March 1965

Amused
JON HUISKEN

... And Let Us Give Thanks
R. TRYON

Esperanto
H. G. MEELKER
Published monthly, except June and August by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

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APATHY IN CONTROVERSY?

Contact with and exposure to controversies as youth of the covenant of God are inevitable experiences in that glorious state into which that youth has been called and placed. The surety of this encounter obtains also with respect to adults, of course, who are by no virtue of their own also placed into that relation of friendship with the Living God. We stress at this point, however, that reality as it pertains to you, the Protestant Reformed youth. In fact, because you are somewhat younger and lack much of the knowledge and understanding at this time, which your parents have received through the years, it may be said that controversy is a more difficult experience for you than for them. But this does not mean that you have not experienced controversy or that you have little knowledge of some of its characteristics. In the actual experience of your life, it involves much more than the above “contact with and exposure to controversy,” does it not? Perhaps it is more accurate and significant to say that the Protestant Reformed youth of today becomes, ipso facto, quite directly involved in such controversy.

We must assume certain premises at this time. First, you are the children of God who are then the friends of God. Secondly, therefore you know Him in your soul, and you love Him and His Word. Thirdly, then you are also desirous to witness (speak and live) in accord with His Revelation and contrary to all that may oppose it. These things must be remembered in our present considerations.

Controversy, we have said, is inevitable. But what is controversy? It may be defined, generally and for our consideration here, as a discussion of argumentative opposition to a given thought or concept, especially in the doctrines of our view of God, His revelation, and our life in this world. Or, the world and life view of the Protestant Reformed faith, if you please, comes under dispute and attack, either from within or from without, and then in a healthy and vigorous church, controversy arises.

And Scripture teaches us that such will be the case. First, the openly godless always flout the cause of Christ in the midst of the world. Secondly, there are within (the sphere of) the militant church the “fifth columnist,” the Judas, the enemy within the gate, who are, though in the church, not truly of it. In due season, of course, this element is always exposed and made manifest. Finally, there is within the hearts of each of us, according to that old nature of sin and the flesh, opposition to the very doctrines which we hold dear and of which we testify that they are the faithful interpretations of the Holy Scriptures of God.

Therefore, we can conclude that where there is no controversy concerning the principles of the faith, there also we find little or no evidence of those principles, but rather a sickly unanimity which must and does lead to spiritual ruin. (cf. John 15:18-27)

This, however, is not a plea for controversy. We do not and may not desire controversy for its own sake! Rather, we purpose to warn against the deadly spirit of apathy which oftentimes prevails in the presence of controversy. Further, we purpose to encourage Zion’s youth to be vigilant and valiant soldiers, enjoined to be witnesses of the heritage which God has committed to our trust.

Apathy is a want of feeling, a lack of passion, emotion, excitement and interest. It is an almost total indifference to what normally appeals to our interest. Apathy is the “So what?”, the “Don’t bother me!”, the “I’m not concerned!” over against the inroads of darkness into the sphere of the church on earth and its attacks on our heritage, namely the TRUTH which has been committed to our trust. Apathy is the “easy” road. Apathy is sickly. Apathy is deadly! Unchecked, apathy always destroys its proponents.

Remember: Apathy is symptomatic.

You will and must engage in controversy in this life. The “easy”, “peaceful”, and “go along with the majority” road is one which is strictly condemned in the Word. However, we may not and we cannot be engaged in such controversy fruitfully if our attitudes are basically apathetic. When the principles of
the faith are controverted, it is axiomatic that you as the youth of the Protestant Reformed Churches have an interest, become excited, and become passionate in the matter, which involves your God, His revelation, His Truth, because He has so revealed those things in your souls. The converse of apathy, in addition to interest and zeal, is based on knowledge and awareness! That knowledge and awareness is given through diligent study of the Word, prayerful meditation, and devotion to the Lord, all wrought through His grace in your hearts. A glory is yours, Protestant Reformed youth! God has given the brilliance of His light. Read of that glory in Isaiah 60, beginning:

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”

We believe that such is peculiarly ours, do we not? (I do not say exclusively). Then when (not if) you are attacked for your beliefs, your concepts, and your doctrines, may you take comfort and joy, and may you receive strength for the conflict from Him who alone is able to sustain:

“... and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.” I Peter 3:14, 15.

H. W. K.

FEATURE

AMUSED

by JON HUISKEN

The idea or notion that children and young people, in general, must have fun and be amused and entertained is far from new. The problem we raise is not new; neither is the proposed solution. The mere fact, however, that the question must again be raised and the answer reiterated is cause for shame and embarrassment. It seems as if previous words of warning have fallen on deaf ears and determined minds. We present here not new questions and new answers but new experiences.

It is argued by many not only in the sphere of the world but also in the sphere of the church that it is not only natural but also necessary and becoming for people, especially young people, to desire fun and entertainment. This idea had, in fact, so crept into the minds of “church people” by the early 1900’s that the Christian Reformed Synod of 1928 had to include the question in its agenda. The question as it faced this synod can be easily resolved into a basic conflict of interest in the world vs. interest in the church. The world was seen to offer its pleasures and diversions, its amusements in the form of movies, card playing, and dancing. It was to these amusements that many young church people succumbed. Hence, the problem. The church could evidently and obviously see that these worldly pleasures were basically wrong. But, reasoned the Church, outright condemnation of these evils would not do. There must be something offered to fill the vacuum left by these worldly amusements. But what of this discussion and judgment? It is evident immediately that the church failed to face the question squarely. In fact, the church failed to face the basic question at all. The church ceded at once that children must have fun. This remained an undisputed fact. The only remaining questions, then, are where and how. The basic question, the question of why children must have fun remains unanswered. The fundamental question has been circumvented for an easier one of method and manner. We reap the fruits of such thought and attitude yet today. Possibly most and evident

Two
and most pertinent to us, as was pointed out as recently as the last issue of Beacon Lights, is the predicament of our own Protestant Reformed young people’s conventions. Conventions in the past have been characterized by an emphasis, seemingly not planned or deliberate, on the social aspect of these gatherings. The social aspect has been given priority, oddly enough, without any urging or bally-hoo from anyone. Perhaps young people are just following their natural inclinations, an inclination described by the epithet “Kids will be kids.” Perhaps, the convention provides not only an opportunity for fun with parental approval and oftentimes glee because of the common religious denominator but also an opportunity for fun with the awful eye of the church being ever present, thus giving this fun an odd sort of sanctity.

The problem, then, is very real for us even today. It is not simply an academic question which applied only to 1928ers. In fact, the problem is more real and closer to us than it ever was in 1928. We no longer have to offer amusements to fill a supposed vacuum. We no longer have to say to our children “Beware of the theater and the dance hall.” All we have to do is point to our very own homes and say: “There it is all. The amusements which the synod of ’28 had said to exist in the world have now been imported into our very own homes, into our very own living rooms. “But such nonsense, you say. Simply preposterous. What a blatant accusation. What gall to say that these worldly amusements now exist in our homes, in the place where our heart is. An ingenious idea, no doubt, to have these amusements centralized in a box with pictures and sounds, but come now, What harm is there in “Daniel Boone” and “Popeye”? It can’t be as bad as all that. What harm is there for our children to absorb themselves for a few minutes each day with seemingly harmless tales?

This seemingly innocent absorption by seemingly innocent youngsters, however, has produced its effect and, not a good one. It has produced a problem. This problem became increasingly aware to me in my position as a teacher, not as a common ordinary teacher, mind you, but as a Protestant Reformed Christian school teacher at that. The interest of Protestant Reformed students in fun and amusement was not shocking in itself. I have been associated with children long enough, I believe, at least I hope, to realize that children need fun and excitement. It is, however, when this interest turns into preoccupation and preoccupation turns into necessity that one is shocked beyond belief. It is when seemingly innocent stories and fables are taken as fact and truth that one is horrified. One is not afraid of a television set. It is the fascination with and the subsequent devouring of the products of the products of television that shocks one’s soul. The result is stupefying. It is common, although there are exceptions and there ought to be, for students to remember point by point, gunshot by gunshot, trauma by trauma the actions and events of television “stories.” Transferred, however, into a classroom situation, the same child draws a complete blank. Mystifying? Not really. Horrifying? Understandably so.

