

# BEACON LIGHTS

*for*

**PROTESTANT  
REFORMED YOUTH**

January 1967<sup>7</sup>

*Literature*

*House Visitation*

*Why Did I Become Protestant  
Reformed?*



# BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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## LITERATURE

### A Definition:

Very simply literature is talk written down. In the early history of mankind the best stories and most important legends, myths, and tales were handed down from one generation to another by word-of-mouth. Later when writing came into vogue these stories were written down for all posterity to read and enjoy. Many of the earliest writings are still with us today.

But what do we of the twentieth century do with our large inheritance of literature. How do we judge what is really good literature and what is bad? Although selection of books is primarily an individual matter, we all most have a concrete and absolute standard by which we can judge all literature. This standard is God's most Holy Word. God's Word is the standard because it is reality from the beginning to the end. This reality has as its heart the spiritual death of man and his unconditional redemption through the way of grace, viz., the incarnation, crucifixion, and ascension of Jesus Christ our Lord. Any literature that presents reality in any other light or by any other standard is not real, but is most blatantly false!

Therefore, a word of warning must be sounded against all worldly literature, of course, but also against literature which purports to be Christian and simply is not. That which is worldly has a peculiar and often easily detectable error, but this pseudo-Christian "fundamentalistic" tripe is misleading, subtle, and confusing. For example, in all these "fundamentalistic" books rely heavily on coincidence. A hard drinking, hard driving, and cursing young man meets a sweet, sentimental, Christian young woman who wants him to become a Christian. He decides to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, and, low and behold, he now wants to be a preacher, too. All the better for the young lady. By the time one reaches the end of book the young hoodlum turned saint is converting others to accept Jesus Christ as he did. Not only do these

books rely on coincidence, but they also present redemption in an Arminian framework.

### Values:

What value does literature have in the life of the Christian? All reading in every field broadens our experience. For example, we do not have neither the time nor the money to travel to Europe, therefore, we read a book about it. Books carry us miles away. We did not live during the age of the Mississippi River steamboats, but now we can visit that age through the books written by Mark Twain. We did not live under the rule of an insane Hitler, but we can read about those who did in *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Books augment, buttress, and enlighten our experience. But there are some things that a Christian may not experience — either actually or vicariously. We may not revel in the sins of Richard Fielding's *Tom Jones*, or indulge in the sins of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, or enjoy the sins committed in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In his *Principles of Education* Prof. H. H. Hanks states that:

- 3) Yet a note of warning must be sounded.
  - a) It is extremely difficult to read a worldly novel or piece of literature which communicates the lie without being affected by it for evil. Only a mature Christian, faithful in his pursuit of knowledge of God should read these things, and then always critically (page 37).

Thus, the Christian must learn to detect what is good and what is bad literature by faithfully studying and reading the Word of God. It is not only paramount literature, but also an absolute guide to all the reality which is presented in all the literature of the world. If we as Christians know the Word of God, we will automatically know if any literature is not in harmony with that Word. Judge all that you read in the light of God's Word take the best and disdain and expel all that is bad, and in the study of literature you shall be blessed.

D.H.

## SUBJECT: THE ORIGIN AND VALUE OF HOUSE VISITATION

KENNETH RIETEMA

Given at South-west Protestant Reformed  
Church Oct. 26, 1966

The history of family visitation during the first years of the Protestant Reformation, the struggle for establishing the true Biblical religion was fierce indeed. Among the bitter problems which the reformers had to endure, there was none more contrary to the truth and more grievous to their own hearts, than that they were trying to subvert the good order of Christ's church by insisting on innovations. Because of these problems, John Calvin, in 1544 writes in his essay, namely *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, "Therefore, let there be an examination of our whole doctrine, of our form of administering the sacraments, and our method of governing the church; and in none of these things will it be found that we have made any change upon the ancient form, without attempting to restore it to the exact standard of the word of God." This attempt has been at once, the glory and the strength of the Reformed Churches.

More than any other Christian group which arose in those turbulent years, the Reformed sought consciously and consistently to model their church life after the apostolic pattern. Thus, in distinction from almost every other party in Christendom, they have also maintained and defended the practice of family visitation throughout the years. By pursuing this course of contact with the families of the congregation, the ministers and elders insisted that they were not introducing something new, but rather reviving a practice which dated back to the early church.

At the outset, the Reformed churches, under the able leadership of John Calvin, broke completely with the system of confessional and sacrament of penance. They returned to the time honored practice of visiting the members in their homes. Because of this they also developed to a much higher degree than ever before in the his-

tory of the Christian Church, no doubt as a result of carefully maintaining the office of the ruling elders in every congregation.

Already at an early date Calvin emphasized that pastoral work included far more than official preaching of the gospel. He insisted on faithfulness on the part of all the pastors in visiting the members of the church, since he realized how beneficial this work was for the development of the spiritual life, and the edification of the church. Those reformed leaders who came to Geneva during that time and saw the progress which had been made, began to follow the same pattern of church care. Thus the practice of family visitation became current wherever the Reformed churches were established.

