BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

OCTOBER 1990

""We must study the Word of God. We must be founded in our Reformed doctrine. . . . The ignorant Christian is a weak Christian. The more we grow in the knowledge of the truth, the stronger we will become spiritually, the more firmly rooted will be our convictions, the better we will be able to oppose all false doctrines and reject all heresies."

Quoted from "Attitudes" the inspirational address given by Rev. H. Hoeksema found in October 1, 1940 issue of the Standard Bearer.

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Contents

Editor's Notes: October 1990.....1
EDITORIAL
Satan's Conspiracy For The Heart - Bruce Miedema.....3
Attitudes - Rev. Herman Hoeksema.....4
ECCLESIASTES LETTER #7
Solomon's Search For Meaning (Without God) - Mrs. H. Brands.....15
TO LOSE THE BATTLE AND WIN THE WAR
Chapter III - The Issues In The Battle - Prof. H. Hanko.....18
III. The Biblical Teaching on Sympathy - Rev. G. Lubbers.....20
FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY
Father's Goods - Rev. C. Hanko.....22
Down Under Presbyterianism - Daniel Kleyn.....25
What's Happened - Lora Bouwkamp.....28

EDITOR'S NOTES OCTOBER 1990

By David Harbach

Fifty year ago this October, the words on the front cover appeared in the October 1 issue of the Standard Bearer. The words are the speech given by Rev. H. Hoeksema to the Second Annual Convention of the Protestant Reformed Young People's Federation. Why the reprint from the Standard Bearer? I have three reasons. First, historically, the Beacon Lights magazine did not exist until about two years later in 1942. Until that time the convention addresses were printed in the Standard Bearer. I plan to put the third annual convention address, which also appeared in the Standard Bearer, in next year's October issue because it will also be fifty years old. Secondly, Rev. H. Hoeksema was one of the early leaders of our Protestant Reformed Churches who guided our youth in the way of the Reformed truth. Thirdly, an energetic Reformed elder from South Holland, Mr. Ed Stowie, sent me copies of these speeches and suggested they be put in the Beacon Lights. Thank you Mr. Stowie for opening our Beacon Lights eyes to golden nuggets of wisdom from the past.

As a fourth grade teacher, I am always amazed at the profound statements made by covenant children. To the question, "How do you know that God created the

heavens and earth in six days," came the answer, "By faith!" According to Prof. Janssen this would not be a good enough answer. Read Prof. Hanko's series on "To Lose the Battle and Win the War: Chapter III - The Issues In The Battle (2)" to find out how mistaken you can become if you do not believe Genesis 1 & 2 by faith.

Rev. Lubbers finishes his interesting series of articles on "The Biblical Teaching On 'Sympathy' ". This month, Rev. Lubbers concentrates on the practical experiential level of sympathy as one of God's young people. Thank you Rev. Lubbers for providing many encouraging truths about having sympathy toward one another evenas Christ has shown us.

The editorial for this issue is "Satan's Conspiracy For The Heart", by Bruce Miedema. You might wonder sometimes why the devil tries to fight against God's people to overthrow them even when we know that God preserves us eternally as His people. Bruce answers this question and shows us how the devil is using the church of today to do his bidding.

Solomon searched for the meaning of life apart from God in four ways and found it to be vexing and of no profit. What were those four ways? Mrs. Brands provides us with an answer in Letter #7 Ecclesiastes 2:1-23, "Solomon's Search For Meaning Without God."

Lora, our faithful Church News editor has provided us with news through September of this year. We will be considering ways in which to expand the church news to include information from overseas. If you have any ideas on how to do this write to: Beacon Lights, Attention Lora Bouwkamp, P.O. Box 375, Jenison, MI 49428-0375.

Do you eat the wrong food? Is your appetite for foods you shouldn't eat stronger than your appetite for proper foods? Do you eat at the swine trough, wrestling with the pigs? Rev. C. Hanko often has a unique way of showing us the doctrinal meaning to passages of scripture. "Father's Goods", which is an explanation to the parable of the prodigal son, gives encouragement to all of us to be faithful in serving God.