A survey recently conducted by the undersigned (or the above whichever is the case) heightened the severity of the problem. It was found that Protestant Reformed students knew more facts and figures about television and its productions than about God and His production, His Holy Word. Ten year olds, for example, were able to fill two walls of blackboards with names of television programs but only one soul knew what the grace of God and His salvation were. Kindergarteners, too, have views and opinions. One young man also in a Protestant Reformed school was asked to draw a house. Included were, of course, the frame, a door, a chimney, and last, but not least, a television antenna. It certainly is not odd that these young people develop these ideas. Look around yourself. Count the houses in your block and see how many are conspicuous by the absence of an antenna. Then, look again. Look through windows and doors for the “Reformed antennas,” the less conspicuous rabbit ears. Take a poll and survey for yourself. But most importantly, survey and poll your own home. Where is the rug that is most worn? Where is the softest chair? What do your children talk about? What do you talk about?

Such is the problem. The solution? The solution is most easily seen if we correctly view the question. Ultimately, of course, the question is one of value. It is a problem of putting first things first, of devoting our time and effort to that which is lasting and profitable over against that which is trivial and mundane. It appears that we have satisfied the Synod of ’28 all right. We have succeeded in filling the vacuum left by the absence of
worldly amusements. But we, too, have missed the point of the whole problem. We, too, have missed the entire thrust of the question. We, too, have failed to answer the question of the why. Why must children have fun and amusement? Do they have need of it? Do they deteriorate spiritually from the lack of it? Do they know what is supposed to be known and consequently can spend their energies on something else? Are they too young for the serious matters of life? Are they too young to spend time finding out who God is and why we serve him? Are we satisfied with our state and with the state of our children? Such can hardly be the case. Try to make out a case for amusements in face of the command “Seek ye first the kingdom of God.” Try to make out a case for entertainment in the face of the mandate to “Go out into all the world and preach the gospel.” The solution to our problem? Does it need repeating?

We have filled the vacuum all right. We have filled it so well that now this once harmless vacuum is turned into a mighty sucking force which sucks into itself all kinds of dirt and trash. It is time we face up to the question. I cannot govern your house or your den; neither do I care to. But my point is, seriously consider, seriously reflect upon such questions: Do we need amusement? Do we need diversions and pleasures? What about that Word? Do we know it? Do we believe it? Do we live it?

. . . AND LET US GIVE THANKS

by ROSALYNN TRYON

Presented as a speech on November 15, 1964 at the First Protestant Reformed Church

“Praised be the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation!” The heart and soul of thanksgiving lies in these words, for when we give thanks, we are rendering homage to the true King of Creation. This is thanksgiving.

This is also one of the prime occasions for thanksgiving. How little we actually realize of God’s true greatness, yet it is all around us. Each morning we awake to a world created by God with a breath of eternity; each night we fall asleep without fear, safe in the knowledge that God controls life in its cycle until the end of time. How great is our God!

This physical creation, however, is not His only greatness. Right now, and in each moment of our lives, He is in the midst of us. Each breath we take, each heartbeat, is controlled by His omnipotent hand. Each smile, each tear; each burst of laughter, and each cry of fear bring us closer to Him in our journey toward heaven. We are not alone for one second, or we would surely be destroyed. How truly great is our God!

Yet, His greatness extends still further. Look in the pew in front of you. There lies the Bible like the Sword of Truth. On the outside it appears to be a simple book, like the sword is a simple piece of metal; but put it to proper use, and it will destroy evil in its preservation of good. God’s special revelation is the masterpiece which transcends eternity to touch time. Its riches are so understandable, yet so deep, that we can comprehend but a little through the eyes of the Holy Spirit. Surely, God’s greatness is an occasion for our thanksgiving. God’s love is another occasion for our thanksgiving. How miserably proud we are in our sins. We are striving toward the moon, the stars, and beyond; We are able to sing, speak, think, and do a thousand other things. And we dare to kneel down and pray as if we really believed that we merit God’s listening ear. We are born in sin, we live in sin, and we die in sin. Every act, even our very being is intrinsically the picture of sin itself. Compare then what God is. He is totally without sin. By the essence of His very being, He is good — all good. We, who are evil, are by nature centered on this evil, for we are
self-centered; while God, who is all Goodness, is centered on this goodness, for He is God-centered. How great then, was His love when He sent His Son to lift us up from the mire of our own sin. Most certainly, God’s love is reason for our thanksgiving.

As if His greatness and love were not ample occasion for our thanksgiving, God has showered us with unbelievable physical blessings. In this land of plenty we are neither cold nor starving. We have a roof over our heads, a fine building in which to worship — actually, we have more than we need and can ever fully use. The Lord has truly given us the fruit of the earth in abundance. For this we must render our thanks.

And, were it humanly possible, this thanks ought to be rendered continuously. Obviously, the prime object of this thanksgiving will be God, in His greatness, love, and blessings; but the secondary object will be man.

In himself, man is not meritorious of even our meagre thanksgiving; but insofar as he is one of God’s children, and insofar as he is created in the image of Almighty God, we will give him our thanksgiving. This, by its very condition of election to the household of God, excludes the reprobate from being the object of our thanksgiving.

However, the thanksgiving which one Christian renders to another is basically different from the thanksgiving which the Christian must render toward God. When we render God thanks, we, as lesser beings, are paying homage to the Great Being; while when we give thanks to our fellow man, we are thanking each other as peers, equals in the sight of God.

But how then, do we render thanks to God?

In the first place, this thanksgiving must be spontaneous. Thanksgiving which is a product of custom, or which is rendered out of a sense of duty or pride, is not real thanksgiving. The Lord does not delight in an empty formalism, but rather condemns it. If we must force ourselves to give thanks, we are not being Christians, but hypocrites, for all we are giving ourselves is an outward gratitude which has no inward existence. This does not mean that our emotions must be churned to a state of near hysteria before we are prepared to render thanks, but rather that our praise be an expression of the true gratitude that fills our hearts. While it is essential that our thanksgiving be spontaneous, it must also be sincere. This sincerity must be based on understanding. Our hearts cannot be filled with a nameless gratitude only when we offer thanks, for, in spite of its spontaneity, this thanksgiving does not have the gratitude based on knowledge of what is true, and it is therefore not sincere. Here, too, thanksgiving is an empty form, for it is based on emotionalism, not on truth. Thus, when we render thanks to God, it must be done sincerely, with the knowledge of the occasion for our thanksgiving.

But what is perhaps the most important element of our thanksgiving is still missing. This is humility. Without humility we cannot realize our many blessings and therefore can neither be sincere nor spontaneous in thanksgiving. While we render thanks to our fellow Christian as equal to equal, we cannot thank God in this way. He is the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent Lord of the Universe; while we are but His footstool. We were created to honor and glorify Him, to serve Him, and render homage to Him. He is the Great Being, we are lesser beings. We were created in His image, not He in ours. And therefore, we must render thanks to Him in humility, as servant to Master. We thank God in humility because of all His many blessings toward us, and because we can never give Him anything that He does not already have. Thus, to be truly thankful, we must be truly humble.

Thanksgiving, then, is spontaneously, sincerely, humbly rendering homage to God for what He is and for what He has given us.

However, even though we know what thanksgiving truly is, we do not render it right. The feeling of gratitude is not easily achieved, for we lack humility.