In Geneva, the work was carried on with great regularity. Four times a year, before each celebration of the Lord's Supper, all the members were to be visited in their homes by the ministers and the elders. Special attention was given the young people, in order that they might prepare themselves for the profession of their faith and thus receive the right to use the Lord's Supper. We must not be mistaken however that because of the regularity of these personal — visits after having rid themselves of the confessional, felt the need for a substitute and hence introduce family visitation. In no sense of the word is the latter a substitute for the former. Rather, in their heroic attempt to purify the church of Christ of unscriptural practices, they returned to the Bible and found there a solid foundation for this type of spiritual work. Too long had the church through its leaders ignored an important aspect of her calling. And only by restoring and maintaining the proper spiritual contact between the churches officers and her members were they able to rejoice in an evident revival of spiritual life in the congregations.

Thus, a brief history concerning the "origin" of family visitation. We must now

out of necessity, carry on, with no doubt, a more interesting and practical section of this paper, that is, the "value" house visitation affords all true believers of Christ's earthly church here below.

Spiritual blessing, we are convinced, will accrue not only to the members of the church, but quite as much to the consistory which zealously seeks to perform this part of its calling. The first benefit for the elders which ought to be mentioned, is that diligent pursuance of this practice will enable them to know the spiritual condition of the flock over which the Lord has placed them. Many experienced elders will cheerfully witness to the truth of this statement. Especially in larger congregations where membership could change regularly, there is a danger that only the pastor knows who belongs. And since he may be called to another field of labor at any time, it is essential to the well-being of the church that the elders are as thoroughly acquainted with the needs of the people as possible. They will in periods of vacancy be compelled to carry on many of the labors which otherwise fall upon the minister of the gospel. How much easier it is to visit the sick and call on the delinquents, when the members of the consistory are acquainted with the conditions of the family beforehand. Many situations which would be puzzling often present no problem at all when one understands the background of the case. The more the elders know the spiritual level of the members, the better able they are to give wise Christian counsel. And this will contribute in no small way to help them present the challenge of their church intelligently to their next pastor.

Secondly, by conducting the work prayerfully and regularly, the members of the consistory will also know whether or not the believers over whom they have been placed make spiritual progress by using the means of grace. Those who superintend the flock must not only know whether the members are diligent in church attendance, but also whether they receive spiritual blessings.

Thirdly, these visits likewise give the elders a much-needed opportunity for engaging in preventative work, with the result that instances of glaring defection from the rule of the gospel become more and more infrequent among the people of God.

Fourthly, we should not forget that such

visits also stimulate the spiritual unity of believers. How easy it is to forget in our days of rank individualism that we are members of the body of Christ, and though our callings differ, we are all given to each other for the purpose of mutual edification.

Finally, this custom enables the elders to demonstrate in a practical way the spirit of Christian love and helpfulness. The rule which they bear has been given for the purpose of ministering to each other. Those called to the office should remember the example which our Savior gave His disciples at the Last Supper, when after the foot washing He said, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Teacher and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, a servant is not greater than his Lord, neither one that is sent than he that sent him. If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them." In the discharge — of their office, they will remember to mirror the office of the Savior, who Himself is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Not only do the elders derive much benefit from this work, but the believing church also profits much. They will experience that by means of it, they are built up in faith and increased in love.

First of all, as members of his living church they will see more clearly the value of discussing matters pertaining to spiritual life. In our age in which leisure is at a premium, and the things of the spirit are constantly clouded over by earthly and material interests, it is so necessary to emphasize this. Many find it difficult to speak to each other about these matters of supreme importance. Not only is there great reluctance to discuss spiritual problems and difficulties, but some members testify very little to the joy of salvation which should be their portion. We should not lose sight of the necessity of edifying one another. Without family visitation we would have to rely entirely on the minister and his ability to preach the Word from week to week. But, the oftener a believer gives a reasonable account of the hope that is in him, the easier it will be to witness to the power of God's grace that is in him in his life from day to day. In order that the believer may

be stimulated, those who conduct family visitation should guard carefully against doing all the talking, thus becoming a one-sided discourse by minister or elder on the Christian's life.

Secondly, these visits will build up the confidence of the people in the leadership of the church. The task of the elders is far from easy and pleasant. Many problems confront them — if they are zealous — in keeping the church pure. If the members see the elders in their official capacity only at the time of public worship, the distance between the two parties will likely breed distrust and misunderstanding.

Thirdly, the preventative work in which the elders engage in at the time of family visitation will help the believers live more consistently Christian lives. There are times when God's people stumble into grievous sins before they are fully aware of the net Satan has spread for them. The longer any particular sin has dominion over their lives, the more hardened their hearts become and it will be more difficult to break that evil. Many can testify that the kindly words and fervent prayers of the elders have greatly aided them in escaping the snares of the devil and restoring them by grace to the blessed fellowship of God and His people.

Fourthly, as a result, this work always presents a good opportunity for learning more about the Christian way of life. It is at times difficult to see the implications of the gospel for daily life. Although words are a wonderful vehical for the communication of thought, we are still in an imperfect world. Therefore what may be clear to most of the members, is by no means plain to all. These latter should be helped. Paul speaks to the members at Miletus of his practice of going from house to house teaching publicly the things of the Kingdom of God. Although the form may be different today since we have regularly established churches, the church still needs sheperds who teach in the homes of its members.