Down Under Presbyterianism is not a new church starting up in Presbyterian circles. "Down Under Presbyterianism" is a short history of Presbyterianism in Australia written by Daniel Kleyn who used to live "down under," but now lives in the Grand Rapids area because he married an "up over" lassie. The staff asked Daniel to trace the history of the Presbyterian / Scottish Reformation in Australia to the formation of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia as we know it today. Thank you Daniel for keeping us in tune with the history of the Reformation through the Presbyterian churches.

"Nothing is less tolerable than when God's truth is turned into a lie, because this is like reducing Him to nothing. God is truth; if, therefore, that is abolished, what else will remain behind? God will be as it were, a dead scepter."

- John Calvin (on Ezek. 13)

Editorial

SATAN'S CONSPIRACY FOR THE HEART

by Bruce Miedema

Ever since Satan's great deception in the garden of Eden, he has been conspiring with his fallen host to deceive the whole world.

Two endeavors stand as Satan's greatest attempts to overcome God besides his attempt at Christ on the cross. These were at Job of old, who was God's delight, and the man Christ Jesus at the time of his baptism and wilderness trial. These were his greatest endeavors because so much was to be gained. In these trials God expressed his delight in the servant quality shown by both Job and the man Christ Jesus. God, as it were, laid his sovereignty on the line. A victory, at least in Satan's mind, would have put the seat of authority in the lowest echelon of hell. Satan failed and in rebellious tenacity he conspired against the church of God and, today in particular, he conspires against the remnant of the seed of the woman.

How foolish for the devil to think he can overcome Sovereign God. And why does he not learn? Despite his long (six thousand year) battle against God, the devil is a finite spirit creature. Because of this limitation, he is unable to plumb the depths of God's knowledge and eternal council. Also, unlike God's redeemed - the seed of the woman, Satan will not and cannot believe. He has no saving faith, and he has no desire to serve as a servant; therefore, he will never elieve.

Revelation 12, which is a recapitulation and representation of things past, sets the scene of conflict.

The dragon awaiting the birth of the man child to devour him went hungry because the man child was snatched up to heaven by God. Following, in heavenly warfare, Michael and his host defeat the dragon and his host.

The dragon was cast into the earth because there was no place for him in heaven.

Upon the heavenly proclamation, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ..." Satan (the dragon) is wroth. There is also given a heavenly warning, "woe unto you inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

The dragon then attempted to kill the woman but was thwarted. "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to

make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

The tactics of the devil according to Revelation 12 are a very threatening thing to every Christian personally in the days in which we live.

In the beginning the devil directly assaulted God and he failed. He then assaulted the woman (church institute). Though making martyrs of many and minimizing her size often throughout history, he has not been able to eliminate her and therefore has failed.

It is not to be said that Satan does not attempt to dethrone God or eliminate the church today. He does as can readily be seen in the latter. The church today is soddened with error and misleading. Only in clusters, strongly fought for, does the earthly manifestation of God's Church exist. The church of the day has become, in many cases, the very tool Satan uses to do his bidding.

With such conspiracy in place the devil is now turning his deceitful ways upon individuals more than ever. As a salesman for the local union works amongst the factory workers stirring discontent and envy, dashing the legitimate authority of the employer, so Satan is now by way of many modern tools conspiring for the remnant of the seed of the woman.

As is the case in any spiritual warfare, God has established the boundaries within which the battle is to be fought. In the case of the remnant of the seed of the woman, the place of battle is the human heart. That which initiates this battle is God's imperative requirement; "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."

ATTITUDES

by Rev. Herman Hoeksema

It is a privilege and a great delight to me that this evening I may deliver the inspirational address at the opening session of the Convention of Protestant Reformed Young People. The task assigned to me is wholly a pleasurable one. I take it that this convention is proof of the fact that in our churches there is a flourishing society life, particularly now with a view to young people's societies. And this is a good sign. It shows that our young people are interested in the church, the things of the Kingdom of God, the cause of the

truth as we believe and profess it. Catechism is, of course, of first importance. But the difference between catechetical instruction and the activities of our societies is that the former is compulsory, while in the latter one participates of his own free choice. That our young people evince an active interest in the life and activities of their societies reveals, therefore, that they take a personal interest in the things of the Kingdom of God. And this is a hopeful sign. For you represent the church of the future. Besides, a well conducted young people's society, or, wherever this is possible, young men's and young ladies' society may, indeed, be a power for good in the church. Catechism serves the specific purpose of indoctrinating the youth of the church and preparing them to make confession of their faith and to assume their covenant obligations. But our societies may serve the wider purpose, through mutual edification, to prepare their members to take their place in the church and in life in general as Christian men and women. You will understand, then, that when I look upon this convention as a tangible proof of the fact that our young people are taking an active interest in the things of the kingdom of God, in the truth as we profess it, it is altogether a pleasure to me that I may deliver the opening address of this second convention of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