In the world today, man has replaced the Almighty Lord with “almighty” man. Huge bands of concrete tie ocean to ocean, tunnels and wires tie continent to continent; great rockets blast man away from earth’s surface while probes dig deep into its crust. Often the Christian finds himself enmeshed in “man’s” achievements, forgetting that these are all God’s handiwork. Science is queen and man is her lord, yet he cannot scratch the heavens and find God. Nevertheless, man’s achievements are a stumbling block to a Christian’s true humility.

But man’s achievements are not the only obstacle to true humility. Sometimes the very fact that we are the elect of God can be a block to our humility. Often we find our-
selves looking down on the world around us as if we really were better than they. It is so easy to forget that we did not first choose God, but that He chose us. Were it not for this choice, we would be as the rest of the world: Locked in darkness without the Lord. Rather than give us a sense of pride, our election should give us humility in awe of God’s greatness.

Let us then strive continuously to humble ourselves before the throne of God, not man; and let us ever more realize that we were chosen of God, not Him of us.

Therefore, this Thanksgiving Day, and each day of our lives; let us, in humility “Praise the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation” — and let us give thanks.

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**THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION**

2. Its Origin

We have said that the decree of election originated in the sovereign will of God, that, in fact, God works all things according to the counsel of His own will. Beyond or behind the will of God no one can go. God’s will is the origin, the continuance and end of all things. From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. The will of God is God decreeing. The love of God, since God is love, is God executing His decree. The will of God acts in love. His will moves in the sphere of His being (its only limitation), which is love. Then God’s decree of election comes forth from electing love. Our confessions say that “the good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election.” Then a gracious election and election love are certainly one and the same thing. The love of God is the motive for election, as the Canons of Dort state, referring to “the purpose of God according to election... as it is written, ‘Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated’ ” (Rom. 9:13). Election is also described as God’s “so great love towards” the elect (I, 13). The Word of God bears this out. God chose Israel to be a special people to Himself above all people. The Lord did not set His love upon them, nor choose them because they were more in number than any people, for they were the fewest of all people. But rather because the Lord loved them He chose them (Dt. 7:6-8). The Lord had a delight in them to love them, and He chose their seed after them (10:15). Notice, that the Lord loved them and chose them. He did both, the one the moving cause, and the other the effect. He loved them, therefore He chose them. Why did He choose them? Because He loved them! Why did He love them? Because
He loved them, that is, because He willed to love them. His election is eternal; so is His love for the elect. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee” (Jer. 31:3). His love from all eternity is in sovereign choice of the persons loved in Christ.

How, in the light of this, can the infralap-sarian say that an object must exist before it can be loved? that is, “God cannot love a non-entity”? God’s sovereign choice and love of a people from all eternity, although not yet objectivized in history, nevertheless make them real to Him. (Isa. 44:9, 10; Acts 15:18). They are in the decree of God. Then God loves them. Otherwise He could not love them from eternity. Men who are not in His decree of election He does not love.

The origin of election is the sovereign will of God. The sole cause of this election is the good pleasure and love of God (Canons I, 7, 10). The character of election is that of grace. Being a gracious election it is spoken of as “the free grace of election” (I, 13, 15, 18). Scripture mentions “the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5). Grace is not the origin of election. Grace better fits in with the end of election than with its beginning. Yet God’s grace is not an abstract from His will. Certainly His will is a gracious will. Yet the end of election is expressed in the words “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (Eph. 1:6). The end of God’s decree of election was the magnifying of His grace. The phrase “the election of grace” is therefore not to be understood as containing a genitive of cause or origin, but of quality or character, as “the Sun of Righteousness,” “the shield of faith,” and “the children of light.” Divine election is directly traceable to the invincible and indisputable will of God. We are predestined according to the good pleasure of His will (Eph. 1:5). He made known to us the mystery of His will (1:9), and did so “according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.” He works “all things after the counsel of His own will” (1:11). “He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth” (Dan. 4:35). God wills Himself the ever blessed God, perfect in all His attributes. His wisdom is infinite, yet by a sovereign act of His will He determines the exercise and the manifestation of it (1 Cor. 1:19-21). God is merciful, but He has mercy on whom He will. God is uncompromisingly just, yet His will decides whether He shall mete justice directly upon the sinner or through a Representative.

Then election is not to be conceived of as accomplished out of foreseen faith (Canons I, 9). What good is there to foresee in the spiritually dead and totally depraved sinner? In their natural enmity against God, and in their unregeneracy, all men are children in whom is no faith. They do not believe (Jn. 5:38), they can not believe (5:44), shall not believe (Ac. 13:41). “All men have not faith” (2 Thes. 3:2), but the men who do have it, possess it not of themselves, nor by any good quality or disposition in them; it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:9). It is not a virtue which originates in or even operates by the power of man, but by the operation of God (Col. 2:12). The Arminian at least thinks, if he does not say it, that as many as believe are ordained to eternal life. But the Lord says, “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Ac. 13:48). The Arminian teaches that if you are not Christ’s sheep, it is because you believe not. But Jesus said, “Ye believe not because ye are not My sheep” (Jn. 10:26). The Arminian says that some men are not of God because they do not hear God’s Word. But Christ affirms, “Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God” (8:47). The Arminian thinks that God blinds men’s eyes and hardens their hearts because they believe not. But the apostle taught that “they believed not,” in fact, “they could not believe, because that Esaias said, ‘He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see’” (12:36-40). The Arminian thinks that all who come to Christ, the Father gives to Him. But the Lord taught, “All that the Father giveth to Me shall come to Me” (6:37). The Arminian says, Believe on His name and you shall be born of God. But the apostle wrote, “them that believe (presently) . . . were (already) born . . . of God” (1:12, 13). The Arminian says you must hear the Word and believe it in order to obtain eternal life. But it is written, “he that heareth My Word and believeth Him that sent Me, hath (not shall have) everlasting life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life” (5:24). It is therefore the one with spiritual life who hears the Word and believes it. The trouble with the Arminian is that he will not have the plain, bare Word of God, despite his loud boasts that he will. He wants the exact
opposite to the infallible Word!

Nor were we chosen on account of foreseen good works. Men are chosen in eternity "being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand: not of works, but of Him that calleth" (Rom. 9:11). The moving cause of our election is not our willing what is good, nor our running and holding out, but the mercy of God. Then "if by grace, it is no more of works" (11:6), "not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship (we are not self-made men), created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:9, 10). Again, He "saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal" (2 Tim. 1:9).

Nor were we chosen on account of foreseen holiness. God chose us in Christ "that we should be (not because we were) holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. 1:4). We were chosen to faith, to obedience, to holiness, and to every saving good. For "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Th. 2:13). Faith, holiness and the other gifts of salvation, including eternal life, are the fruits and effects of election, not a moving or contributing cause of it.

It was not the foresight of any good qualities in men which moved God to choose them. They never have any good in them except that which God ordains for them, promises and bestows upon them. Therefore God never has foresight of anything not in His decree. God cannot foresee without foreordaining. His foresight is founded upon His sovereign will. This foresight, or prescience, bare knowledge of things beforehand, has been confused with the biblical term "foreknowledge." But foreknowledge as used in Scripture is not foresight, or an aspect of mere omniscience. Therefore, "whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate" (Rom. 8:28f) does not mean that predestination is on the basis of foreknowledge (omniscience). That is Arminian. Foreknowledge in Scripture is a knowledge of approbation, a knowledge of love, a knowledge of one's own. Whom He did foreknow, means whom He loved as His own—He predestinated them.

So, "I never knew you" can only mean, I never loved you; as "the Lord knoweth them that are His" means, the Lord loves His own. When we read that Christ was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Ac. 2:23), we notice that the decree of God is first, preceding His knowledge of love. For Christ was delivered to death not merely by decree, but also by the love of God.