Finally, by contacting the familys in this way, the elders can effectively point out the high ideal of living together as a Christian family from day to day. That our people need such repeated and personal reminders needs no proof. No congregation is stronger than the families which constitute it. What greater blessings can be enjoyed than that

of seeing God's grace working in the generations, so that grandparents and parents and children alike bow to the same God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, rejoice in the same heavenly Savior, and experience the gracious operation of the holy spirit. Our first religious impressions were gleaned at the time of family worship. Our childish lips learned first to pray at our mother's knees. There we first heard the stories of the holy gospel and way of salvation. Our God is the God of the covenant, whose gracious promises to our children place us under the solemn obligation to nurture them in the fear and abmonition of the Lord. This is not only sound psychology but above all good scriptural doctrine.

Let the elders never weary of pointing out to the children and the parents alike their privileges and obligations. The whole Bible plainly teaches the significance of a truly Godly home. And when our homes are permeated with the principles of sound doctrine and the Holy Bible the future of the church is secure. We look upon the Christian family, where everything is on a footing of religion, and we see them around their own quiet hearth and table, away from the great public world and its strifes, with a priest of their own to lead them. They are knit together in the ties of love that make them one; even as they are fed and clothed out of the same fund, interested in the same possessions, partakers of the same successes and losses, suffering together in the same sorrows, animated each by hopes that respect the future benefit of all. Into such a circle and scene it is that religion comes, each day, to obtain a grace of well-doing for the day. . . . It leads in the day, as dawn leads in the morning. It blends a heavenly gratitude with the joys of the table; it breaths a cheerful sense of God into all the works and tempers of the house; it softens the pillow for rest when day is done. And so the religion of the house is life itself, the life of life; and having always been observed, it becomes an integral part even of existance, leaving no feeling that, in a proper family, it could never have been otherwise.

If then, family visitation did no more than keep alive in the minds and hearts of believers the ideal of a truly God-centered home, its value could never be overestimated.

# WHY DID I BECOME PROTESTANT REFORMED ?

JUNE WILLIAMS

"When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Psalm 27:8

". . . . Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." Jer. 31:18b

These texts in Scripture are very beautiful to me because they are the words I searched for in order to express why I became Protestant Reformed.

Just recently I heard the trite remark, "I don't really belong to any church in particular. I guess it is because I haven't found one that suits me as an individual."

My answer can only be understood in a spiritual way. I did not *choose* to become Protestant Reformed. I did not go around sniffing in the doors of a number of churches and then proclaim, "Aha! This is the one for me! This one brings out my individuality!" If that had been the case I would have passed on to another door. Why? Because in every way Protestant Reformed preaching goes against my flesh and nature. My nature wants to take the easy way out. It wants to say:

1. God is all-loving with a love for all men and wants all men to love Him.
2. I am my own interpreter of Scripture. I can tolerate anyone that differs from me. After all, we are going to the same place because all that really matters is if he has a profession of faith in God, too.

3. Last week I did this and that and this for the Lord. But I could have never done it unless He *helped* me.

4. That is the whole problem. Our church is becoming so modern. We really need to back up a little and become a little stricter. That would really solve everything.

No, my flesh does not like to say that I am totally corrupt, I can do no good thing, and my salvation is *all* of God.

In a little over two years my whole life has been changed. What I believed and professed, my friends, my activities, and my attitude are that of a new person. Now I love a preaching that before I could only hate. Now, I cannot hear enough of election and reprobation, God's covenant for His people, and God's love for His people *only*. They are a comfort to me and cause my heart to sing when I hear them or read of them.

No, I did not choose to become Protestant Reformed. Instead, I believe I was *sent*. My heart was turned and my eyes were opened unto understanding by the powerful, irresistible grace of God.

Oh, Lord my God! This thing thou hast done unto me . . . it is so beautiful!

". . . . Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." Jer. 31:18b

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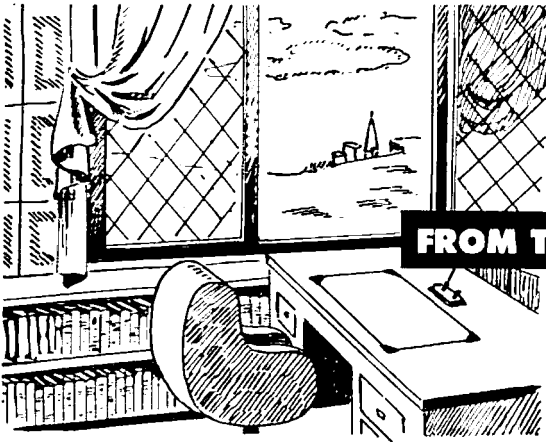
## CURRENT EVENTS AND COMMENTS

In the Catholic paper *Operation Understanding* a young teenager asked the question, what is considered a modest covering in swim wear and dress wear for boys and girls of highschool age by their church? The editor of the column, Father Conroy, began the answer by saying that modesty is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. It is the preserving of one's charm for the one he or she is to marry. And if a person does not marry this charm goes back to God who gave it in the first place.

Father Conroy brings out a very true

and worthwhile point, but I feel that another aspect concerning the question on modesty should be shown. Consider Romans 12:2, "And be ye not conformed (or fashioned according) to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." The trend of modern day society is to progress, forget past rules and regulations, and live for the present and the future. Yes, two-piece swimming suits are "in," and so are

(Continued on page 13)



## FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

REV. G. VAN BAREN

### PEACE IN 1967

We have just gone through the holiday season of Christmas and New Year. We stand on the threshold of 1967. What lies before?