There is still another, a more specific reason why I take particular delight in addressing you tonight. I am reminded tonight of a similar occasion at which I delivered the inspirational address. It is some twenty years ago that I spoke at the opening of the Federation of Reformed Young Men's Societies, the first meeting of that federation. I had helped to organize it. I was its first president. And I had the honor of being the first editor of its publication, The Young Calvinist. But that federation did not spring into being until after the Christian Reformed Churches had existed for more than half a century. When I compare that occasion with the present one, my heart is filled with joy and gratitude to God. It is only about fifteen years ago that we were expelled from the fellowship of the Christian Reformed Churches. And we were very small. Our enemies predicted, the wish, no doubt, being the father to the thought, that we had but a very short time to live. And when I recall all this, and then look upon this gathering of young people, having come from far and near, representing the young people's societies of several of our churches; when I consider that after so short a period of our separate existence we may already meet as a convention of Protestant Reformed young People's Societies that are very much alive, I am inclined to exclaim: "what hath God wrought!"

My task for tonight was assigned to me: I am supposed to speak on the theme of this convention, "Attitudes". I find this somewhat difficult just because it is the convention theme. During the course of this convention there will be other speakers who are asked to speak on specified topics, that are, however, all related more or less directly to the general theme

that constitutes the subject of my address. In order not to conflict with them I will, therefore, have to be careful and confine myself to some general remarks. I shall try, therefore, to be as specific as possible without colliding with the other speakers of this convention. And I will try to make clear to you, that, in the sense in which we now speak of "Attitudes":

I. Principally there are but two possible attitudes.

II. In actual life one meets with various attitudes.

III. We must strive to cultivate the proper attitude.

I. The word attitude in its simplest and original meaning denotes a physical concept. It means posture. Thus we can speak of the attitude, that is, posture, of a person, the attitude of an animal, the attitude of a statue. But as the posture of the body often reflects the disposition of the mind and heart of man, the word attitude is frequently, if not most generally, used to denote this mental or spiritual disposition with respect to some object. Hence, we speak of one's attitude to war, to politics, to Christian education, to woman suffrage, to religion, etc. it is in this latter sense that we use the term in our speech tonight, and that especially with regard to the things of the Kingdom of God as represented by our Protestant Reformed Churches: our church, the truth, our doctrine, the "three points", the activities of our churches, our mission, our societies, The Standard Bearer. Attitude as I use the term, therefore, denotes the mental and spiritual disposition as reflected in our actual life, with respect to the specific things for which we as Protestant Reformed people stand.

Now, I stated that principally there are only two possible attitudes. We are either for or against. Another attitude is fundamentally impossible. This is often emphasized in Scripture. The Lord Jesus declares: "He that is not for me is against me". You cannot serve God and Mammon, for either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will cleave to the one and despise the other. The apostle writes to the Corinthians: "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" II Cor. 6:14-16. The tree is either good or evil, and accordingly its fruit is good or bad. And he that is friend of the world is an enemy of God. It is either or. It is for or against. Neutrality with respect to the truth and the things of the kingdom of God is impossible. Here one must choose.

What it means to be "for" is well expressed by our Form for the Administration for Baptism, which teaches us that it belongs to our "part" of the covenant that we love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul and with all our strength, that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life. This declares in the first place, that our attitude to God, to Christ, to the truth and the things of the kingdom of God, is a matter of the heart and of our whole being and life: "with all our

heart and mind and soul and strength" we must love the Lord our God. In the second place it teaches us that to be "for" covers all our active life: we must love the Lord our God "with all our strength". To love the Lord our God implies that we serve Him, that we keep His commandments and apply them to every department of life. Not only in the church and on Sunday, but also during the week and in our daily life we are "for" and "walk in a new and holy life". In the home and in the school, in shop and office, in society and in the state, always and everywhere our calling is to love the Lord our God with all our strength. And, thirdly, this part of our Baptism Form reminds us that to be "for" implies the antithesis; for to love the Lord our God also requires of us that "we forsake the world, crucify our old nature" and thus walk in a new and holy life. You cannot serve God and Mammon, but neither can you merely serve God without assuming any attitude over against Mammon whatsoever. if you love the one, you despise the other. You are called to be of God's party in the midst of the world that lieth in darkness. Hence, you cannot avoid the antithesis. To be friend of God implies that you assume an attitude of enmity over against sin within and without, the world and its prince.