The end God has in mind in His decree of predestination, in election and in reprobation, is His glory. As to the elect, "know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself" (Ps. 4:3). As to the reprobate, "the Lord hath made all things for His own end, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil" (Pro. 16:4, marg.).

3. Its Well-Spring

The eternal purpose of God has a definite relation to Christ. First in His counsel is His decree of the covenant. To realize the purpose of His covenant, God ordained His Son to be the Christ, the visible representation of the invisible God. Christ became the Head, the Alpha and the Omega of the covenant. Charles Haddon Spurgeon in his unadulterated, unabridged and unedited works reveals a grand understanding of the truth. He said, "Search for the celestial foundation, from which the divine streams of grace flow to us, and you will find Jesus Christ the well-spring in covenant love. If your eyes shall ever see the covenant roll, if you shall ever be permitted in a future state to see the whole plan of redemption as it was mapped out in the chambers of eternity, you shall see the blood-red line of atoning sacrifice running across the margin of every page, and you shall see that from the beginning to the end one object was always in view—the glory of the Son of God." (John 11:4).

"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1). Here is the initial election, the well-spring of election. Christ is the first of the elect. He stands at the head of the register in the book of election. The Son thus became the Fountain of election, just as He is the Fountain of life (Jn. 5:26). He was preordained to be the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, and foreappointed to be the one Mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus. He did not thrust Himself into this office, but was called of God, as Aaron (Heb. 5:4), and was sealed
to the office by the Father (Jn. 6:27). He was set up, or ordained from everlasting from the beginning, before the earth was. It was then that He was beside the triune God, a co-equal, yes, a Father (Prov. 8:23, 30, Heb.). He was ordained the Father of Eternity and the Mighty God (Isa. 9:6), one chosen out of the people (Ps. 89:19), laid in Zion, i.e., predestinated in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, chosen of God (I Pet. 2:4, 6). Since we have been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, a valid implication is that Christ was chosen before we were, then we in Him. He was the principal object in the decree of God, there appointed especially to be the Firstborn among many brethren, the Firstborn of every creature, and such a Firstborn in the way of being the Firstbegotten from the dead. As the Firstborn, He came out of the womb of election, opening the way for His many brethren to come forth.

(To Be Continued, D.V.)

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. G. LUBBERS

GOD'S TREASURE — SNOW AND HAIL

"Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?"

Job 38:22, 23

The pastor was sitting in his study. It had been another busy week for him in his small yet demanding congregation. Somehow he had again been enabled with a new supply of the Spirit to forge ahead in a busy week of teaching, preaching, sermon-making, writing in the periodicals; it had taxed his strength; it had seemed to drain him dry!

It called for a time of quiet meditation, for prayer; it was the hour of need to be alone with God, to refresh his soul with water from the brook, the river of God which flows softly — from the Throne.

The wind had begun to blow outside. Winter was still in the land, and all things were still asleep in winter's deep. The radio had predicted another winter-storm in the offing. Yes, it was another storm which neither Almanac nor weather-man had really foreseen, and which fact made one feel deeply that the winds of the Almighty blow where He listeth, be they spring breezes, summer sephrys or winter's icy blasts. The tall oak trees stand gaunt and bare, with a few of last season's golden leaves tenaciously clinging to their branches, which reach heavenward with out-stretched arms as if in awe before their mighty Creator and Sustainer. And, in ever increasing tempo and crescendo, the howling winds descend with stronger gusts. And man
and beast seek shelter, each in their own habitat. It seems that God is walking on the wings of the wind . . . and He does!

God is speaking out of the whirl-wind. The kingdom of heaven happens in parables! The pastor sits in reverie, in thoughtful contemplation of the Lord’s works. His thoughts turn to the speech of God addressed to Job out of the whirl-wind, out of his divine Theophany! Once more he reads the familiar strains recorded in the sacred pages of his Bible, “Gird up thy loins now like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me: hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow…”

Yes, had the pastor entered with Job and considered attentively the Lord’s “treasure” in the snow?

Oh, he had walked in it many times; sometimes he had waded through it knee-deep and hip-high. It had been bothersome; yes, it had even been a bit terrifying as he walked in it, engulfed in the breath-taking wind and the mounting, swirling snows. He had observed that thousands of snowflakes descended as fluffy down, accumulating and multiplied by thousands of thousands. It had taxed his strength and endurance; he had opined that he was not as youthful and vigorous as he had been in yester-year. He had observed that more than one of his fellow-men and generation had succumbed in the battle with the snow, or, that when it had melted and formed to ice, had been the reason for bruised limbs and broken bones. Yes, doctors and medical men “in the know” were warning the public, men of his age and strength, to beware in their battle with the snow!

But, had he truly entered into the “treasure” of the snow, and of the hail.

The latter too could be an awesome experience, crippling man and beast, reminding man of his puny strength when matched with the Him who scatters His ice like hoarfrost. Recently the rain had turned to such ice and it seemed that the Lord literally rained ice from heaven. It lay inches deep upon mountain and plain, even where the foot of man never makes an imprint. It was not stingly scattered abroad. He covers the mountains with the snow and hail as in great reservoirs of water, to cause them to thaw and flow down steep mountain slopes, hastening and hurrying them to the sea. Meanwhile the wild asses quench their thirst beside these streams.

But had he considered the “treasure” of the snow and hail?

Ah, Hannibal, the great general of ancient times, had not! He assayed to lead his army of men and elephants across the snow-covered Alps only to find that the snows killed more of his army of men and elephants than all the rigors of actual warfare! Great avalanches of snow went cataracting, with thundering reverberations, into the valleys, carrying with them man and beast, and leaving nought but destruction in its path. One can read it in the books. Ironically enough, it is man’s chronicle of God’s “treasure” in the snow, His reserved power in the day of battle . . .

Had the pastor considered?

Outside of his study windows the winds were blowing in stiffer gale . . .

How often had the Lord not in His secret providence used the snow and the hail in His arsenal for battle? Little children imitate their maker unwittingly betimes. They have their snow-ball fights and battles. Sometimes they pack them wet and hard. Thus the Lord used the snow and the hail, the swollen rivers and the seasonal floods as barriers in history, defying the ken of man, deciding the issues of the battle of the nations, determining the course of history and the bounds of the habitations of man. Napoleon, that master-strategist, was taken in his own strategy. He met his fall at Waterloo . . .

Meanwhile there is a positive treasure in the snow.

Yes, this the pastor had often considered. It is the “mystery” of the transformation, a picture of earth changed to heaven. When God takes the murkiest waters and lifts them aloft, He causes them to descend from heaven whiter than any fuller’s soap can whiten the purest linen. It is the symbolism of which the prophets speaks in unforgettable beauty for Zion’s comfort, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow . . .”

There is a beauty of God in the snow, in each snow-flake. Amongst all the myriad of snow-flakes there is not one alike. Each snow-flake bespeaks the wisdom and the matchless ingenuity of its Designer; each is the pure crystalline beauty which reflects the purity of God, which when touched by man is soiled beyond recleansing. Its pristine beauty never returns . . . unless it is wafted heavenward once more, to be cleansed by the Almighty and to return in the form of snow!

Gird thyself as a man and consider . . .
Consider the ways of God, even the path of the snow-flake, O man!
The pastor turns about in his chair; his reverie is ended. The wind and storm are still tempestuous. More snow has fallen. It would be a good evening to stay indoors, about the fire-place and the embers...
Meanwhile the pastor’s spirits are lifted; he feels refreshed and his soul is filled with a song; he drank from a full cup. He muses how God speaks out of the whirl-wind!
The life of each creature the Lord makes His care...
The tiny snow-flake too.
Blow then, O northwind, laden with treasures in thy wake...