The world has been emphasizing the idea of peace much. There have been the holiday truces in Vietnam — with the hope expressed that these truces might be somehow be made permanent. Man wants peace.

Many of this generation believe that there are not sufficient efforts made to establish peace. These become engaged in picketing to call attention to the urgency of peace. Others, more lawless, burn draft-cards; they refuse to serve in the armed forces of the country.

The churches of our land join in the effort to seek peace. Many there are that have passed strong resolutions against the present engagement in Vietnam. Annually, the churches join in a day for prayer for peace.

Thus it would appear that almost all are urgently seeking peace on this earth. And one can not help but feel that with such pressure towards the goal of peace, this peace would also soon be established. The thought also enters one's mind that possibly man is having a change of heart. Through all the ages there has been war and rumor of war. Now more than ever man wants peace — especially in view of the fact that total war would mean virtual annihilation of this earth.

Yet for all of his apparent longing for peace, this looks as remote as ever. His wars

continue. Crime abounds and even increases year by year. Hatred is not removed from the heart of man. He teaches his children to war. He gives to them for their entertainment all the armaments necessary for war — but in toy form. Children grow up accustomed to the idea of war and killing.

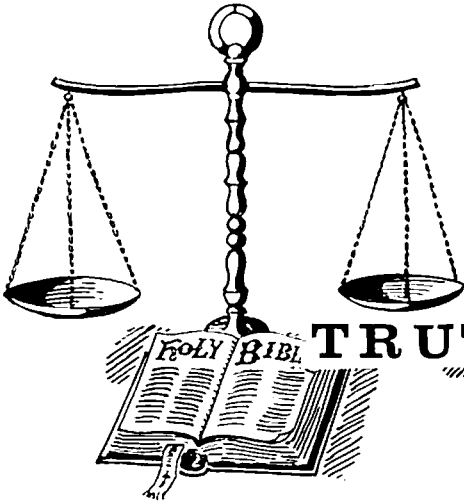
Is there a prospect for peace in 1967? Scripture declares that there shall be wars and rumors of wars as a sign of the nearness of the end of time. The only peace on this earth indicated in Scripture is the peace of the kingdom of the antichrist. This will be a short period of peace which will be at the same time the period of great persecution for the church.

It must be well understood that there can never be any real peace on this earth among men. Even the peace of the antichristian kingdom will be a time of great conflict against the church. The child of God too can never pray for a peace missing that one essential ingredient which distinguishes peace from war. Even the cessation of armed conflict does not mean that peace is attained.

What is peace? For what peace must we pray? What peace can we expect in 1967? Peace is first of all a relationship, a spiritual relationship, with God Himself. At the heart of all war, enmity, strife, lies rebellion against God Himself. That rebellion began in the garden of Paradise when Adam disobeyed the good command of God. We are both guilty and corrupt in Adam. Man-

*(Continued on page 12)*





## TRUTH vs. ERROR

by REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

### 20. THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

#### 16. Its Value. Conclusion

The truth of election has very practical value in the certainty of the true Christian's salvation. It is a folly to attempt having assurance of salvation not founded on the basis of election. It makes no sense to acknowledge the effect while the cause is denied. No true assurance comes to the Christian until he can believe that the glorification of the elect is so infallibly fixed in the eternal purpose of God that it is impossible for any of them to perish. Nor will his faith be firmly strengthened until he believes that he belongs to the company of the elect. For him to do so is not presumption, for the regenerated person has the right to regard himself as a member of the household of faith. For the Spirit renews only those predestinated conformed to the image of God's Son.

The Apostle Paul maintained this unshakable basis of assurance when he taught, "Whom He did *predestinate*, them He also called, and whom He called, them He also justified, and whom He justified, them He also glorified" (Rom. 8:30). Begin on that foundation of divine, sovereign predestination and the end, *glorification*, is guaranteed. God loved the elect with an everlasting love. Then He is for them, and "if God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" What mighty streams flow from this fountain of election! but what folly and effrontery to

attempt choking the stream! There is no eternal security of the sheep except on the foundation of God's decree. The sheep need this firm foundation as they are naturally timid and often beset with doubts concerning their final perseverance. They therefore find great comfort in discovering in themselves the marks of election. Then they rejoice in the certainty of their eternal life!

It is the apprehension of this truth which enables the true minister of Christ to hold his spiritual balance, continuing firmly to his ministry's end. What discouragements he meets! Few attend a faithful ministry of the Word. Visible fruits are rare. He is frequently warned that if he continues preaching along the lines of divine sovereignty he will have no one to preach to. He is tempted to think that the seal of God's approval is not on his ministry, that he is a colossal failure and ought to give up. There is enough in his circumstances to fill him with dismay, to tempt him to go along with popular opinion or to enter a more lucrative ministry. This is the rocky path all our ministers have trod.

