A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
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Time And Change

Rev. C. Hanko

Are busy ever.

How true it is as we look round about us.

Not so long ago the trees stood newly adorned with young buds and fresh leaves, the verdant fields were alive with the cheery voice of the birds. The summer season was at hand and many seasonal church activities were drawing to a close.

It seems hardly possible, but it is not less true that the summer has once more flown. The trees are preparing to shed their leaves, the birds are collecting in flocks to make their scheduled trek to the south, and the fields have lost their former freshness as they await the coming frosts of winter. Soon we may expect the fury of the north-wind, killing frosts and ice, heavy clouds releasing their burden of snow, and inviting home-fires to keep out the biting cold. Winter with its long evenings lends itself to society life and other seasonal activities. Soon our church meetings will once more be in full swing.

There will be changes in all of our societies this fall.

The outstanding change will be felt by those societies that count young men among their members. By this time practically every church has seen some of its young men called into service, and some have even seen their ranks definitely depleted by this call. It will seem strange to meet without them, yet our thoughts will often be with them. And our prayer will continue to be, that wherever they may be, they may be preserved in the power of God through faith from every evil power to manfully fight the battle of faith against all the hosts of wickedness, that the trial of their faith may prove to be unto praise and honor and glory at the appearance of Jesus Christ.
But there will also be a marked change in our attitude toward many things. No one can entirely succeed in erasing the thoughts of war, horror and destruction, suffering and economic disorder from his mind. Nor is this necessary. The Christian is not afraid to face the reality of things and to freely discuss them as they are. But this should and will make an impression upon us and will influence our attitude toward life in general. More than likely our discussions in the society will turn repeatedly to the war and all its attending problems. Also then the Word of God must be our only guide, the only safe and sure lamp before our feet and light upon our pathway. We should be particularly careful that we are not deceived by the fancies of men and the philosophies of the world, but learn to see the reality of things as they are revealed to us in the Scriptures. Particularly in times like these, ours is the calling to serve as home guard within the church. This makes our society life doubly important.

And so we set out into a new season.

Although some will be absent from our midst, society life will mean even more to us than it has in the past.

Beacon Lights once more deems it a privilege to spread its rays over your society activities. You will notice a few changes in our paper this year. The Rev. De Wolf has been asked to write on “Current Events,” and Walter Hofman will have charge of the “Letters from our Soldiers.” Mr. De Boer has been asked to continue his articles on “Science” and John Piersma will once more take charge of the “Digest.” The Rev. P. De Boer has consented to once more write the Bible Outlines, and the undersigned is glad to continue his “editorials”. Assured of your hearty reception as in the past, we enter a new season, well aware of the responsibility that rests upon us even now, and prayerfully seeking the approval and blessing of our Lord.

May this season prove both interesting and profitable for all of us who are called to serve in the church as home guard.

And may God bless our societies.

No Convention?

Who would have thought it possible just one year ago, as our annual young people’s convention disbanded in Oak Lawn, that that would be the last convention of our Federation for some time to come? Who would have dreamed that so many of our boys would be
called into service, would have left the States and even be on foreign soil, even before another convention could be called?

To whom had it occurred that there might be a rubber shortage and that tire rationing would reduce travelling to a minimum?

In one word, who could have imagined that it would be possible for the war to so soon make such inroads into our lives that the Federation Board would deem it advisable to call off the 1942 meeting, even while the plans were in the making?

But nothing is so uncertain as life itself.

That we were disappointed need hardly be said.

As the time for the prospective convention drew near we began to realize that things were not the same as a year ago. It would have been foolhardy to shut our eyes to the reality of things, for our country is at war, and we know it.

We realized that some of our more distant societies would not be able to send the usual number of delegates, partly because many of their members are engaged in the all-out defense program, partly because of the rubber shortage.

We knew that some societies had their ranks depleted by the call to service.

We were well aware that war with all its horrors is a terrible thing and that our spirits tend to be depressed on account of it.

But we were disappointed, none-the-less.

We felt that in times like these a convention is fully as important as in normal times, for spiritually we need each other now possibly more than ever.

Many young people had been making plans to attend and disappointedly waved these plans aside.

We may rest assured that the Board felt even as many of us did when they finally passed their decision.

Be that as it may, the annual convention of our young people's Federation is now out of the question for some time to come.

Yet that does not mean that our societies in and near Michigan cannot arrange for a mass meeting to be held sometime this fall.

There is much to be said in favor of such a mass meeting. With the consent of the societies in the Federation this mass meeting could receive authority to hold an annual election for board members. Normally that would be quite out of order, but circumstances being as they are, allowance could be made for such an action. This meeting could even discuss matters pertaining to our Beacon Lights and other Federation activities.

It would make a splendid occasion for organizing a league of the
Mass Meeting Preview

Plans are in the making for a Combined Meeting of all our Young People's Societies, to be held on Thursday, November 12, 1942.

The tentative arrangement is to hold an afternoon meeting, beginning at 2:00 at the Roosevelt Park Pro. Ref. Church. The afternoon program looks very interesting: a song service, a short talk, and a free-for-all discussion! We hope that many of you will be able to be present at this afternoon get-together.

And, of course, we expect everyone at the banquet in the evening, at the Fuller Ave. Church basement. There are many more interesting details which cannot yet be disclosed. So watch the Church News and bulletins for further announcements. Lodging will be provided for out-of-towners who desire it.

We realize that everyone is busy these days because of the war effort, but we also believe that a meeting of this kind can and will be very profitable to those who attend, especially because these days are so filled with serious problems due to war activities.

So, Young People, let's all plan to meet one another in Grand Rapids on November 12!