FROM DORT TO TODAY
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REFORMED FAITH
The Church of God in America
(17)

by REV. HERMAN HANKO

In our last article we finished the history of the Reformed faith in the Netherlands. It is now time to cross the ocean and come to our own shores to trace the history of the truth of the Calvin Reformation and of the Synod of Dort in our own country.
The Reformed faith was brought to this country through emigration.
The emigration with which we concern ourselves was that which followed upon the secession. However, we must understand that prior to the emigrationists of the secession, there were many people from the Netherlands who had found their way to this country. They had begun to come already before the Revolutionary War. They were predominantly members of the Hervormde Kerk (The State Church), and they had established in this country what became known as the Reformed Church of America—a denomination that exists under that name to today. This Reformed Church of America does fit into the picture of the history with which we now deal; but how precisely this was we shall presently see.

The emigration which is of chief importance to us began soon after the secession and continued throughout the entire 19th century. These people were mostly people who had separated from the State Church in 1634 and following years behind the leadership of De Cock and his colleagues. There were many reasons why they came to America: 1) The persecution was still sporadically severe in the Netherlands, and they moved to the “land of religious freedom” to escape it. 2) They were very poor people on the whole, poor because of the class distinctions in the Netherlands between the landholders and the common workers who were oppressed; poor because of the intolerable burdens of taxation imposed upon them by the government; poor because of persecution; poor because of famine in their fatherland. It is not an exaggeration to say that they were starving; and they needed to find a place where they could feed their families. 3) America was the “land of opportunity”. Its vision appeared to the eyes of men throughout the world as a golden “Canaan” of peace and plenty. It beckoned
irresistibly and stretched out its seemingly welcome arms to those who were crushed under the burden of hardship. Dutchmen, as a general rule, are not immune to the attraction of wealth.

As the emigrants trickled over to these shores, the ministers in the Netherlands were concerned about their spiritual welfare. Pious people of God were going to a foreign land which was large and unsettled and which was considered pretty much barbarian as far as the Christian faith was concerned. The danger therefore was very real that the Hollanders would be scattered from one another beyond the possibility of contact; that they would imbibe the heady elixir of worldliness in a foreign culture; and that they would lose their faith and their hope in the truth of God's Word for which they had so valiantly fought in their homeland.

The result was that several ministers determined to go over with the bands of emigrants and help establish colonies where the faithful could remain together and where their spiritual needs could be cared for. Although there is little purpose in giving all the names of these ministers, some of the better known ones we will mention. Van Raalte (who was to play such an important part in the later history of the colonists) went over in 1846 to settle in what is now Holland, Michigan, on the shores of the Black Lake. Scholte led a band of colonists to the fertile land of Iowa, east of Des Moines, near the Skunk River to form a town which is now known as Pella. C. V. Vander Meulen settled in Zeeland, Michigan; M. A. Ypma in the area west and north of Zeeland.

As these colonies were established and various churches formed, a classis was organized — although the classis was limited to the Michigan Churches.

We now have to bring into the picture the Reformed Church of America. A certain Rev. I. N. Wyckoff, a minister in the Reformed Church in New Jersey, had spent a great deal of time and effort in aiding the Holland colonists as they came over to these shores. Especially when they first landed in this foreign country, they were helped over their first difficulties by this generous minister. And, understandably, Wyckoff retained his interests in the colonists even after they had left the East for points in the distant West. So it was that in 1849 Wyckoff made a trip to Michigan and visited the Churches in that area. He formed a deep friendship with Van Raalte, and the two became the engineers of church union. A meeting was called at which the ministers and elders of the colonists were present; and to this meeting union with the Reformed Church was proposed. There was some dishonesty somewhere it seems; at least the colonists were not given a correct picture of spiritual conditions in the Reformed Church. For this Van Raalte, who strongly favored union, was certainly to blame, at least in part. Wyckoff's purpose was to bring these struggling churches, faced with the monumental task of making a home in a new land and taming the forests of Michigan, into his own denomination where they would have stronger church ties and from which they could receive financial help.

It seems as if this meeting passed a resolution favoring union with the Reformed Church with the one provision that their classis could remain intact. However, the meeting was unofficial and had no real ecclesiastical authority. It was not an official decision to join the Reformed Church. But Wyckoff returned to his home and informed his Synod that the colonists favored union. In June 1850 the Synod of the Reformed Church in America approved this union and took the colonists into their denomination.

This union however, has a vague history among the Michigan Churches. There is no mention of union in all the official minutes of the classisal meetings until the spring of 1851. Nevertheless, with Van Raalte pushing for all he was worth, the union did become an accomplished fact.

But this was only the beginning of trouble. Many of the colonists were apprehensive about the whole thing. They questioned the wisdom of it, agitated against it, and, in general, showed every sign of preferring their own denomination.

These apprehensions of the colonists were soon strengthened. Reports kept coming in from the East through the medium of new immigrants, and the news was not good. First of all, it was learned that the Reformed Church had tampered with the confessions. The colonists had not known of this. The Reformed Church had made extensive changes of some importance in the Church Order; they had modified the Belgic Confession; and they had dropped the negative part of the Canons — the rejection of errors. The colonists were not happy about this, for they
had struggled to preserve these Confessions in the Netherlands and had no intention of giving them up now.

Secondly, the new immigrants reported that there were some very strange practices going on in the Churches “back East”. In some churches there was no preaching on the Heidelberg Catechism; ecclesiastical holidays were not observed; baptism was often administered in the homes of parents with new babies or in the Consistory rooms, but not in public worship services; and colored communicants were set apart at the table of the Lord’s Supper.

It was about the time when fears were mounting and when doubts were on the increase that the colonists had made a very bad move in affiliating with the Reformed Church, that there arrived on the scene a man by the name of Gysbert Haan. He was an elder in the church of the secession in Netherlands. He was a very bright, articulate and gifted man. He had, in later years, much influence in the churches in Michigan, and was a leader in the beginning of the Christian Reformed Churches; but he seems to have been a man who regarded himself rather highly with an inflated opinion of his abilities; and his basic love of the cause of the truth is suspect.

Yet he brought some very grave reports back from the East. He informed the colonists that he knew of an elder “back there” who, although he had several children, had baptized none of them on the grounds that they must be free to choose their own denominational affiliation when they come to years of discretion since every church was but another road to heaven. Further, Haan spoke of Arminianism as being very common teaching in the Reformed Churches, the Arminianism which their fathers had so strenuously resisted in the “old country”. Besides, there were lodge members in the churches and this practice of membership in secret organizations was not condemned. Hymns had, in some instances, taken the place of the Psalms; Sunday School was taking the place of Catechetical instruction. Conditions were deplorable, Haan insisted; and he could not understand how the colonists had ever gotten themselves into such a fix to belong to such a denomination. He was of the opinion that they ought to bend every effort to establish their own denomination.

The years 1855-1857 were years of trouble with Haan leading the fight to sever relationships with the Reformed Churches, and Van Raalte leading the fight to remain in this denomination. Although at one classic Haan was censured for agitation in the churches, gradually his views prevailed. Many new immigrants refused to join the church, and others, already members, withdrew.

In 1857 a new denomination of four churches met in classical session. A new name was adopted: “The Holland Reformed Church”; which was later changed to the “True Holland Church”; later still to the “Holland Christian Reformed Church”; and finally, in 1890, to the “Christian Reformed Church”.

Haan’s instability shows through in that, after some additional trouble, he returned to the Reformed Church from which he had withdrawn after a bitter fight.

This new denomination grew rapidly both from new waves of immigrants and from other congregations of the Reformed Church who separated (primarily on the question of lodge membership) and joined the Christian Reformed Church.

There is no doubt about it that the colonists had made a mistake in joining the Reformed Church. The fact of the matter was that the Reformed Church had, in this country, lost its distinctiveness. It had frittered away its heritage and drifted the way of worldliness and apostasy. It had tolerated Arminianism in its fellowship, had lost its distinctiveness as a church of the Reformation, and had become much like other denominations in this country. It had not the spiritual energy and stamina to carry on the glorious traditions of Calvin and Dordt in this new world. Someone else had to do it if the Reformed faith was to prevail. Hence the secessionists and the Christian Reformed Church was formed by the providence of God. God preserved His truth in a new denomination so that the “faith of our fathers” was established in this land.