What then is it which revives the drooping spirits from all such temptations? What keeps a servant of the Lord sure that he has not drawn a bow at a venture, but that he is an ordained instrument in God's hands to accomplish His eternal purpose? It is his faith in the whole counsel of God. He is commissioned to preach a general proclamation of a particular gospel, knowing that it

is not God's purpose that all or even many be saved. The Lord taught His church that His flock is a "very little" one (Luke 12:32), that there is only "a *remnant* according to the election of grace." The disciples were somewhat curious as to whether there are "few that be saved." In the Sermon on the Mount He stated that many would take the Broad Way to destruction, but that *few* would course the Narrow Way that leads to life. The true minister knows and understands this. He knows that some believe because it was *given* to them in behalf of Christ to believe in Him (Phil. 1:29), and that the rest believe not because they are not Christ's sheep (John 10:26). He knows that God is using him and other such servants to gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad, in fact, to gather together in one all things in heaven and in earth in Christ (John 11:52; Eph. 1:10). It is this purpose of God according to election which always stands that keeps him in perfect tranquility and garrisons his heart and mind.

There is no peace of mind like that which rest upon the sovereignty of God brings. He who is sure that God's decrees cannot fail, that His eternal counsels must come to pass, and that whatever God has ordained for Him to do must be accomplished, is a triumphant conqueror. There may be many adversaries, appalling ruin all around, thousands falling on his right hand, his own many failures emphasizing his own weakness and inadequacy. Yet he is sure that the plan of God is being realized as ordained. He is sure that those ordained to eternal life will believe, that the sheep given to Christ must be saved, and that of their number He should lose nothing. He is confident of this very thing, that God who began the work of election, salvation and regeneration, will complete it unto the day of Jesus Christ.

The ministry characterized by election preaching is perfectly cognizant of the promise, "My Word . . . shall not return unto Me void, but it *shall* accomplish that which *I* please, and it *shall* prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). The preached Word may not accomplish that which the preacher desires, nor prosper as the saints had hoped, but the good pleasure of God shall most certainly be done. If God has ordained that the sheep

and the lambs shall be fed, then nothing in the world can prevent the giving them the true Bread from heaven. When so many have nothing whatever to do with the church, the Lord's servants find comfort where He did, in the truth that "*all* that the Father giveth Me *shall* come to Me" (John 6:37).

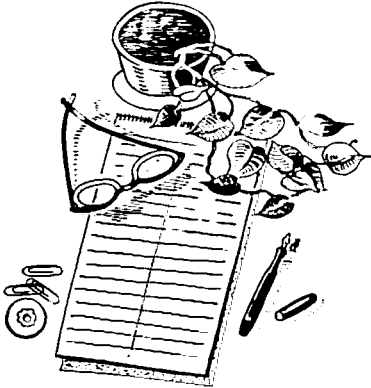
"But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself; the Lord will hear when I call unto him" (Ps. 4:3). Spurgeon in his great *Treasury of David* wrote, "*But know.*" Fools will not learn, and therefore they must again and again be told the same thing, especially when it is such a bitter truth which is to be taught them, viz., the fact that the godly are the chosen of God, and are, by distinguishing grace, set apart and separated from among men. Election is a doctrine which un-renewed men cannot endure, but nevertheless, is a glorious and well-attested truth, and one which should comfort the tempted believer. Election is the guarantee of complete salvation, and an argument for success at the throne of grace. He who chose us for Himself will surely hear our prayers. The Lord's elect shall not be condemned, nor shall their cry be unheard. David was king by divine decree, and we are the Lord's people in the same manner; let us tell our enemies to their faces that they fight against God and destiny, when they strive to overthrow our souls" (Vol. I, 38).

In this day of unbelief there is denial of every article of the faith; no surprise then that men deny the gospel and election. The modernist denies the gospel. The Arminian fundamentalist denies election. In that way, he, too, denies the gospel, for there is no gospel apart from election. A worse enemy we can hardly have than the modernist. Yet his denial is more open. It is like denying the whole house — all its structure. The Arminian's denial is a denial of the foundation. For election is basic; the gospel is founded thereon. Successfully deny the gospel and man is ruined; but so deny election and God is ruined. His sovereignty is denied. His will to do what He pleases with His own is denied. Denied is His government, His right to punish evildoers. Denial of election, in effect, forces God to universalism and the salvation of all men. He not only

must save them, but do *their* will, not His will. He is governed by the overriding principle of *their* will. They run the universe, not He. The denial of election in effect breaks down the bulwarks of heaven, the walls of salvation, cracks the foundations of God's kingdom, splits His throne, crumbles His sceptre and hurls them all to the ground in smithereens, while the violent godless trample God prostrate under their detestable feet. Deny election and God is a "God" with His hands tied; that is, He is no God. Election is based on the attributes of God, on His infinity, eternity, immutability, independency, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, truth and love. Denial of election, then, is denial of all His attributes. It is atheistic. It robs God of His Godhood. Put aside election and the question is, "How man shall handle God." But with election the question is, "How God shall handle man." A God without election is a God without omnipotence. Election honors God, saves His justice and manifests His eternal power and Godhead.