To be "against" signifies the very opposite and this in the same comprehensive sense as to be "for". It means that we are enemies of God with all our heart and mind and soul, with our whole being. And this inner spiritual disposition of enmity against God reflects itself in a hatred of God with all our strength, that is, in all our actual life and all its departments. And this implies that we love darkness rather than light, that we indulge in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life; that we love the world and seek after its pleasures and treasures rather than after the things of the kingdom of God; and that we walk in the old corruption of the flesh. You are "against" God and His Christ, and, therefore, "for" the world and the forces of darkness.

The question might be asked: why is it that with respect to the things of the kingdom of God there are only two attitudes possible fundamentally? And why is it, that men must necessarily assume either of these two attitudes? Why is it that an attitude of neutrality is impossible, so that one may be neither for nor against? Or why can there be no compromise, so that one is partly for and partly against, and so that he may serve both: God and Mammon, Christ and Belial?

The answer to these questions is objectively in God. God is God! He is the sole Sovereign of heaven and earth, Who is the Creator of all things, and Who made all things for His own Name's sake. And He is One. There is no God beside Him, next to Him, under Him. The Lord our God is one Lord! And He is a light. There is no darkness in Him at all. he is good, not merely in the supreme sense of that word, but as the only Good, the implication of all infinite perfections, the Holy One of Israel. There is no division in God. There is no compromise in the sole Sovereign of heaven and earth.

From this it follows that the end of your existence is in Him only. To serve and glorify Him is your sole purpose, that is, it is the end for which you are made. And He will have your all. There is no Lord you can serve beside Him. To Him belongs your body and your soul, your mind and your will, your talents and your strength, all that you are and have. Hence, it follows that your attitude to Him is either or: you are wholly "for" Him, or you are wholly "against" Him; you love Him or you hate Him with all your heart and mind and soul and strength.

And subjectively the answer to the above questions must be found in the fact that our attitude to God is a matter of the heart, whence are the issues of life. From an ethical viewpoint the heart is the center of our whole life. As our heart is so are our thoughts and desires, our longings and aspirations and all our actions. As the heart is so are we. And that heart is either good or evil. It is never both. It cannot be neither, good nor evil. By nature our heart is corrupt, perverse, moved with enmity against God. And if our heart is corrupt, so are all the issues of our life. It follows that in our natural state we hate the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. From our corrupt heart we cannot partly love God and partly love sin. And on the other hand, regeneration is a radical change of the heart, a change from death into life, from darkness into life, from corruption into holiness, from enmity against God to the love of God in Christ. It is a change of the whole man in principle. hence, principally, the regenerated man loves the Lord his God with his whole heart, and therefore with all his mind and soul and strength. If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new!

Perhaps, you would object, that although with respect to God and Christ it may be true that only two possible attitudes are conceivable, so that one must be either for or against, you can hardly apply this truth to one's attitude to the specific cause and truth which we represent and maintain as a Protestant Reformed people. Here one must draw the line less sharply. Whether one is Protestant Reformed or Christian Reformed, or even Baptist or Methodist can hardly be a matter "for" or "against". But this objection is an error. One is principally either for or against our Protestant Reformed faith. In fact, I would even maintain that the difference in attitude is here rather accentuated. The truth as we confess it concerns the doctrines of God, of Christ, of man, of salvation, of sin and grace, of our life and walk in the midst of and over against the world. These are fundamental doctrines. And they are all concerned in our controversy with the Christian Reformed Churches. One of their spokesman said in the well-known conference of the Pantlind that we had a different theology from theirs. He spoke the truth. Grace is either particular or common, -it cannot be both. God either loves or hates the wicked, - both at the same time are impossible. Man is either wholly depraved or he is not. The "Three Points" are either

true of they are very fundamental errors. And our Protestant Reformed Churches have maintained the truth over against corruptions and errors, so that they have a right to exist as churches; or they erred in 1924 and then they are a mere sect. Hence, here one must choose. You cannot be neutral. You are either Protestant Reformed or you are opposed to the Protestant Reformed truth. You are for or against. And if you are Protestant Reformed you reject all heresies repugnant to our confession.

