic Church (so long as it tries to be holy and catholic;) the communion of (what) saints (there are;) the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body (if body means personality; not if body means this mortal frame, for I am sick to death of my mortal frame, and hope to be rid of it soon;) and the life everlasting (meaning a chance to finish out the interrupted opportunities of this life.) Amen.”

This makes it plain enough that Unitarianism has no determined, distinguishing doctrines. This mock-theology of Park’s reveals that this movement has no more than a nebulous, tenuous pragmatic philosophy. Truth, or fact, is that which seems to work. It is a fact, and remains so only as it seems to work. That which worked yesterday, but does not work today, ceases to convey truth to us. It fails to remain a fact. But if we were to attempt a compilation of Unitarian tenets, it might look something like this: 1) Christ is not truly a divine person, nor as Socinus taught, a mere man exalted to the throne of the whole created universe; but a paragon of human perfection. 2) Scripture is not a divine revelation, but an exclusively human book. 3) The Sabbath day is to be used in resting from secular business, but is not “set apart from our common lives to religion.” 4) The soul is probably a personality distinct from the body. 5) There are no such spirit beings as devil, angels or demons. 6) The Scripture does not teach the doctrine of the eternal punishment of the wicked. 7) Also rejected are: the miraculous conception and virgin birth of Christ, the doctrine of the atonement as a satisfaction to divine justice, the doctrine of imputation of Adam’s sin and of Christ’s righteousness. The doctrine of predestination is a product of the age of dragons.

Years ago, modernist false prophets used to call the Reformed and all Bible believers who held the traditional, Scriptural doctrines of the Protestant confessions “uncharitable,” “narrow-minded” and “heresy-hunter.” Although the same sound reverberates from the heads of modernists, liberals, neo-Orthodox and neo-Evangelicals, it is very much out of place and out of date. For it is not
and never has been uncharitable to clean and keep clean our own house (and to keep our creeds free of corruption). Nor is it narrow-minded to worship God according to the dictates of our own consciences, or to warn men against the broad way leading to atheism. Long ago men may have been heresy-hunters, but today heresy hunts us, and we are not only uncharitable if we do not oppose it but also too narrow and unworthy to bear the name Christian!


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**NEWS from, for, and about our churches**

LOIS E. KREGEL

The coming of Christmas brings with it the promise of several musical programs in the Grand Rapids area. On December 16 the Hope Choral Society plans such a program in Hope Church; on December 23 there will be a Christmas Singspiration in First Church; and Hudsonville Choral Society has set aside the night of January 6 for its program.

In the recent past singspirations were held at South Holland (Nov. 4) and Hope (Nov. 18), both with a full house.

The Young People of our Churches (and the older folk, too) can enjoy the singing of the “young” Young People of the Adams St. Christian School by means of the Reformed Witness Hour. The Program Committee of the Radio Committee reports that, the Lord willing, during December the combined talents of the Radio Choir and the choir of our Adams St. Chr. School, under the direction of Mr. Roland Petersen and accompanied by Fran Lubbers, will be heard December 9 and 16. Along with these fine singing groups the radio listeners can hear sermons by Rev. H. Hoeksema, who has again begun a current series of radio messages. The Committee invites all who love distinctively Reformed preaching and singing to tune in and listen to these programs. Printed copies of the sermons can be obtained by writing to the Reformed Witness Hour, P.O. Box 1230, Grand Rapids 1, Mich.

**Called Home:**

Carl Lee Dykstra, son of Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Dykstra, of Hope Church, at the age of two months, on November 22.

Mrs. A. Brummel, of our Hull Church, on November 1, at the age of 75 years.

From South Holland's "Reflector," the school paper, we learn that a Thanksgiving Program was presented by the pupils in the South Holland Church on November 21. In an editorial in the same paper Mr. H. W. Kuiper discussed "Our Purpose in Education," concluding that it should be "a means to fit the child for service in the kingdom."

The students of Adams St. School were to present a Christmas program to the
Mothers’ Club at the school gym on Dec. 6. Fathers and friends were invited also.

Rev. B. Woudenberg has declined the call extended to him by the Kalamazoo Church. That church now has a duo composed of the Revs. R. Harbach and H. Veldman.

Rev. J. Heys has declined the call from our Loveland Church.

Our Servicemen:
Henry and Maurice De Vries (Rudolph) left for service in October. Ted De Vries returned the same month, and so the young people of the congregation were invited to the parsonage for a combination welcome and farewell.

Here are the addresses of three of our servicemen, all from Randolph:
- Pvt. Henry De Vries
  US 55775729
  Co. C. 10th Bn 3Trg Bde
  US ATC Armor
  Fort Knox, Kentucky
- Pfc. Milton Alsman
  RA 16670961
  Co. “B” 307 Eng Bn
  Fort Bragg, North Carolina
- Pfc. Frank De Vries
  US 55677321
  2nd Hsp. Evac. Smld.
  APO 252, New York, New York

Frank Block, of First Church, returned home the last week in November.

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. B. Boeda of our Oaklawn Church, who celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary on November 16, and to Mr. and Mrs. J. Miedema (Hope), who celebrated their fifty-second wedding anniversary on November 29.

New arrivals on the Church Scene:
- A daughter, born to Mr. and Mrs. T. Newhof, Jr. (First)
- A daughter, born to Mr. and Mrs. H. Gruseczynski (First)
- A daughter, born to Mr. and Mrs. C. Juker (First)
- A son, born to Mr. and Mrs. Allen Hendricks (Edgerton)
- A daughter, born to Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Lubbers (Hudsonville)
- A daughter, born to Mr. and Mrs. B. Zandstra (Oaklawn)

Wedding bells rang on Oct. 30 for Jeanette Bouve and Wm. Bleyenberg (Edgerton).

Membership changes:
Mr. and Mrs. P. Koole and six baptized children came to Hope from Creston.

Mr. Thomas Dempsey became a member of First Church.

Mr. and Mrs. Dale Mensch transferred to Loveland from Hope.

The following members came to Southeast from Creston: Mr. and Mrs. C. Lubbers; Mr. and Mrs. John De Vries and four baptized children; and Mr. Leonard Koppenol, Miss Leta Koppenol, and Miss Marie Koppenol.

Southeast received the membership papers of Rev. and Mrs. M. Schipper, Lois, and Kenneth, from Southwest.

James Huizenga transferred to First Church from Randolph.

Mr. Tom De Vries went to Loveland from First.

First Church received the following members from Creston: Mr. and Mrs. William Kamps and eight baptized children: Mr. Wm. Vanbelkum; Mrs. Marie Vanbelkum; Mr. Jacob King; and Mrs. Sadie Dykstra.

Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit VanderLee and Miss Dorothy VanderLee joined First Church, coming from Grand Haven.

Some items of interest:
Randolph’s congregation now distributes 635 pamphlets every month, as a result of the generous support of this project by the people there.

The deacons of First Church were to be at Adams St. School on Dec. 5, 6, and 7 to receive gifts of summer clothing for the poor of Jamaica.

Hudsonville’s Mr. and Mrs. Society recently sponsored a coffee and baked goods sale, the proceeds of which were donated towards the new kitchen facilities.

Rev. G. Van Baren, of our Randolph Church, lectured there on Nov. 15 on “Creation Days: 24 Hours or Long Periods.” The following Sunday’s bulletin contained a word of thanks to the congregation for its wonderful response.

From Lynden’s bulletin: “Sometimes silence is golden. At other times it is just plain yellow.”