The spirit of the gospel honors election. The spirit of the gospel puts us down in the dust of God's footstool. There man in that spirit learns to cry, "If He slay me, it would be just. I am of no account, nor is the whole human race of any account any-

how — merely the small dust of the balance. Yet though He slay me, still I will trust Him." This is no fatalism. He knows his election (1 Thes. 1:4), yet he examines himself with, "Do I trust in the Lord? Do I have faith in His blood, the faith of God's elect? Do I seek salvation by grace only? Do I see more power in the blood of Christ to save me, than evil in all my sins to damn me? Do I belong to Him? Do I hate sin and love righteousness? Do I live and walk in the light? Then I am elect!" The gospel does this for a man because election is the very content of the gospel. With election removed the gospel becomes a species of humanism. Election puts first things first. It puts God first because it puts Christ first. It puts Christ first, for not election but Christ is first. It leads to despair of self (a main step to true happiness) and trust in Christ alone. He Himself saw all things in the light of election. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemd good in Thy sight." When any are saved and numbered among the elect, the whole of heaven sings, "Grace be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" When the reprobate go lost, the whole of heaven sings, "Holy! holy! holy!"



# CRITIQUE

AGATHA LUBBERS

## PROTESTANT REFORMED CHRISTIAN INSTRUCTION (V)

### III. The Protestant Reformed Christian School's Distinctiveness

The Protestant Reformed Christian School is an extension of the home. There are certain tasks for which the home does not have the time nor the facilities. This is

particularly true for the person who lives in the complexities of the twentieth century. It is even difficult for the busy teacher to be continuously on top of the new developments in our age of mechanization and technology as they affect the instructional program.

Students from our Protestant Reformed Christian families must some day take a place in the workaday world if the Lord does not come. They must be equipped with certain skills and must be knowledgeable concerning the world in which they live. Economic necessity will demand that they know.

When one says that the Protestant Reformed Christian School is an extension of the home one must also emphasize the fact that it is an extension of the home with delegated authority and with assigned tasks. The tasks which the school should perform are only those things which the parents are incapable of performing. Too often the school becomes the "catch-all" type of institution which must draw together all matter of loose ends.

Permit me to use one illustration to make clear my point. Ideally the whole problem of body hygiene and the tracing of physical disabilities is the responsibility of the home. The school's major responsibility is to be concerned with the intellectual training of the student. The school, however, cannot adequately perform its task unless the student is healthy and possesses all the physical potentialities which will make possible his pursuits in the intellectual arena. In order to trace these lurking deficiencies it is often necessary for the school to assist the parent in the location of potential and actual physical impediments or disabilities.

The Protestant Reformed Christian School is instituted by the parent and is committed to the instruction of covenant youth in the "culture" of this world. This is not "culture" in the ultimate sense of the word. Culture truly understood will only be developed in heaven where moth and rust doth not corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal. But the accomplishments of men, God's creatures, sinful creatures, depraved creatures, having only glimmerings of natural light are nevertheless busy in the world which God has created. They take all things and use these things to serve the creature and do not glorify the Creator of heaven and earth. It is, nevertheless, a fact that they discover and say many things which are factually true. There is a formal correctness in what they say and discover even though the ultimate reasons are spiritually and ethically corrupt. The child of God is in the position, how-

ever, where he must use much that has been discovered by depraved, wicked men. This is the culture of the world to which we refer.

In the *Testament of Vision*, p. 96-98, H. Zylstra, Ph.D., writes concerning the task and quality of education. He gives a reason for including in the curriculum the subjects which are there.

"Our schools must be schools. They must subject the Christian student to as thorough a discipline as he is capable of in the natural, cultural, historical, and spiritual life of man. It is as human beings that we are Christians. All that is human concerns us. That gets us into all the subjects of the curriculum. It involves us in the whole of reality."

The Protestant Reformed Christian School is an institution which assists in the training and thorough furnishing of the man of God to do every good work (II Timothy 3:17). It is not a renewal agency. It is an institution which is dedicated to the task of instructing princely renewed creatures. Creatures they are who have been dedicated unto the high calling of the service of God. Creatures they are who have been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. A baptism it was which sealed and signified the washing in Christ Jesus.

Protestant Reformed Christian Schools must do more than make it possible for the individual when he has completed the course of study to make plenty of money. Good pay is not the incentive for study nor for the instructional program. If this is the motive for the instructional program it operates in the service of the unrighteous mammon and does not make friends using the mammon of unrighteousness (Luke 16:9).

#### IV. The School's Accomplishment of Its Task

In order for the school to accomplish the task delegated to her she must be staffed with a faculty of Christian teachers. Because the school to which we refer is a specifically and distinctively Reformed Christian School that teacher must not only be a professor of Christianity—the Reformed brand of Christianity as developed in the Protestant Reformed community of believers but he must also be a confessor. The confessional attitude of the instructor is of utmost importance.

The Christian instructor must be aware

of the structure which serves as the basis for instruction in the Christian school. This structure is that of: Love, Faith, and Obedience.

Love is the basic element in the structure of the Christian instructional system. The love we refer to is that gift of God which he implants in the heart of his people which only he can give because he alone is able to love. The love we refer to is that love which God manifested in the sending of his son to save the world (cosmos) so that all that are called according to the principle of grace are saved. This love must be an intrinsic structural element so that the school can accomplish her task.