... errors can never be uprooted from human hearts until true knowledge of God is planted therein.

John Calvin

BEACON LIGHTS

Thirteen
In this so-called “missile age” in which we live today, one finds that the world seems to become smaller and smaller as the ease of communication becomes less difficult. Time no longer holds the same meaning which it did a hundred years ago. It is now possible to breakfast in London, lunch in New York, and dine in Los Angeles all in the same day, and the busy world hardly seems at all impressed, as the great wonders of God are to them only matter-of-fact daily happenings of the age.

So often we young people too forget that the wonders of the day are sent from God. We are so easily swept along with the rushing tide of the wicked and become complacent in our thoughts. Of course we know that all things are from God and of course we acknowledge that all things come from His hand, but how often do we feel day by day that assurance that we belong to Christ and Christ is God’s and therefore all things are ours? How often do we heed the signs of the times and recognize that Christ is coming on the clouds of heaven? Or do we often pass over as the world, with our matter-of-fact attitude and fail to diligently watch for all the possible signs of His coming?

Easily recognizable for the Christian are the signs which we read of in the Bible: Matthew 24:6-7 “And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”

Never before has there been a time so ripe for the coming of the antichrist as today with all that wicked talk of amalgamation of the churches. Then too there are the signs of apostasy in high places. But there are other signs of the times that are not so easily recognizable or are easily passed over in this busy world.

One of these recognizable signs of the times has to do with the above mentioned aspect of communication. Today as never before in the world, communication is essential. People who cannot speak the same language cannot communicate with one another. The lack of communication between two nations can set off a nuclear war and thus cause the destruction of half of the people of the world. What can a nation hope to achieve politically within the own boundary limits of its citizens if those citizens are unable to communicate with one another? Needless to say, absolute chaos would result. How much more true then is this when communication is lacking among members of the United Nations. The world can easily see that there can be no hope of uniting the nations unless there is a common ground of communication between people, nation, and race. Furthermore, how can the so-called Christian nations possibly hope to spread their religion of democracy to the heathen nations whose religion is communism?

So wicked man strives to maintain himself and freedom in the world. He looks for a way whereby all nations may unite, where all the world may be one for the cause of freedom. To achieve that end man must learn to com-
municate with his fellowman. So the world for some three-quarters of a century has worked and strived to find some means whereby he can communicate — to build a tower that will reach to heaven as the Babel of old. The whole wicked world desires one language, one nation, one world, one man, and NO GOD. Wicked man with all his power works to develop his own wicked ends. In the January 11, 1965 issue of one of our national newspapers there was an article which dealt with this means to communicate. The article referred to “Esperanto,” the international language — “the language of hope.” Although for seventy-five years Esperanto has failed in its purpose to gain one world through communication, it is now believed that there may be a new breakthrough as Esperanto “looks like a natural for the jet age.” The article goes on to say that the proliferation of new nations, scientific knowledge, world trade and travel demand a language that is easy to learn, and yet has a rich and supple vocabulary. Language barriers are getting higher at the very time that the world’s business demands that they be lowered. Esperanto can supposedly be learned in about one-fourth the time it takes to learn any other language. Yet, the vocabulary of Esperanto is full. Shakespeare’s plays and Einstein’s theories have been translated into Esperanto. Esperanto is taught in the schools of thirty-two countries, from the United States to the U.S.S.R. International companies like Philips Electric of Holland and Fiat motors of Italy print their brochures in Esperanto. Communist China uses it in its propaganda broadcasts. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) gives financial support to the publication of so-called great works, such as Dante’s Divine Comedy, into Esperanto. Esperanto is one of the languages used in the official introductory guide to the New York World’s Fair.

Why is there all this new emphases on the creation of Esperanto as a world language? Simply because wicked man, like wicked man through the ages wants himself to be the all powerful creature. He wants to forget that there is a God and he wants one great glorious happy world where he and his children may forever do as they please.

Oh, but the world forgets that story of Babel. They forget that God’s hand deferred the completion of that tower. It forgets that all of its power comes from God alone. The world will not acknowledge that Christ is coming again. The wicked hate God and also hate His people. Thus they think they will be able to create a world of one communication.

We as Christians, by God’s grace, can discern these signs of the times. We prayerfully ask that God may show us through His Spirit what he would have us do that all glory may be His.

But there is more than merely discerning a sign from the world’s desire to be one in language. We do not place value in communications of the heathen or in any communications which lack speaking of God’s glory and honor. Thus, the one world language which the world so hopes to achieve is all in vain. How can there be any true speaking apart from that what one Christian achieves with another? The fellowship of Christian believers is the only true fellowship or communication. In all our walk of life we are called to take heed and depart from all language which is not of God. Only with other people of God can we have true language fellowship. We know then that we have nothing in common with those who are not God’s children and who speak not the language of the truth of God. We do not feel at home with the wicked who defame our Father’s name, as our conversation is not and cannot be one in Christ Jesus.

Thus in all our conversation may we so conduct ourselves that others may see in us that we are not one with the world but that our communication is with those things that are of the heavenly. May God give us the grace to discern the signs of the times and to walk according to His love and Spirit, to conduct ourselves in heavenly conversation.

A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter. 

Proverbs

We are saved by grace only, without the work or cooperation of man, or we are not saved at all.

Rev. H. Hoeksema
The Wonder of Grace
JACOB AND THE SHECHEMITES

1. Shechem and Dinah: (vss. 1-4)

A. The Setting. (Note. There are several different aspects to the incident recorded in this chapter, even as there are several individuals involved. Above all, we must view the entire history here as part of the Lord’s dealings with Jacob, the heir of the covenant, at this time. And the main questions as to why the Lord dealt thus with Jacob, and what there was in Jacob’s life and way that occasioned these dealings of the Lord with him, — these questions must be kept in mind throughout your discussion of this passage.)

1. Review the last part of chapter 33:
   a. What did Jacob do at Shechem? vs. 19. Of what is this an indication? Did Jacob intend merely to sojourn there a while and then pass on? Or did he, (and had he done so at the time of the incident in chapter 34,) settle down?
   b. What was really the idea of that altar that he built? Was this a truly pious act on Jacob’s part? Or was this an attempt to satisfy the Lord, this building of an altar and naming it El-Elohe-Israel, in lieu of going to Bethel?
   c. Did the Lord appear to Jacob at all during this period? Did He do so at this altar?

2. How long did Jacob stay at Shechem?
   a. Is this anywhere mentioned in Scripture?
   b. Can we determine the approximate length of Jacob’s stay? How old were his children, — Dinah, Simeon, Levi, — at this time?
   c. Can we determine, from the length of Jacob’s stay here, anything as to Jacob’s attitude at this time? Would you characterize it as a spiritually sound and healthy attitude, or was Jacob at this time rather carnal, revealing himself still in the old appearance of Jacob, the pre-Peniel Jacob?

B. Shechem’s Rape of Dinah:

1. Dinah’s part.
   a. Who was Dinah? How old a girl was she?
   b. What did Dinah do? vs. 1. Was this a proper action on her part? Should she have been visiting “the daughters of the land?”
   c. Do you think it surprising that she also came into contact with the young men of the land?
   d. Was Dinah herself entirely innocent in this affair?
      1) Was this a single incident? Or was this a love affair between Shechem and Dinah?
      2) What do you suppose was Dinah’s reaction to Shechem? Did she lend an ear when Shechem spake “kindly” (literally: “spake to the heart”) to her?
   e. Was Dinah, however, alone at fault in Jacob’s family?
      1) Was there already something wrong in the family situation when she was allowed to visit the daughters of the land?
      2) Was there something wrong in Dinah’s upbringing? In view of the fact that idols were served in Jacob’s household (cf. 35:4), could Dinah conclude that there would be anything wrong in seeking the fellowship of heathen young women and listening to the “kind” words of a heathen prince?