The Executive Board
Fifth Column, that veiled underling of treachery, has slain more than one country in the past years. We have witnessed the fall of more than one country in the past few years, the direct cause of which was division. Division in a country prepares it for destruction. Division is just that horrible in the church for it spells her ruin and disintegration. Just that awful it is also in the home between parents or between children. Our enemy across the ocean fully understood the ruinous effects of division when in his Mein Kampf he counts sedition and division fully as effective as the Stuka and the Messerschmidt, and prescribes the rule “divide and slay”. When a thing is divided it is ready to be slain.

Just as effectively disastrous is a divided heart. What a divided people is to a country, a divided heart is to an individual. As incapable as is a divided country to withstand attack, so incapable is a divided heart to weather personal trials. As impotent as a divided country is to arise to the challenge, so impotent is the divided heart to fight the good fight of faith. In short, a person with a divided heart cannot stand and cannot endure, never could, but least of all in the days in which we live at present.

In Ps. 86:11 we find therefore the prayer from the lips of the godly David: “UNITE MY HEART”. If we at home would
arise to meet the new challenge with which the times confront us, we must have a united heart: and if our young men in the service of the colors will meet their challenge and remain standing they must have united hearts.

As we young people begin another year of society work and of general activity, let us set ourselves to our task, each of us having united hearts. For God has indeed brought these times upon us wherein men's hearts are tried, to see whether they be divided or united, and if the trial find us with divided hearts, Deuteronomy will clap his hands when he shall find us divided and slain. And as we stand before the face of our heavenly Father, and at the same time stand before the trials and challenges of the day, we lift up our voices and say “Unite my heart”.

The physical heart is a very important organ of your body. Just stop and consider that in a normal seventy-year life span that heart has lifted over five hundred thousand tons of blood. But the spiritual heart is far more important still, for the Scripture teaches us that the heart is the center of our whole life. The heart gives direction and control to all we say, do and think, for out of it are the issues of life. The heart not only directs and controls it also dictates the actions of life. Under direct control of that heart are the mind and the will and through mind and will the heart controls our passions and our emotions, or for choosing and our willing, as well as our eyes, ears, hands, feet, and mouth which all carry out the issues reared in the heart. Hence it is evident that the heart is the spiritual center of our life with hundreds of branches running out from that one center.

This entire intricate network of the inner life was one time a grand unity. For God created man after His own image, the image of the Triune God. As in the Trinity there were three, yet they three were one, so man was created one. And his unity consisted in this that his heart loved and sought and served God and all life, as it came out from that heart, was one unified movement in the direction of God. Jesus Himself speaks of the parts when He says: “Heart and soul and mind and all our strength”. With heart and soul and mind and all strength man sought God and that was the unity of his life. The heart had but one object, that object was God and from out of that heart, on down through the network of mind and soul and all our strength, will, passions and emotions, went always one and the same stimulus, serve God. And that was a united heart. There was no division there, all was unity.

Sin, however, has changed that all.
Sin divided all things, it divided also the heart. The natural heart no longer has one motive, one object and one purpose, but instead it is torn between hundreds of desires. The Bible calls these desires "lust". There is no unified life or unified living but a divided life and a divided living. Today he desires one thing, tomorrow another: on Monday he sets his heart on one thing, on Tuesday he is after another. Now he desires money, then honor and afterwards carnal enjoyment. His heart is divided because he has lost God and because he lives as if there is no God. He divides his life into parts, with each part he seeks some other phase of carnal self-satisfaction. His life is divided for instance as follows: work, education, amusement, money and religion. You notice that last one, religion, sure that is a part of his life also, he gives that a pigeon hole too. Do you see how divided his life is?

Such divided living is a sorry and a dangerous thing. So sorry because it makes your life useless and vain. Scripture has solemnly warned us saying "thou canst not serve God and Mammon". Our lives cannot be divided into parts, one part of which we perhaps give to God, as we say. God will not have it. If God is not ALL our life God will be in none of it and disdains all of it. We cannot love and seek the world with some of our parts and reserve another part for God. The life in which God is not ALL is vain and useless before His holy eyes. But this divided living is also a dangerous matter. For there is no power to meet temptations. Let me illustrate this point. Here is a young woman already leading such a divided life. She is tempted to walk the way of so called glamour. Since her heart is already divided that temptation is bound to have a strong appeal to one or the other lust passions in her. Had her heart been united and had her life been united so that the fear and service of God were the center of her life she would realize that the way of glamour is no way to serve God. Or the illustration of the young man, tempted to follow Lot to Sodom for a world-position. His heart is already divided and the challenge to make big money appeals to him, even though it be at the expense of all other things. Had the service of God been the unifying principle of his life he would have met the temptation with a definite answer, because the way to Sodom is not the way of serving God. The divided heart says, for instance, that when you are young you must have a good time, and what of it if one sows wild oats for a year or two as long as finally we come out alright. Such dangerous living! But just
that dangerously do they live who have a divided heart. They live that dangerously when they are in the service of the colors, but they live just that dangerously at home. They are like a city having no wall.

Unite my heart! That is our prayer.

Shall I imagine that I can do that myself? Can I take all those powers of heart and soul and mind and all my strength and bend them so that with them all and all the time I serve God and Him only? By no means. God alone can unite our hearts. And God has done this through regeneration. God sends forth His Spirit so that once again I bear His glorious image. And as He is ONE our life begins again to become one. As He seeks Himself and loves and serves Himself, we begin to reflect something of that splendid image also. As He has but ONE motive of life we begin to have but one motive: As He with all that is in Him seeks Himself, so I with heart and soul and mind and all strength begin to want and serve Him. The Spirit of Christ has come to dwell is us, uniting our hearts. Christ was one, He was united of heart. No matter where you met Him or when or how. He was one of heart and one of life. His life was God.

And in the service of God His soul and mind and all His strength was always going in the direction of divine service. Whatever came to interrupt or intervene or divert was dismissed as temptation.