II. Fact is, however, that in actual life one does not meet very often with this sharp antithesis of "for" and "against". Life seems to be different. Somehow it appears as if this uncompromising theory of the antithesis does not prove itself capable of application in reality. One is not always "for" or "against". There seem to be many other possible attitudes one may and actually does assume. The "for or against", the "either or" of Scripture are not practical in the world. A certain measure of compromise, of "appeasement", is required by actual life. The man that would really bring the antithesis into practice often stands alone.

The reason for this must not be sought in the "world". It is always world. The natural man is always "against", even though there may be different degrees of manifestation of this attitude. He is never for Christ and the truth. But the Christian individually and the Church collectively are not always clearly and uncompromisingly "for". This is true, not only of the Christian and of the Church today, but equally holds for the people of God as they are pictured to us in Scripture. The reason for this is in the flesh, the old nature in the Christian, and the carnal element in the Church. The Christian is a new man, a new creature, but he is such only in principle. He has only a small beginning of this new obedience that causes him to walk in a new and holy life. His heart is radically changed and therefore, he is principally "for". But his old nature is a powerful factor still in his life. That old nature is inclined to seek sin and the world. And to the inclination of that old nature the Christian often yields. And the same is true of the Church. Not all are Israel that are of Israel. Not only is there always a carnal element that arises from the Church itself, carnal children of the covenant, but a carnal element also joins itself to the Church for various reasons, and their entrance into the Church cannot always be barred. If this were not the case I could close my lecture right here; now, however, I must call your attention to various attitudes which the flesh often causes the Christian individually and the Church as a whole to assume. I will limit myself to a few typical attitudes that are illustrated for us in Scripture.

One of the most striking and frequently assumed is the utilitarian attitude. This is a big word, but the meaning of it may be very simply and concretely expressed in the question: does it pay? They that take this attitude always ask themselves the question: how does the application of the truth affect my life in the world, my natural well-being, my

name and position, my wealth and influence? They are people who are "for" Christ and the truth, for the Protestant Reformed faith and cause, as long as this attitude does not come into conflict with their earthly position and carnal desires. They are practical people, not men of principle at all. They certainly dare not lose their life in the world. Rather then lose the world they would lose their own soul, though it is their deliberate attempt to save both. If the cause of the truth requires sacrifice they forsake the cause. And if their carnal interests conflict with their calling in the cause of Christ they deny the latter and pursue the former. A fine illustration of this attitude you have in the men of Succoth and Penuel at the time of Gideon. You know the story. The Lord had wrought a glorious victory and a great deliverance in Israel through Gideon and his brave band of three hundred. They were pursuing the Midianites in the land across the Jordan. it had been a strenuous day and the men were faint. Faint, yet pursuing! And Gideon asked the men of Succoth and later those of Penuel: "Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian". But the men of Succoth and Penuel answered: "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?" You see these men "played safe". They wanted to see results first. They were afraid that Gideon might fail, and that the kings of Midian might return and take revenge upon them if they aided and abetted Gideon and his men in their pursuit. They wanted to be sure that they did not risk their own necks, before they would take sides! You know Gideon's reply to these miserable curs. He promised the men of Succoth that he would tear their flesh with thorns and briars of the wilderness when he would return and the Lord had delivered the kings of Midian into his hand; and he threatened that upon his victorious return he would break down Penuel's tower. Judges 8:4-9. And I for one would like to have been present when Gideon's thorns and briars lashed the backs of those wretched cowards who preferred their own safety to the victory of God's cause! Always one finds these utilitarian bargainers. If they belong to us, they are Protestant Reformed only in as far as their faith and confession do not conflict with their earthly position and carnal ambitions. As soon as this conflict arises they easily depart from us.