2. Shechem’s action:
   a. Who was Shechem? What kind of man was he? What was he spiritually?
   b. Was his act that of a sex maniac? Or did this illicit “love affair” apparently go on for some time?
   c. What do you think of Shechem’s “love” for Dinah? Was this a case of “true love?” Was it a case of “infatuation”?
d. How are we to judge of the fact that Shechem wanted Dinah for his wife? Is Shechen to be credited for "at least wanting to marry" Dinah after their illicit relationship?
e. What is meant by the fact that Shechem was "more honourable than all the house of his father?" vs. 19
f. As between Dinah and Shechem, who, in your opinion, was more honorable: the covenant young woman, Dinah, or the "outsider," Shechem?

II. Jacob and His Sons Versus Hamor and Shechem: (vss. 5-19)

A. Hamor's Proposal:

1. Jacob's reaction:
   a. How did Jacob become aware of the situation? vs. 5
   b. Does this tell us anything about the relationships in Jacob's family? Was Jacob keeping a watchful fatherly eye on his daughter? Did his daughter confide in him?
   c. How did Jacob react? Did he do anything immediately? Why did he wait until his sons came home? Did he get his sons out of the field? And what, after all, did his sons have to do with it? Was this a matter for Dinah's brothers or for her parents?
   d. With what, apparently, were Jacob and his sons very concerned at this time, — with building a God-fearing home or with multiplying cattle and possessions?

2. The proposal of Hamor:
   a. Who was Hamor?
   b. What did Hamor propose?
      1) Was he interested merely in obtaining Dinah for his son?
      2) Or did he see this as an opportunity to set up an alliance with the prosperous house of Jacob?
      3) Did Hamor have anything "to lose" by this?
      4) Did Jacob stand to lose anything by this proposal of Hamor? If so, what? Do you think Jacob should have accepted the proposal in good faith? Give reasons.
   c. What was Shechem's abiding interest in the whole transaction?

B. The Counter-proposal of Jacob's sons:

1. Who answered Hamor?
   a. Was this the proper province of Jacob's sons?
   b. What does this reveal concerning Jacob, if anything? Should he, as the head of the household, have left this to his sons? Did the fact that he did so absolve him of responsibility?

2. What did his sons demand of the Shechemites?
   a. What is the meaning of circumcision? Cf. Rom. 4:11, for example.
   b. Supposing that the sons of Jacob were acting in "good faith," even then would it have been proper for them to demand what they did and to make this arrangement? Would the mere rite of circumcision remove what they called the "reproach" of giving Dinah to Shechem?
   c. Suppose that the whole arrangement had gone through as proposed by Jacob's sons: what would have been the result?
   d. To what use were these sons putting the covenant sign of circumcision?
   e. What was their motive in all this? In what sense did they act deceitfully? Were they truly interested in circumcision? Did they have their eye on more cattle and goods?

III. The Outcome: (vss. 20-31)

A. For the Shechemites:

1. How did Hamor and Shechem view the sons of Jacob?

2. How do you explain the fact that they readily agreed to the proposal of Jacob's sons?

3. What did Simeon and Levi do to the men of Shechem?

4. Would you say that the men of Shechem were "innocent victims?"

B. For Jacob's sons:

1. Simeon and Levi:
   a. What did they do?
   b. Of what sins did they make themselves
guilty?
1) Were they murderers?
2) Were they more than murderers?
3) In the slaying of these uncircum-
cized-circumcised Shechemites, did
Simeon and Levi reveal themselves
as respecting the sign of circumci-
sion and as men who bore the sign
of circumcision themselves?
c. What does Jacob say of them prophet-
ically in Genesis 49?

2. The other sons:
a. Were the other sons free of responsi-
bility? Proof?
b. How did these sons reveal their real
motive? Vss. 27-29

C. For Dinah:
1. What became of Dinah?
a. Where was she already at the time of
the slaughter? Is this of any signifi-
cance?
b. Do we read of Dinah again?

2. How would you judge the outcome of the
situation as far as Dinah was concerned?
a. Could we say that in spite of all the
deceit and corruption here, — or rather,
through it all, — the Lord nevertheless
kept Dinah from an ungodly marital
union?
b. Would it perhaps have been better if
the marriage of Dinah and Shechem
had gone through?

D. For Jacob:
1. Did Jacob receive “food for thought” as
far as his family situation was concerned?
2. What did Jacob fear as far as the inhabi-
tants of the land were concerned?
a. Was this a good reaction on his part?
b. Was there anything “spiritual” about
Jacob’s attitude as expressed here?
3. Did his sons apparently care much about
Jacob’s fears?
4. Was the Lord using these events to
chastize Jacob? If so, how?

**COULD THIS BE SAID ABOUT YOU?**

**COULD THIS BE WRITTEN ABOUT YOU?**

The Christians are not distinguished from
other men by country, by language, nor by
civil institutions. For they neither dwell in
cities by themselves, nor use a peculiar
tongue, nor lead a singular mode of life. They
dwell in the Grecian or barbarian cities, as
the case may be; they follow the usage of the
country in dress, food, and the other affairs
of life. Yet they present a wonderful and con-
fessedly paradoxical conduct. They dwell in
their own native lands, but as strangers. They
take part in all things, as citizens; and they
suffer all things, as foreigners. Every foreign
country is a fatherland to them, and every
native land is a foreign. They marry, like all
others; they have children; but they do not
cast away their offspring. They have the table
in common, but not wives. They are in the
flesh, but do not live after the flesh. They
live upon the earth, but are citizens of heaven.
They obey the existing laws, and excel the
laws by their lives. They love all, and are
persecuted by all. They are unknown, and yet
they are condemned. They are killed and are
made alive. They are poor and make many
rich. They lack all things, and in all things
abound. They are reproached, and glory in
their reproaches. They are calumniated, and
are justified. They are cursed, and they bless.
They receive scorn, and they give honor. They
do good, and are punished as evil-doers.
When punished, they rejoice, as being made
alive. By the Jews they are attacked as aliens,
and by the Greeks persecuted; and the cause
of the enmity their enemies cannot tell. In
short, what the soul is in the body, the Chris-
tians are in the world. The soul is diffused
through all the members of the body, and the
Christians are spread through the cities of the
world. The soul dwells in the body, but it is
not of the body; so the Christians dwell in the
world but are not of the world. The soul, in-
visible, keeps watch in the visible body; so
also the Christians are seen to live in the
world, but their piety is invisible. The flesh
hates and wars against the soul, suffering no
wrong from it, but because it resists fleshly
pleasures; and the world hates the Christians
with no reason, but that they resist its pleas-
ures. The soul loves the flesh and members,
by which it is hated; so the Christians love
their haters. The soul is inclosed in the body, but holds the body together; so the Christians are detained in the world as in a prison; but they contain the world. Immortal, the soul dwells in the mortal body; so the Christians dwell in the corruptible, but look for incorruption in heaven. The soul is the better for restriction in food and drink; and the Christians increase, though daily punished. This lot God has assigned to the Christians in the world; and it cannot be taken from them.


One reads of no one who burst forth into bolder or more unbridled contempt of deity than Gaius Caligula; yet no one trembled more miserably when any sign of God’s wrath manifested itself; thus — albeit unwillingly — he shuddered at the God whom he professedly sought to despise. You may see now and again how this also happens to those like him; how he who is the boldest despiser of God is of all men the most startled at the rustle of a falling leaf.

John Calvin
Institutes

Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God. This, therefore, is a special gift, where God, to instruct the church, not merely uses mute teachers but also opens his own most hallowed lips.