Bearing that Image it is in principle possible once again to have a united heart. Then the determination to serve God becomes the unifying principle of our life. Whatever leads us away from this is considered a temptation and a dangerous one. The united heart does not allow part of its energies and part of its time to be used for purposes other than God, but rather all its energies and all its time are pressed into service. That heart does not act pious on Sunday but impious on Monday; it does not come up out of the slums of its illegitimate life of the week to dress up for Sunday, nay, throughout the week and throughout life it becomes a life God-centered.

Such is a united heart. With a united heart our young men serving the colors can stand the grueling tests native to their environment, with that united heart we at home can be and will be strong christians and fruitful.

May God unite our hearts. But let us pray for it.
"In the garden more grows than the gardener sows."

This old proverb is very painfully obvious if we but look in our own gardens. Have you ever wondered, while weeding the garden or lawn, where all the weed seeds came from? Perhaps you have been surprised to discover the various types of plants growing in one locality. How did they all get there?

Suppose we consider the forms of seed dispersal; they are birds, insects, wind, water, animals and inherent mechanical devices. In this issue let us limit ourselves to the first two; namely—birds and insects.

The world's greatest traveler is the bird. With the air as his highway all is accessible—hill and valley, mountain and canyon, land and sea frigid and torrid regions. What creature could better serve to scatter the earth's seeds.

There are several ways in which birds unintentionally distribute seed. One interesting way is by the means of the mud which sticks to the feet of the bird; especially, is this true of aquatic species as geese, ducks, partridge, snipe and others. During his experimentation, Darwin discovered 82 seeds in the mud he removed from one red-legged partridge.

Some seeds produce a mucilage; thus making it possible for them to adhere to the bird's body. An example of this type of seed is produced by the mistletoe whose berries contain pulp which is very sticky and proves to be quite a delicacy for birds. While eating these berries, the birds eject the gummy seeds by wiping their beaks on the bark of the tree. The mucilage which remains around the seed hardens, and, incidentally attaches it firmly to the bark, where the seeds germinate. It may be interesting for the reader to know that the mistletoe, commonly used for decorative purposes during the holiday season, is not a shrub as many suppose, but is a parasite which always grows on the branches of living trees, from which it gets its food supply.

On the islands of the Eastern Archipelago are found the Pisonia trees—the nesting place of the herons. The seeds of these trees
are exceedingly viscous and often clog the bird's feathers to such an extent that flight is impeded; and, in some known cases, the birds are so encumbered by this sticky substance that disastrous results.

Likewise, the seeds of the wormwood are very muscilaginous, and are transported from place to place by the small owl.

However not all seeds which attach themselves to bird's bodies are of this nature. Many are small and light, as the Kentucky blue grass and caraway seeds which adhere especially to the downy type of feathers. A duck may even appear green due to the many small duck weeds it has on its body. Very innocently he continues the great project of seed dispersion as he visits from one pond to another.

Nuts, a common form of seeds, are also transported by these air travelers, one of which is the crow who frequently carries hickory nuts, acorns, walnuts, beech nuts, or chestnuts. Observation has proved that in the case of the Arizona woodpecker nuts may be transferred to little pits within the tree itself. Very securely, this woodpecker buries each acorn in these special little crevices which he has dug and even human hands cannot remove them. Similar in habits to the squirrel is the "crested jay" which carries its nuts and buries them in the ground to be used for its winter provision.

Once again we see how seeds are scattered almost incidentally.

Frequently, the bird deposits the seeds it carries in the nest it is building. Later, when the nest deteriorates, these little embryos of life sheltered within, are scattered to and fro. Some naturalists have even observed plants growing within the nest itself. A certain robins nest, after being in a museum for four years, was watered and produced sixty-four plants which had been dormant within the nest. Similar experiments illustrate this factor for various examples are on record: a sparrow's nest having 59 seeds, a barn swallow's containing 19 and eight robins' nests totaling 325.

Seeds are also distributed by "dropping" as is evident by the numerous shrubs and trees found along fence rows (especially in the case of the cherry tree and berry bushes).

The second agent of seed dispersal is the insect, the ant being the most outstanding. They have been known to carry the seeds of various plants in the crotches of trees, where later they may develop. Epiphytes are plants which grow on other plants. Certain species of ants collect the seeds of epiphytes and roll them in little balls of earth which they attach to the branches of trees. Here they are able to develop in the proper environment. The seeds of the
bloodroot and the ginger plant have albuminous appendages which prove very tasty to the ant who carries them considerable distances until the nest is reached. One experimenter, Sindlinger, removed $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of soil from an ant hill and found that 62 plants developed from it. All of these instances prove the importance of the ant in seed distribution.

Hairy larvae (the worm-like stage of the butterfly and moth) have been observed to carry many small seeds on their bodies.

Seeds have also been found in the droppings or dead bodies of locusts, which fly great distances and, thus take the seeds to various places, far removed from the original location.

At the time of creation God ordained that all living things should produce after their kind. This was also true of the plant kingdom which would propagate itself by means of seeds. Gen. 1:12. "And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after its kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself after its kind; and God saw that it was good."

Even as God has decreed since time began the means of propagation (the seed), so also has He provided the instruments and agents to carry out this purpose in intricate detail.

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**From the Editors Desk**

**ALL CONTRIBUTORS PLEASE NOTICE:**

All material for Beacon Lights must be in on or before the 15th of the month preceding date of issue. Send all material to our new managing editor:

Mr. D. Vander Wal,
1100 Sigsbee St., S. E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Kindly cooperate so that our magazine may be printed on schedule.