Then there is the attitude of selfish pride and ambition. They that assume this attitude would let the things of the kingdom of God revolve around the glory of their own ego. They want to be the greatest, and do not understand that the greatest in the kingdom of heaven is he who can humble himself as a little child. You may find this class of people very active sometimes in the affairs of the Church and the kingdom of God in the world. They are zealous. They usually have capacity for work, too. They are able and willing to take the lead. But their zeal is largely motivated by the desire to realize their personal ambition. They are in it for their own glory.

We find this type of attitude illustrated in the pride of Ephraim in Gideon's time once more. He had taken the initiative against Midian, as he was called to do so by the Lord. And Jehovah had given him and his men a glorious victory. And only after the decisive battle had been fought and the Midianites had been routed, did he call upon the men of Ephraim for help in the hot pursuit. And we read in Judges 8:1 that the men of Ephraim "did chide with him sharply". They said: "Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites?" They were hurt in their pride. The Lord had wrought a great salvation in Israel, but for it they cared little; what concerned them was that the glory would go to Gideon, not to themselves! Of course, they had had abundant opportunity to make the attack upon the host of Midian themselves, had they had the faith and the courage to do so. But they had failed. But now salvation had been wrought through Gideon and his band, they chide with him, because they were far more concerned about their own honor than about the cause of God! A very dangerous attitude this! People that take this attitude in the Church, in society, in respect to any activity in the kingdom of God, are always a menace. In this frame of mind one is ready to sacrifice the cause of God to her personal ambition and pride!

There is, in the third place, the attitude we might describe by the French phrase: "laissez-faire", the "let it run" attitude. We find some such attitude illustrated in what Scripture tells us about Gallio, the deputy of Achaia, in Acts 18. You recall the incident, no doubt. There was an insurrection of the Jews against Paul, and they brought him to the judgment seat. But Gallio refused to be judge in the matter and drove the Jews away from the judgment seat. They the Greeks, making the best of the occasion, took Sosthenes and beat him right in the presence of Gallio. And then we read characteristically: "And Gallio cared for none of these things". He assumed the "laissez-faire" attitude. Just let it go! Well, one finds Gallio's in the church. They are, perhaps, among the most regular members of the church. Faithfully they attend public worship and contribute to the needs of the church. They never cause trouble. But they are inclined to avoid trouble and strife at all cost. They see and admit that the church is apostatizing, departing from the truth and becoming worldly minded in life and walk. But they "care for none of these things". At all events they will do nothing about it. They do not like trouble. They love peace. The truth of the matter is really that they love their own leisure and tranquility more than the things of the kingdom of God. If it were left to them you would never have a secession in the church on earth, a reformation would never be started, the church would be permitted to go to destruction in the way of apostasy. A fitting example of people of this frame of mind and attitude is, according to my opinion, that often lauded scholar of Luther's days, in whose honor, to the shame of that Dutch city, Rotterdam erected a statue, which even escaped the destruc-

tion caused by the German air raid. I mean, of course, Desiderius Erasmus. Well he knew the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church. But he loved the leisure of his study too much to do anything about it. Laissez-faire!

Closely related to those we just mentioned are those who assume the attitude of self-complacency and cold indifference. They are people that are really well satisfied with the goal that has been attained, with the actual condition of the church, no matter what it may be. They have no ambition, no zeal for the cause of the kingdom of God. They are self-satisfied. You can never persuade them to do anything in the interest of the church. They are not member of any society, and if they are they might better not be. They take no part in any activity. Their biblical picture you may probably find in the condition of the church of Laodicea. Its members are described as being neither cold nor hot. While they consider themselves rich and enriched and as having need of nothing, the Lord judges that they are naked and wretched. They are nauseating to Him and He threatens to spew them out of His mouth. Also this sort of people you usually meet with in the church wherever it exists. And there is no need of saying that they are never an asset to the church. You can do nothing with them in any sphere of the church's activity.