Faith is another of the basic elements in the structure of the Christian instructional system. Faith is that spiritual gift whereby the Christian is united to Christ. The love life of Christ can only flow into the Christian if he through faith is united to him. Faith in contradistinction to all rationalism, instrumentalism, existentialism, empiricism, pragmatism, or scholasticism is the fundamental position of the Christian.

Obedience, a word which never occurred in the classical Greek, is fundamental to the instructional program and for the school to carry out its program. This means that every participant in the instructional program must be obedient to God and to his Christ. This obedience will be indicated in the basic attitude of the teacher and will be determined by his subservience to the Word of God. Obedience implies that there are those who are set in authority. Without authority the instructor is not in a position to instruct. He cannot be constructive if he does not have the authority which based upon the eternal principle of obedience which is rooted in faith and love for God who sent his Son, the eternally obedient one.

This implies that the learning process in the Protestant Reformed Christian School is distinctive. It is not regulated by democratic principles (Deweyism) nor autocratic principles (ala Machiavelli) but is determined by the *regula fidei* (the rules of faith). Pistological principles are basic to the entire instructional program. Certainly in a formal sense of the word the Christian learns no differently the basic facts concerning creation. The processes whereby he learns these things are no different because he is human like all other men but the learning process

as an activity of faith is distinctive. All learning is regulated by the principles of love for God and His Word; faith in God and His Word; and obedience to God and His Word.

This also implies that the school accomplishes her task by means of a unique medium. The world becomes the textbook of the Christian. The world is not the textbook of the Christian, however, in the same way that it is the textbook for the non-Christian. He too studies all of creation but does not use the Word of God as the fundamental medium of interpretation. Because the Christian sees all things in the light of the Word of God he sees all things in the light of salvation and redemption. The Christian sees not a bettering of this world but the coming of a new heavens and a new earth where the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and where the child shall play on the hole of the asp. He sees a world lost in sin but saved in Christ for all those who have been elected unto life eternal.

Christian instruction does not simply happen. It requires diligence and work. The teacher must also not be independent but must be instant in prayer and in supplication to God. Only in this way can Christian instruction take place in the classroom. Only where God is sought and only when constant supplication and prayers ascend to the throne of God can really distinctively Reformed Christian instruction take place.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### Congo Crisis

by JOSEPH T. BAYLY. Published by Zondervan Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. 224 pages. Price \$3.95.

On the title page of the book is written: "Charles and Muriel Davis relive an era of missions during the weeks of imprisonment in Stanleyville, Africa." Although the book makes mention of several other missionaries and Congolese Christians, it centers most of its attention on the experiences of the Davis' family. The death of Dr. Paul Carlson is also treated in great detail because Chuck Davis accompanied Dr. Carlson until the moment of death.

The author is at great pains to demonstrate historically that the Congolese Simba rebellion was in many respects the fault of

the white man, specifically, the early European slave traders and the Belgian entrepreneurs. In the chapter "Leopold's Ghost" one reads: "'Black Ivory' became the Congo's most valuable commodity. Intertribal warfare ceased to be merely a competition for local dominance: it became the means of securing prisoners for sale to white traders in exchange for rum and trinkets. War parties often set fire to villages at night, capturing the villagers as they sought to escape the flames" (page 31). Historically the book is lucid and accurate.

To read of the experiences that these missionaries and the Congolese Christians suffered is good for the soul of any Christian. The *Congo Crisis* points to a bigger crisis that Christians, not only in Africa, but all over the world will face in the not-too-distant future. Read this book, young people, with discretion; and take to heart the best it has to offer.

D. H.

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## FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

(Continued from page 6)

kind stands as rebels against the Living God. If true peace is to exist, that rebellion must first be removed. We read in Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God. . . ." So, peace is truly possible — but only by way of justification by faith. Our sins must be taken away. We must be declared to be holy and righteous before the law of our God. Then, and then only, does one have peace. That same way of true peace is set forth in Col. 1:21, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." True peace can only be the restoring of that perfect relationship of fellowship and communion with God.

It is true that such peace is impossible for us of ourselves. It is not of man to establish peace. His United Nations can never accomplish this. He can not provide before God that which is required to make this peace. Christ alone does this. According to Romans 5:1, peace with God is *through our Lord Jesus Christ*. In verse 10 of the same chapter we read that "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the

death of His Son . . ." Peace must be established through the shed blood of the Lamb of God. The Son of God in the flesh only can provide such payment required to satisfy the justice of God. Any "peace" separated from that cross, is not peace at all. The most one could say of such "peace" is that it is a devilish imitation of the real thing.

When such peace is established in the hearts of the saints, they in turn also seek peace one with another. The church continues to proclaim God's Word that this peace may also be instilled within the hearts of all those whom God has eternally chosen in Christ. There is fellowship and communion and love and grace seen within the gathering of those who enjoy true peace. They fear no more the just wrath of God; and they walk not in envy and hatred any more against the neighbor. Peace then exists principally within the church. That peace we know will continue in 1967. The wicked world can never enjoy that peace. And the peace which the world now seeks, a peace apart from Christ, must also be condemned as the proper work of the devil.

That peace for 1967 should be cause for comfort to us. We do not know what lies before us in this year. There is every indication that wars will continue through another year. Certainly crime will not cease. Robbery and murder will continue. And the situation of the church appears ever more precarious. The more this world succeeds in establishing the "peace" of the antichristian kingdom, the more the church can expect oppression and persecution. We can expect that a worldly "peace" will have such consequences for the church.