**SOLDIERS! SAILORS!**

All our young men in the service—Beacon Lights greets you in this first issue of our third volume. Once again we plan to reserve a section of our paper for you. Send us a letter. Last year this section was one of the most popular both among those at home and among your friends in service throughout the world. Let's hear from you from near and far. Send a letter to: Beacon Lights, 734 Franklin St. S. E., Grand Rapids, Mich.
Stalingrad

At the time of this writing, Stalingrad has withstood thirty days of constant and destructive siege. The big question that almost everyone is asking is, "Will the Russians be able to hold the city?" and "How long will they be able to continue in the face of such a terrible assault?"

Whether or not Stalingrad still stands when this article appears in print, no one dares to predict. But, already now, one thing has become plain and that is that the Russians would rather die than be conquered. There can be no doubt but what the cost in human lives is terrific not only on the part of Germany but of Russia as well. How a nation can continue fighting in the face of such a wholesale devastation is indeed surprising. It certainly doesn’t seem natural, or even possible. For one thing, it is plain that Russia has a vast amount of man-power. If this were not the case she would have been compelled to surrender already a long time ago. More than once we have heard that Russia is not receiving war materials as she should and as was promised her and that she has been holding the invading forces through sheer man-power, through human flesh. Another thing that has become evident is that Russia has prepared herself to meet the German attack in the city of Stalingrad. She knew that it was coming and so she prepared herself to resist to the last ditch at this spot. This, in a measure, accounts for Russia’s ability to stand at this time. However, the greatest factor in Russia’s resistance is undoubtedly her will to stand and rather to die than to be enslaved. Here is also an answer to the power of communism as a system of government. If the Russian people didn’t like it, they wouldn’t fight for it as they do. Simply “hate”, as such, is not a sufficient
reason to explain Russia's tremendous sacrifice in this war. France also hated Germany but she was not willing to pay the price that Russia is paying. We believe that Stalingrad's defense is an indication of the power of communism. Communism is more than a system of government. It is atheistic Russia's religion!

Air Power

It is generally conceded that this war is being waged predominantly in the air and that it will be won and lost in the air. We admit that this sounds very reasonable. No one will deny that the airplane has become a dreadful instrument of destruction. Therefore it also stands to reason that the nation which is best able to wage an air-war and is most successful in its bombing raids, will win the war. That means also that the determining factor in the winning of the war will be that of wholesale destruction. The final outcome will not hinge on the ground battles, on hand to hand fighting or the destruction of armies, but on the destruction of property, of munitions factories, supplies, cities, and consequently of men, women and children.

Just imagine the awful power of destruction of a four ton bomb! That, we are told, is the latest size bomb being used by England in its raids on German property. Compare that with a giant firecracker which you used to set off on the fourth of July: that gives you a faint idea of the power of such a bomb.

We may well ask, "Where will it end?"

Every so often we hear of a new secret weapon which will soon be used. And it seems that each is worse than the former.

Our Young Men

Many of our boys have already gone into the service. And there are many more who will go in the near future. There seems to be every reason to believe that before long those of eighteen and up will also be called. The general opinion seems to be that after the coming election, congress will pass a bill to call up all the young men within this age limit.

Whether or not this will be the case we do not know. However we do know that the Army has always been in favor of calling the men of this age. And we have also read that the only thing that has prevented it is the coming election. Nevertheless, just this morning I read that the President has stated that that would not be necessary.

What can a person believe? We hope that the boys who are constantly being called up may experience that their strength is in the Lord: that they may also be found faithful.
* A short but to-the-point contribution entitled "........AND FAMILY", signed by Bernard T. Haan, is found in the August, 1942 issue of the "Young Calvinist". It deals with a problem that is painfully evident in many of our church services.

To let the article speak for itself, we quote the following portions:

"What a contrary and paradoxical people we sometimes are! I have heard parents and teachers talk and speak about the unity of the family, and how the family is one, and that as a unit it should stand together.

But I have noticed that this unity is nowhere less in evidence than in some of our churches. I have seen families come to church together, but once inside its portals, they scatter as sheep without a shepherd. This sudden declaration of independence in worship seems to be characteristic of some of our young people. Once in church they dismiss themselves from the rest of the family and proceed to the gallery or the back row. And usually . . . . the farther removed the better.

This disintegration and separation of the family during worship is producing an unwholesome result. Younger members of the family . . . are being made to feel that worshipping with their parents and family is unmistakeable and embarrassing evidence of their puerility . . . Alas, the desire to sit alone . . . is often but the expression of the juvenile yearning to unmistakeably prove their maturity. Now I fully realize that this does not apply in all cases, but I am sure that the majority of our boys (and girls as well) who desire the separation, do not do it because they can listen better or be more edified by the sermon."

And the writer concludes: "What sight is more pleasant than to see a whole family come down the aisle and sit in the pew together?"
BEACON LIGHTS

. . . Let us have the families of Israel not only come to Zion, but also worship Jehovah, together!"

Perhaps the suggestion that our societies spend some after-recess session in discussion of this problem as it applies to the particular church to which they belong is in order. Group action to counteract this evil might be undertaken. And the reminder that our conduct should be reverent and pious especially during public worship would be beneficial for most of us. I'm sure.

* * * * *

* I suppose that most of us have at one time or another heard of the famous theologian, Dr. Karl Barth. In his department: “The World Today”, the Rev. E. J. Tanis tells us in “The Banner” for September 4, 1942, that from one of the two small areas in Europe that are yet free, Dr. Barth “still thunders” against Hitler and his Nazi philosophy and program. Even though Switzerland is in imminent peril of German domination.