Fifthly, I must call your attention to a type of people that assume the attitude of what is often erroneously styled "broad mindedness', the latitudinarian attitude. They are really not broad minded at all, but rather lacking in definite and well established convictions. They halt between two or, perhaps, between a dozen or more opinions. They are Protestant Reformed merely in the sense that they happen to belong to a Protestant Reformed Church, not because in their conviction that church is the purest manifestation of the Body of Christ in the world. Yes, they can agree with the doctrine of the church of which they are a member, but they can see the good of the "Three Points" too. They do not like sharp lines. Their sympathies are very broad. And they hate controversy. They like to bury the hatchet. They do not like us to assume the attitude that we know it alone. We ought to have due respect for the opinions of others. There is some good in every view, no matter how far it may be beside the truth of the Word of God. The attitude of these people is not unlike that of the people of Israel in the old dispensation, who served Jehovah, but also worshiped the gods of the nations round about. Thus it was, for instance, at the time of Elijah. But the prophet must have nothing of their "broad minded" attitude and urges them to make up their mind as to who is God. No longer must they halt between two opinions. It must become either or. If Baal is God, very well: let them serve him then; but if Jehovah is God let them worship Him alone. If the "Three Points" are the truth, very well: embrace them and confess them openly, without a pretense as to being Protestant Reformed; but if they are errors, oppose and reject them as being repugnant to the truth of which you are con-

vinced!

The last type of attitude to which I wish to call your attention in this connection is that of the double minded man. He is, of course, very closely related to the type just mentioned, yet he is also distinct from the "broad minded" man. James mentions this type when he speaks of the double minded man that is unsteady in all his ways. It is the attitude of those that are never sure whether they would serve the world or confess the Lord in word and walk. They divide their devotion. On Sunday they are with the people of God, on Monday they are friends with the world. They sway to and fro. And as it is with their walk, so it is with their attitude toward the truth. One never knows where they really belong. They are members of the Protestant Reformed Church, but they often talk as if they belong to the camp of our opponents. They are as two-faced as they are double-minded. They are people who in their double-faced attitude are a shame to any church of which they happen to be member. They should, of course, be persuaded, if at all possible, to make up their mind and then go where they belong.

III. These are some of the outstanding types of different attitudes mentioned in Scripture and exemplified in the actual life of the people of God in the world. No doubt, other types could be described than those we characterized above, but these are sufficient to show that the only two possible attitudes of "for" and "against" are not always clearly manifested by those that profess to be of Christ. And it also proves that here we have a calling, a task to perform. I mean that as a church and as a people, particularly also as young people, we should be careful and diligent to cultivate the proper attitude. What this attitude is we have, in general, already indicated. It is that we love the Lord our God with our whole heart, and with all our mind and soul and strength. It means that we assume an attitude of opposition over against the world and the flesh, and that we walk in a new and holy life. Specifically it implies for us as a Protestant Reformed people, that we embrace the truth we profess with all our heart and mind and soul, that we consistently reject every heresy repugnant thereto, and that we are faithful to this truth in profession and walk.

If we analyze this attitude I would say that it implies especially three things: single heartedness, wholeheartedness, and steadfast-heartedness. It implies single heartedness because the Lord our God is one Lord. God is one, Christ is one, truth is one. It follows that the only proper attitude we may assume with relation to this one God, this one Christ, this one truth is that of single heartedness in confession and walk. It implies wholeheartedness, because God is God, the Lord, the sole Sovereign of heaven and earth, and His Anointed, our Lord Jesus Christ, is at the right hand of God, and has a name which is above every name. And He is our Lord. We belong to Him with body and soul, for time and eternity. Hence, there can be no division in our devotion and obedience. Wholeheartedness, and therefore, com-

plete consecration of our whole mind and will and all our powers in every relation and in very department of life, is the only attitude that may be assumed toward this one Lord of all. We must serve and confess Him always and everywhere. And it implies steadfast-heartedness, because God is Jehovah, the eternal and immutable One, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever, and the truth is unchangeable. Hence, we must be steadfast and unmovable and not be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, assured that our labor shall not be vain in the Lord. And in all this we stand antithetically over against the world and the powers of darkness, fighting the good fight even unto the end, that no one take our crown!

This only proper attitude we are called to cultivate. When I say this I do not mean that this only true attitude is merely a matter of cultivation, but of regeneration, of the efficacious operation of the Spirit of Christ and the grace of God in our hearts. The natural man cannot see the kingdom of God. He certainly cannot reform himself and cultivate the only proper attitude over against God and His cause in the world. You cannot train a natural man to become Protestant Reformed. But the Christian, he that is in Christ Jesus and has become a new creature in Him; who principally stands in the right relation and proper attitude to his God and the things of the kingdom of God; but who has but a small beginning of this new obedience, while he is daily tempted by the flesh, the world and the devil, - that Christian has the sacred calling to watch and pray and fight that he may assume and maintain the only proper attitude of being single heartedly, wholeheartedly and steadfastly "for", and never "against".