John Calvin

The whole power of earth has armed itself to destroy it (the church), yet all these efforts have gone up in smoke. How could it, assailed so strongly from every side, have resisted if it had relied upon human protection alone? Rather, by this very fact it is proved to be from God, because, with all human efforts striving against it, still it has of its own power thus far prevailed.

John Calvin

Pride goeth before destruction... Proverbs
Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles. Proverbs

Even as Adam lived and was an active creature, not in or before his being created, but by virtue of this marvellous work of God, so the sinner lives, and becomes positively active, so that he wills to be saved and embraces Christ, not in cooperation with God who saves him, but as a result of the wonder of grace performed upon him.

Rev. H. Hoeksema

God reconciled us unto Himself while we were yet sinners! God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. . . . This is the meaning of the cross: God reconciled us to Himself through the death of His Son! There God reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. There God Himself, through His Son in the flesh, satisfied His own justice. The Son of God brought the sacrifice that was required to blot out the guilt of sin, and to clothe us with an everlasting righteousness. . . . And so, the Gospel is the ministry of reconciliation. It proclaims that reconciliation is an accomplished fact: the elect are surely reconciled to God. He reconciled us! We are reconciled by grace, by pure, free, sovereign grace!

Rev. H. Hoeksema

There can be no doubt that, if the truth were to be determined by popular vote, the doctrine of sovereign election would be rejected by an overwhelming majority.

Rev. H. Hoeksema

A spiritual union must be established between Christ and our soul, before we can receive any fruit of Christ’s death and resurrection. This union is absolutely first.

Rev. H. Hoeksema
Radio News:

The Program Committee of the Reformed Witness Hour reports to us that several new “outlets” are enjoying our Distinctively Reformed radio program each week. Although the Houston, Texas, station has been dropped by the Mission Committee of our Churches, the people of Protestant Reformed persuasion residing in that locality are still able to hear the programs. Upon the request of Rev. G. Lubbers, the Program Committee sends a copy of the weekly broadcasts to the brethren and sisters in that area. A new station has been added. The Consistory of the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church requested that the programs be aired over one of their local stations, W.K.P.R. Their request was considered and granted by the Radio Committee. Also tapes are sent each week to the two ministers of the churches on the island of Jamaica — the Revs. Elliot and Frame. The Quenga family and their friends, on faraway Guam, also express their enjoyment in this method of spiritual contact with the churches. For quite some time the Revs. C. Hanko (Redlands), J. A. Heys (South Holland), and G. Vanden Berg (Oaklawn), and many members of their respective congregations have listened each week by means of their personal tape recorders to the messages of the Truth of God’s Word proclaimed in the preaching and expressed in song and music by this means of communication.

Called Home:

Mr. William Bos (First) at the age of 77 years and Mrs. John Flikkema (First) at the age of 61 years.

New Births:

A son born to Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Miedema (Hudsonville).

A son, Timothy Mark, born to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hoving (Oaklawn).

A daughter, Monica Denae, born to Mr. and Mrs. Lam Lubbers (Hope).

A son, Mark Wayne, born to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hoekstra (Hull).

A daughter, Elaine Faye, born to Mr. and Mrs. Ed Hoekstra (Hull).

A son born to Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Lanning (Holland).

A son, Timothy Gordon, born to Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Ondersma (First).

A daughter born to Mr. and Mrs. George Kamps Jr. (Hudsonville).

Confession of Faith:

was recently made by Henry DeVries (Randolph) and Ruth Vander Kolk, Bob Windemuller, and Paul Windemuller (Holland).

Concerning our Servicemen:

Duane Mensch (Hope) has returned from overseas and Art Stellinga (Doon) has completed his term of service.

Chuck Kalsbeek (Hope), Chuck Bult and Dale Reitsema (First) left on February 9, to begin their six months’ duties in the Armed Forces.

We have also received the new address of Don Hoksbergen. It is as follows:

Pvt. Donald L. Hoksbergen
NG 27819938
208th M. P. Co.
Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. 65475

Wedding bells
rang for Roger Lee Curtis and Betty Young (Hudsonville) on January 18.

Membership changes:

Doon welcomed into their midst Mr. and Mrs. H. Miersma, Valerie, and five baptized children from Edgerton and Rodney Miersma from South Holland.

Activities of the Young Peoples’ Societies:

On January 31, Oaklawn Young Peoples’ Society invited their congregation to listen with them to a Special Reformed Witness Hour tape recorded by the Radio Committee of First Church.
On February 7, First Senior Young Peoples' was host to Southeast, while Hope Young Peoples' traveled to Southwest.

Doon Young Peoples' Society sponsored a singspiration for the churches in that area on February 7. Gerald Kuiper, of Edgerton, was to lead the singing.

On the same evening, Holland's Young Peoples Society sponsored a hymnsing for their congregation. The proceeds of the evening were for chairs in their church annex.

**Miscellaneous Items:**

Southeast Church has finally reached its goal. The carpeting was installed in their church during the first week of February. To meet the balance of the cost, the Mary-Martha Society canvassed the members of the church during the same week.

Rev. and Mrs. J. Kortering, aided by several members of their congregation moved into the former parsonage during the last week of January.

Loveland's congregation has selected property and will soon begin building an edifice that will serve both as a church and (in a basement arranged for that purpose) a school.

The families in Houston sent one thousand dollars to the consistory of the Southwest Church, requesting that one half of that amount be used for travelling expenses for Rev. Lubbers enabling him to spend a few weeks in Houston during the month of February.

The Holland Ladies' Society recently purchased drapes for the annex of their new church.

Hudsonville's Mr. and Mrs. Society sponsored a coffee and baked goods sale for their congregation on February 10. The proceeds were for their new kitchen.

The Adams St. Mothers' Club sponsored a Pea and Vegetable Soup Supper on Friday, February 12. In spite of the bad weather, many turned out to enjoy a very good dinner.

The Publication Committee met February 9, at First Church and has decided to send to press Rev. Hoeksema's Dogmatics.

The Ladies' Auxiliary of South Holland sponsored a Hostess Dinner on February 12.

On January 25, Rev. G. Van Baren lectured in South Holland on "Limited Attonement." This is the third in a series of lectures on the Five Points of Calvinism on which he as been lecturing in Randolph.

The Ladies' School Circle of Oaklawn sponsored a Casserole Supper on February 5.

**Some thoughts to ponder:**

Southeast's Bulletin: "The idle Christian is the raw material out of which backsliders are made." "No man has a right to do as he pleases unless he pleases to do the right."

Randolph's Bulletin: "He is a bad Christian who cuts the coat of his profession according to the fashion of the times, or the humor of the company he falls into."

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**Editorial**

The January 1941 issue of Beacon Lights had this word to say to the parents.

"We need your support in this new undertaking. Not your financial support; in fact, we prefer that young people find ways and means to take care of their own financial obligations as much as possible and that they thereby develop a sense of responsibility. They will appreciate this paper for more if they realize that it has cost them some sacrifice. But we do need your moral support and your prayers. You can cooperate by maintaining an interest yourself and by fanning the flames of youthful enthusiasm. Discuss the contents with your children; remind them, if need be, to read and make use of it in their preparation for the society; give it your wholehearted support."

Parents, this still holds true today.

To the young People the following admonition from the February 1941 issue of Beacon Lights.

"... the success of this magazine depends as much on you as on any one else. Make it your own. Read it to appreciate it; be free to offer suggestions for its improvement; urge others to read it.

This also still holds true today. Young People read Beacon Lights and promote it in whatever way that you can.

Beacon Lights purposes to guide you on your course toward your goal. As an airplane pilot wings his way unhesitatingly on his course by the sweeping rays of his beacon lights, so this paper designs to guide you on your way through this world of sin and darkness, that you may ever hold your course and unswervingly strive for your goal.

Rev. C. Hanko
Beacon Lights Vol I, No. 1