Included in this article is a short biography of this fearless person, that will serve to introduce him to all of us. We quote: “Dr. Karl Barth is 56 years, the son of a Reformed professor. He studied at the universities of Berne, Berlin, Tubingen and Marburg. For ten years he was pastor of a church. At that time he was a liberal, a socialist and pacifist. One Saturday he was preparing a sermon when the post-war misery of Germany and of his own people (this was about 1920) made him keenly aware of the emptiness of his preaching. He began to study Paul’s great letter to the Romans, and from that day he became the most powerful preacher in Germany. He was called to teach in Gottingen, Munster, and Bonn universities (in succession), but while teaching at the last named university he refused to promise unconditional allegiance to the dictator of Germany. He was willing to take the oath of loyalty to the government, with the understanding that he would have the right to criticize the government’s interference with the Church and with the education of German youth. Thereupon he was requested to leave the university of Bonn. Soon afterwards he was called to the chair of systematic theology in the famous university of Basle, Switzerland.”

* * * * *

* R. G. LeTourneau, is a name that is not so familiar amongst us, perhaps, but is nevertheless very well known amongst the Fundamentalist groups in our country and in Canada. Mr. LeTourneau is an industrialist, at the head of a large corporation devoted to the manufacture of heavy machinery,
and related articles. But, this is not the most peculiar feature of this man at all... it is rather that he is a confessing believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. As such he devotes much of his time travelling about the country, usually in his private plane, to speak to different groups.

Mr. LeTourneau’s convictions reveal themselves in his business practices also. In each factory there is a “shop chapel”, to which various ministers and other prominent Christians are invited to speak to groups of employees. The corporation has its own publication also, entitled “NOW”, because of the text found in II Corinthians 6:2, “Behold, now is the accepted time: behold now is the day of salvation”. Besides the two pages devoted to “shop news” and to pictorial scenes of factory activities, editor Tom M. Olson furnishes two pages of editorials, that are most interesting and clever. To illustrate we quote the following from one of them found in the issue for September 18, 1942: . . .

HAS SURNAME
42 LETTERS LONG

“For many years a man named Gustantirus Papatheodorakouman-ntourigiomichelakapoulas has lived in Chicago.

His claim of being the long-name champion of the United States has never been successfully disputed.

It should be a great satisfaction to that champion—and to every other person with a long name—to know that the grand word “whosoever,” frequently mentioned in the Bible, takes them in!

There is no name too long, nor too difficult to spell, nor too hard to pronounce, to be entered in the Lamb’s Book of life.

The Lord advised His disciples to rejoice because their names were “written in heaven” (Luke 10:20).”

* * * *

* If true, the account given by Dr. Henry Beets, well-known editor of the “Missionary Monthly”, of the latest Geelkerken incident in the Netherlands is indeed shocking. For a group of young people largely American by birth, Dr. J. G. Geelkerken does not signify very much. Perhaps our parents know more of him. Suffice it to say that he was a minister in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands from 1909 until 1926, when he was deposed because of his divergent views on the question of original sin.

Dr. Beets quotes the following paragraph in the August issue of his magazine from some paper evidently “Information”, as indicative of the attitude this former pastor in the Reformed Churches entertains toward the Nazi government.

“Dr. Johannes G. Geelkerken—
one of the only two Netherlands Protestant ministers who have embraced Nazi principles—has been awarded an ornamental sword by Gestapo chief Heinrich Himmler, according to the 'Amsterdam Algemeen Handelsblad.' The 63-year-old Nazi displayed this 'spiritual' weapon while addressing a meeting of Dutch Youth Storm Troopers at Breda, in the province of North Brabant."

Underneath this paragraph, Dr. Beets pens the following statement: "And this 'ornamental sword', in our mind, dishonors rather than honors the clergyman who received it".

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* In the "Moody Monthly" for September, 1942, under the caption: "What the Bible Needs Today", Dr. Wm. Evans, internationally known as a student of the Bible, and a much-sought-after speaker for Fundamentalist conferences and special meetings, writes something that we might bear in mind as we approach our Society Bible lessons for another season. Not that we haven't heard anything like this before, but because we ought to practice it more diligently, do we quote the following from the above mentioned article:

"It is all right to read books on Bible study, but there is ever and continually the incipient danger that such books will be allowed to take the place of the Bible. It is really wonderful to note what light the Bible itself throws on books that are written to throw light on the Bible. This may seem like a jocular sentence, but it is unquestionably true. Even a Bible full of notes may stand in the way of arriving at the teaching of the Bible. Care must be exercised even in this respect—even with all its good points.

Let us read the Bible itself for itself. Let us listen to its own witness. Why be secondhand believers? The Bible is of age—it can speak for itself. . . Jesus asked Pilate, "Sayest thou this of thyself or did others tell it thee of me?" . . . We should come to it for firsthand information.

That is why it is good, at first, to read the Bible without a single note in it . . . Then, when you feel that you have earnestly come to an end of your own research into its treasuries, you may turn to notes and what God has said to us through scholarly and holy men."
The question might be asked, Is a special study of Hebrews 11 worthwhile? We might answer in a general way that a special study of any part of Scripture is worthwhile—God’s Word, and every part of it, is worthy of special study. And, however, from this general truth, there are several considerations that ought to show clearly that the choice of Heb. 11 for study by our societies is certainly in order. For, first of all, the chapter deals with one of the most important matters conceivable, viz., faith, and that from the viewpoint of faith as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen. Because of the latter viewpoint the chapter is also of an extremely practical nature—it is exactly faith as the evidence of things unseen which all Christians in the midst of the world need so much, not the least in our day. Secondly, Heb. 11 is a good choice for us, since the author
does not deal with faith as the evidence of things unseen in an abstract way, difficult to understand. On the contrary, the chapter offers one example after another of historical illustrations to drive home the truth that faith is the substance of things hoped for. And this makes the chapter easier to grasp and to discuss. And, thirdly, since the illustrations are all from the Old Testament, we are impelled to refer continually to the Old Testament. This continual reference gives us opportunity to combine the Old and the New Testaments, and to show the unity, connection and relation between the two.