Would we not then fear? Would not much concern be expressed for you, young people? Can you stand when the world does finally establish that "peace" it wants? Will the church endure to the end?

It shall. Because of that peace which is ours through the cross of Jesus Christ we have the perfect assurance that whatever befalls, our peace can not be taken away from us. Man may destroy our body, but he can not destroy that spiritual life in us. When Christ establishes His peace in the hearts of His people, all wars, persecutions, and death itself can not destroy our peace. We are reconciled with God through Jesus

Christ our Lord. Hold fast to that glorious peace through 1967. Nor be afraid.

And pray for peace. Pray that this spiritual peace may continue to dwell within us — as God has promised it shall. And pray that this peace may soon be revealed to us in all of its glory at the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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### CURRENT EVENTS

(Continued from page 5)

mini-skirts and hip-huggers. But where are these modern fashions formed? Of course

the answer is that it is the work of the world. The verse I quoted states, "Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." It commands us to separate from the world, not by becoming hermits in a woods far north, but separating in the sense that we as Christians should be able to let the world know that we are different both by our dress and by our walk.

DON JONKER

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## HELPS FOR BIBLE STUDY ON THE

REV. HERMAN VELDMAN

# Epistle of JAMES

### IV. Verses 12-13.

#### A. *Connection between this and the preceding.*

1. In these verses James writes his conclusion of the verses 1-11.
2. Instead of respecting persons, catering to the rich and oppressing the poor, we must speak and do as they what shall be judged by the law of liberty. This must determine and control all our conduct.

#### B. *Mercy rejoices against judgment.*

1. Certain erroneous views.
  - a. Some seek in these words a contrast between the church and the world.
    - 1) The world is unmerciful. There is no regard in the world for the poor and miserable. To be sure, they try to help them. But, poverty and misery must be blotted out. The world has its mercy killings. The fifth beatitude is utter folly. The world can never really say: Blessed are the poor. There is in poverty and misery no blessedness.

- 2) But the church is merciful. There judgment has given way to mercy.

- 3) This interpretation is wrong. James is obviously speaking here of conditions within the church.

- b. Others see in these verses a general rule which should always govern us.

- 1) Mercy should always triumph over judgment. We must always forgive, let bygonnes be bygonnes. We are all sinners. Let us be lenient, always be ready to forget.

- 2) This reasoning, too, is utterly fallacious. Indeed, we must be lenient, always be ready to forgive. We must love our enemies (not God's enemies)—see Matt. 5:44-48. But we may never forgive without confession. Never does Scripture teach that there is mercy without judgment.

(To be concluded, D.V.)

# NEWS

## from, for, and about our churches

GEORGIA HENDRICKS

### GENERAL

On Dec. 11 the Young people sponsored a Holiday Singspiration in the First Church.

The Annual Christmas Bazaar and Coffee was held on Nov. 16 at the Adams St. Chr. School.

On Nov. 13 Mr. H. Zwak showed pictures of Jamaica in the Church in Holland.

On Dec. 19 the consistory of our Doon church sponsored a public lecture. Prof. Herman Hanko spoke on "Creation vs. Evolution."

On Dec. 18 the Choral Society rendered a Christmas Program in our Hull Church.

On Jan. 1 the Hope Choral Society held their annual Christmas Program in our Hope Church and the Hudsonville Choral Society held their on Dec. 25.

A Food Shower was held in the First Church for the seminary students.

### SERVICEMEN

Robert Mantal left for four weeks of training at the Great Lakes Center in Illinois.

### BIRTHDAYS

Mrs. W. Nienhuis (First) celebrated her 92nd birthday on Dec. 11.

Mrs. Wm. Mastenbrook celebrated her 80th birthday on Dec. 14 (First).

### CALLS

Rev. Lanting has accepted the call from our church in Edgerton. Installation Services were held on Dec. 9.

Rev. D. Engelsma has received a call from our church in Hull.

Rev. Heys declined the call from our church in Randolph.

Our church in Holland has extended a call to Rev. C. Hanko.

### BIRTHS

A son was born to Mr. and Mrs. F. Hanko (First).

A son was born to Mr. and Mrs. W. Lanning.

A daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. James Dykstra (First).

A son was born to Mr. and Mrs. R. Schipper (First).

A son was born to Mr. and Mrs. D. Hauk (First).

### MEMBERSHIP

The membership papers of Miss Helda B. Meelken were transferred from our Hope Church in California to our First Church.

On Nov. 27 Miss Irma Veltman made confession of her faith (Redlands).

### WEDDING BELLS

Mr. Harvey Holstege and Marilyn Ondersma were united in marriage on Nov. 11.

On Dec. 16 La Jean Klein and Howard Bonestroo were united in marriage.

On Nov. 18 Cynthia Dingman and Dale Bartelds were united in marriage.

### SICK

Mrs. R. DeVries has been hospitalized and now released again (First).

Miss Pat Vande Vegte (Redlands) was confined to her home with a strep infection.

Mrs. J. Vander Wall is coming along fine (Redlands).

Mr. S. Veltman (First) continues in a state of unconsciousness.

Mrs. H. Nieuwenhout (First) is doing fine.