**To Whom Written**

The secondary author of the book of Hebrews is unknown. Paul is often referred to as the author; Art. 4 of the Belgic Confessions also shares this opinion. However, there is no certainty on this score. Several points in the epistle itself plead strongly against the Pauline authorship. The matter of secondary authorship is, of course, not of great importance: the primary author is God, and that is of greatest significance.

The entire epistle gives evidence that it was written originally for a community of Jewish Christians, that is, for Christians that were converted from Judaism to Christ. Such Christians there seem to have been at first in almost every congregation organized under the instrumentality of the apostles. They sometimes seems to have constituted by far the large majority in the local churches. In the case of those to whom this letter was written, it seems that the entire church consisted of just such Jewish Christians. It may safely be concluded, also, that these Christians lived in the city and vicinity of Jerusalem. The fact that so much mention is made of the temple service, of the danger of falling back into the temple service with its shadows, pleads for this view.

**The Thrust of the Letter**

The key-word of the book of Hebrews is "better". Christ is better than the angels, better than Moses, better than Melchizedek; the New Testament covenant is better than the Old Testament form thereof; etc.—over and over the book compares the New Testament manifestation of grace in Christ to the Old Testament manifestation thereof and always finds the one "better" than the other. It is evident that these Christians to whom the letter was originally addressed were tempted to fall back into Judaism, from Christ back into the shadows. Perhaps they were a bit disappointed in Christianity after their first enthusiasm had passed. Perhaps
they had expected the full realization of the kingdom at once; but the Lord tarried and things remained the same. And being weak in faith they were in daily danger of returning to their former worship in the temple and falling away from the reality in Christ. It was with a view to this that the writer warns them. The day of shadows has passed and Christ has entered the holy of holies in heaven. In vs. 23 of chapter 10 he admonishes them to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering, and to consider one another to provoke unto love and good work. In vs. 25 the writer exhorts them not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some had become. He points out in vs. 26 to 29 that if those that despised Moses did not escape, how much less those that turn away from the Christ and trample the blood of Christ underfoot. In vs. 32 he reminds them to call to mind their former zeal and enthusiasm when they were first converted. Then they endured the afflictions and did not seek to flee them. Yes, they even according to vs. 34, took joyfully the confiscation of their goods. Then they knew and were assured that they had in heaven a better and enduring heritage. In vs. 35 the writer pleads with them not to cast away their confidence which hath great recompence of reward. He points out in vs. 36 that they have need of patience, and that after they have done the will of God, they will then receive the promise. And that promise is the coming of the eternal salvation in the return of Christ, for “yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry”. The second coming of Christ would surely come, there could be no question about that. And, now in vs. 38 they are reminded of the rule, “The just shall live by faith”. They had ceased to live by faith. They wanted to see, and therefore they had grown impatient and were tempted to fall back into the service of the shadows. Their faith had grown dim, and so they were inclined to give up the hard battle against Judaism. They must live by faith, by the faith that is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. To encourage them therein, and to show that from of old it was always necessary to live by faith, the author leads them in Heb. 11 through the hall of the heroes of faith. These all lived and died by faith. They did not give up, no matter how dark it seemed. So they must do, for “if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him”. (10:38). The writer has better hopes for them: he is convinced that they are “not of them who draw back unto perdition: but of them that believe to
the saving of the soul”.

QUESTIONS: Why is a study of Hebrews 11 worthwhile? What is meant by the distinction between the primary and the secondary author of Scripture? Who in your opinion might be the secondary author of the book of Hebrews? Is the latter question of great importance? To whom was the epistle to the Hebrews originally written? Where did the addressees undoubtedly live? Why was this letter written to them? Why did the writer take special pains in vs. 25 of chapter 10 to warn the believers against forsaking the assembling of themselves together? Did he mean the church worship, or perhaps societies? What significance does this injunction have for us? What is patience, and why do Christians need it?

Outline II

FAITH, THE EVIDENCE
OF THINGS NOT SEEN

2nd week of October

Heb. 11:1—Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

In vs. 1 the writer points out the particular aspect of faith that he wishes to enlarge upon and impress upon the readers. It is imperative, first of all, to bear in mind that this verse speaks only of a particular aspect of faith. There are those that assert that this verse is the definition of faith, a complete definition. If that were true something would be asserted of faith as a tie to Christ, of faith as a gift of God etc. A definition, a complete definition would naturally have to contain mention of all these, since all these are integral parts of faith as set forth elsewhere in Scripture. We should remember that the Bible is not a book of definitions. God has given us the facts of history in Scripture, a book of dogmatic definition. The facts of astronomy are in the sky, but the science and orderly arrangement thereof God has left to man to discover. So too, it is with Scripture and with faith. All the elements of faith are clearly portrayed in the Bible but nowhere do you find a simple definition. God has left the latter to the church. There is, consequently, in this verse no definition of faith, only a statement regarding the aspect of faith the author wishes to emphasize.

FAITH CLOSELY ALLIED TO HOPE

We discovered in the previous outline that the writer emphasizes that the just shall live by faith. We discovered, further, that he exhorts them to patience with a view to Christ’s return and their faithfulness in the interim. Put these two together and it is evident that faith here means almost the same thing as hope. It is pri-
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marily faith as a firm adherence to the sure things yet to come, that is on the foreground.

However, it ought to be added that although it is faith from the aspect primarily of hope that receives the emphasis, it is surely living faith of which the writer speaks. Some have taken the position that the author does not speak of living faith at all, but of faith in general, which even unbelievers may have. A cursory view of the chapter to our mind is sufficient to disprove this, as we believe the sequence will clearly show.

THINGS UNSEEN AND THINGS HOPED FOR

The two concepts "things unseen" and "things hoped for" are very closely related: the former is the more general thought and the latter the more limited idea. All things hoped for are things unseen, but all unseen things are not things hoped for. For example the creation of the world (vs. 3) certainly does not belong to the things still hoped for, yet it is a thing unseen.

By the things unseen are meant those things that escape our general perception, that cannot be seen or heard, or touched and tasted, and that are even contrary to physical sight. For example the past things of history to which belong all the miracles spoken of in Holy Writ. The miracles of the raising of the dead have not only not been seen by us, but are even contrary to what we see. They are real, very real, but they belong for us to the unseen things. So also it is with our righteousness in Christ. That the believers and their children are washed in the blood of Christ and are clean from all iniquity is not something evident to physical eyesight; it is real, very real, but it belongs to the unseen things. These examples might be multiplied many times over, since all the spiritual realities of God's grace fall in the realm of things unseen.

By the things hoped for we must understand those unseen things that lie as yet in the future. Some of the things Abraham hoped for have been fulfilled, e.g. the inheritance of the earthly Canaan. That is no longer a thing for us to be hoped for. So too with the birth of Christ, his suffering and death, his ascent to heaven and the outpouring of the Spirit. But that does not mean that there are no things that still lie in the future. There are. Centrally speaking, there is one great event still hoped for by the church, and to be hoped for—that is, the second coming of Christ with all that it implies.

These unseen things and the things hoped for play a great role in the Christian's world and life view. Take them away and his Christianity is gone. Undermine
his certainty in regard to their certainty, let him waver in respect to the certainty of Christ's return on the clouds of glory, and his spiritual life loses its vitality and is bound to disappear. If these things are not sure for him, then why should he suffer for Christ's sake? Then the Christian life is a vain thing.

**Faith the Substance and The Evidence**

What is the secret of the Christian's certainty in regard to the reality of the things unseen and hoped for? To that question there can only be one answer, viz. faith. For faith is the substance and the evidence of these things. The word "substance" is not an altogether fortunate, nor clear translation. The Revised Version translates the original with the English word "assurance". For those still acquainted with the Dutch we might mention that in the Holland version you find "vaste grond", quite similarly to the King James Version in use among us. The meaning is that faith is the ground, the pillar upon which these things stand. Not, of course, in the sense that if you take away faith these things cease to exist. The reality of God and his Word, of Christ and our righteousness, etc. do not depend upon our faith in the sense that if faith is taken away the facts themselves cease to exist. Of course not—our unbelief cannot make God's Word less true. Nevertheless, the reality and certainty of these things for me and for you does depend upon faith. Subjectively, faith is the assurance, the certainty, the proof of their reality. Consequently, faith is very important.

Fundamentally the word translated "evidence" means the same thing as the word "substance". Also here faith is considered as the subjective conviction which proves the reality of the unseen things to me and to you as believers. Faith is not the proof whereby we can convince others that God's Word is true. But for me and you personally faith it is that convinces us, that proves to us, that assures us of the reality of the things unseen and the things hoped for. That personal faith is the root of hope that looks forward to the day of Christ. This includes, naturally, that all doubt and fear is not faith and does not arise from faith. Faith, as here described, is certainty, assurance, confidence.

**QUESTIONS:** Is Heb. 11:1 a complete definition of faith? Prove your point. How does the Heidelberg Catechism define faith? How is the aspect of faith spoken of implied in that answer of the Catechism? Can the believer convince the unbeliever of the reality of the heavenly things by appealing to what he believes and knows by faith? What is
meant by "things unseen" and by "things hoped for"? Which one of these two does the chapter especially enlarge upon? May the Christian ever doubt; does he ever; is doubt ever compatible with faith?

OUTLINE III

THE GOOD REPORT OF THE ELDERS

3rd week of October

Heb. 11:2—For by it the elders obtained a good report.

Faith as described in the first verse is the theme of the entire chapter. Yet the writer does not speak of it in an abstract, hard to understand, way. On the contrary, it is very easy to follow his elucidation, for the simple reason that he brings to our attention a number of men who lived through faith, and through it became distinguished, and obtained a good report. The writer intends to take his readers through the Old Testament Hall of Heroes, and illustrate from their lives the faith that is an evidence of things hoped for. This is made clear in the second verse.

THE ELDERS

The elders spoken of in the verse are not our consistory members, but as the chapter shows those saints that have gone before us, particularly those of the Old Testament dispensation. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and all the rest whose names are mentioned in the chapter are the elders. These all were men of faith. They possessed the faith that is the substance of things not seen and the evidence of things hoped for. And they lived and died in that faith. Of them may be said truly that they kept the faith. The unseen things were real to them. They were motivated and controlled by the faith that is the certainty of the things hoped for. They even sacrificed the visible things of this life for the invisible things of God's promise, as e.g. did Abraham when he forsook Ur and went to the land the Lord would after show him.

THEIR GOOD REPORT

The text says that by faith these men obtained a good report. It is not stated with so many words from whom they received a good report. But we know that they did not obtain this good report from the world. The world at times even spoke ill of them, e.g. of Abel, of Enoch, of Moses. In a certain sense even the world must give the Christian a good report. So 1 Tim. 3:7 says of officebearers in the church, "he must have a good report of them which are without". And, of course, the wicked world must not be able to speak evil of
the believers and to point to wicked ways of living in conflict with the faith. In so far Christians must take care to have a good report from those that are without. However, from the aspect of faith itself, the world will never give the Christian a good report. If all men speak well of us, if the world finds in us a good partner, we may well ask ourselves whether we are walking in the faith, yes, if we are believers at all. "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets". (Luke 6:26).

In the light of the context it is evident that the good report spoken of is the report the elders received from God. It is the good report of them that the Scriptures of God give of them on the pages of Holy Writ. But it is not only the good report God gave about them and after they were gone that is intended; primarily, it is the good report they obtained of God themselves while they were living. Vs. 4 says that Abel obtained witness of the Lord: they obtained testimony in their hearts even while they lived that they pleased the Lord. God inscribed their names on the roll of the heroes of faith, and God gave them assurance that their walk was pleasing in his sight. And as it was with them, so too it is for every Christian, through faith the Lord bears testimony to us, and walking in faith he gives us assurance that we please him. There is no other way than faith to obtain a good report.

QUESTIONS: Who are the elders? Must Christians have a good report of them that are without; and if so, in what sense? Of whom above all must the Christian have a good report, and is this compatible with a good name in the world in every sense? Who are the heroes of the church? May the church hold up Washington, Lincoln, etc. as examples whose lives we must emulate? When it is done, can you see any bad effects? How does God give testimony and witness to believers when they walk in faith?

OUTLINE IV

UNDERSTANDING THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

4th week of October

Heb. 11:3—Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

In a sense this verse is an interruption in the train of thought developed throughout the course of the chapter. As the chapter as a whole indicates the writer intended to present a list of examples of Old Testament worthies to show
that faith is indeed the substance of things hoped. Already in vs. 2 the author speaks of the good report the elders obtained. But now, before he passes on to review the lives of these elders, he pauses to speak of the creation of the world. The insertion of this interruption is, however, surely easily understood. Undoubtedly as the writer's thoughts wandered back to olden times, the thought occurs to him that even before the history of the elders began there lies an event, a significant event, which is an object of faith only, viz. the creation of the world. The interposition of this reference is certainly not out of place, if simply because the verse contains a cogent illustration of faith as evidence of things not seen. How the world originated is absolutely an object of faith only. And, not only is this interlude in place here, but we may add in our day there is every reason to give serious attention to the truth expressed here.

THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD

How did this world originate? This question is a wholly natural one, and every thinking man or woman sooner or later puts the question to himself. Everything about us has a beginning, and so almost unbeknown to ourselves we find ourselves asking, 'Whence did all this—that we see have its beginnings? To this question there are only two possible answers—either the answer of faith or the answer of human philosophy. When the writer of Hebrews answers the question he does so as Scripture always does—God created the world. He puts the answer positively and negatively. Positively, he asserts that the worlds were framed by the word of God; negatively, that the things that are seen were not made from the things that do appear. In respect to the positive assertion the emphasis falls upon "by the word of God". We know from other portions of Scripture that this Word by which the world was framed is very God Himself, the second Person of the Trinity (John 1:1ff.; Heb. 1:2). There, the writer is rather thinking of the simple fact that by a word of power God framed the world. This is plain from the text itself which wishes to show that the world was not made from the things that are seen. God called creation into being by the word of his power, Gen. 1: Ps. 33, etc. The word "framed" is used rather than "created" or "made" because "framed", "ordered", "prepared" is the more comprehensive term, for God not only called the material into being, but He also framed it, he ordered it into the beautiful and orderly whole that is now called cosmos. The text speaks of "worlds" (the plural)—are there more worlds
than one? Certainly not. The plural is used (and more frequently in such a case) since the viewpoint of creation is that of time and duration. One thing is plain. Heb. 11 ascribes to God the entire work of creation.

Negatively, the text asserts that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. The reason for this negative statement is the fact that apart from faith this other conclusion would be the only possible one in regard to the origin of the world. Unbelief always answers that the things were made of things which do appear. Evolution is unbelief's answer. The old Greeks taught it, so there is nothing new or modern about this error. The theory of evolution in one form or another has many adherents even today. Over against them the author emphasizes that the world was framed by the word of God, so that the things that are seen were not made of things that do appear. He means the things seen, creation in all its beauty and order, was not made from the things that do appear; that is, did not have its origin in them, did not evolve from them. The seen things do not find their beginning in seen things, not on the first day of creation nor on any other. They find their origin in the word of God. There is here no room for the theory of evolution.

That God made the world, we understand through faith. By "we", the writer means the believers, those that receive the testimony of God's revelation. By "understand" he does not mean that we comprehend God's creative act—that we never can—but that we know it, recognize it and are convinced of it. That, he asserts, is through faith. Certainly the Christian does not know that God created the world by sight—we were not present, nor from the testimony of men—no man saw it, not even Adam. Neither does "pure reason" (so-called) ever lead men to this conclusion. Apart from God's revelation we can only conclude either that the world was eternally or that it evolved. Without faith there can be no knowledge in respect to the origin of the world. Faith gives knowledge, for faith is the adherence to God's revelation regarding the origin of his own creation.

Faith is thus the only way to knowledge of the origin of the world. Mere reasoning can never convince the unbeliever who rejects the testimony of God. The trouble with the unbeliever is a spiritual one—rejecting God, he rejects him also as Creator. Then he can only wander about in the vain corridors of the cave of human philosophy. Faith alone gives us the answer. And this faith is also reasonable. Unbelief's evolution is unreasonable, for it conflicts with the very
facts: faith is reasonable for it is in harmony with creation fact. Well may the writer spur the believers on to faith. If we forget faith, and live only by the seen things, we are foolish. If in respect to the origin of the world we must walk by faith, is it not proper that also with a view to the future and the ultimate end of the world we walk by faith and not by sight...

QUESTIONS: What is meant by the theory of evolution? Whose name is most frequently associated with this view? Can any scientific fact be mustered to substantiate the claim of evolution? What different types of evolution are there? Can you see any dangers in the theory of evolution? Is it possible to convince the unbeliever that God created the world? Give reasons for your opinion.

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A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our Helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
And armed with cruel hate,
His craft and power are great,
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth His Name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.