How this may be done, you ask? In answer to this question I would emphasize in the first place that instruction in and study of the truth is paramount. We must study the Word of God. We must be founded in our Reformed doctrine. This is all important. The ignorant Christian is a weak Christian. The more we grow in the knowledge of the truth, the stronger we will become spiritually, the more firmly rooted will be our convictions, the better we will be able to oppose all false doctrines and reject all heresies. In the second place, I would emphasize that we should study the Word of God prayerfully, and that our whole life should be in the attitude of prayer. Mere intellectual knowledge is not sufficient. It must become spiritual knowledge, so that we spiritually discern, love and appropriate the truth of God in Christ. this can be realized only through the grace of the Spirit, which God will give unto us in the way of prayer. Thirdly, I would emphasize the necessity of close fellowship with the church in which you have a place, faithful attendance of public worship, employment of the means of catechetical instruction, exercise of the fellowship of the saints, active participation in society life. And here I would emphasize that our societies, also our Young People's Societies, may be a power for good in this task of cultivating and keep-

ing the right attitude. May they always keep this purpose before their consciousness as the ideal after which they strive. And may this convention serve as a means to strengthen us in the determination to cultivate that one and only proper attitude: to love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength, forsake the world, crucify our old nature and walk in a new and holy life! Be ye therefore steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor shall not be vain in the Lord!

ECCLESIASTES 2:1-23

LETTER #7

Solomon's Search For Meaning (Without God)

by Mrs. H. Brands

We have finished Chapter 1 of ECCLESIASTES, which is Solomon's introduction to the book, giving both his main theme and his reasons for writing the book.

We now enter chapters 2-3 of ECCLESIASTES. In these two chapters Solomon summarizes for us his own personal search for meaning in life apart from God, giving the double conclusion that there is no meaning for labor apart from God but that labor has eternal value if done for God.

You can look at this part of the book as having two main parts: a NEGATIVE part (2:1-23) apart from God and a POSITIVE response (2:24-3:22, the end). We can take this negative part in just one day, this letter, but it will probably take us three days to get through the positive section because it has so many thoughts, some of them rather complicated and many beautiful.

Today we will look at Ecclesiastes 2:1-23, Solomon's personal search for meaning in life apart from God and the conclusions he draws from this search.

I. Solomon's Search for Meaning Apart From God, 2:1-23.

A. The Search (2:1-10)

Solomon was a very industrious person, a very alert and perceptive person, and had access to every form of the pursuit of meaning in life. He tried to find meaning in pure LAUGHTER along with the delights that produce laughter (vs. 1-2). He experimented with DRUNKENNESS and the sins that go along with it (vs. 3). He labored hard to produce great WEALTH and ACCOMPLISHMENTS (vss. 4-8). He tried the delights of the

world's best MUSIC (vs. 8b). He kept his WISDOM all through the search (9a). And he did all this with an attitude of enjoying his search, rejoicing in his labor for its own sake (10).

That summarizes his search. Read all ten verses to get the missing details but notice that it does indeed cover every area of labor possible in this life.

B. Its Conclusion (2:11-23).

Solomon's conclusion we have already mentioned several times: apart from God, "all was vanity and vexation of spirit and there was no profit under the sun" (verse 11).

But now he goes on to give some REASONS for this conclusion that he is always drawing. WHY does he say all this labor is without profit?

First of all, notice that verses 13-14a form a parenthesis in his giving of reasons. There he will admit that while he is living, even apart from God, the man with worldly wisdom who works hard is better off than the man who lives merely for pleasure or sin. (Put parentheses around these verses!)

But the rest of verses 11-23 give five reasons why Solomon states that this labor was still without profit.

REASON 1: THE LABOR ITSELF must needs be repeated (vs. 12).

If one person does everything, as Solomon did, what's left for the next guy to do?? He can only repeat what was already done!

REASON 2: THE MAN HIMSELF will still have to die (vs. 15).

The earthly wise man dies just as the fool, so what lasting good did his work do him? Both wind up in a grave!

REASON 3: THE MAN HIMSELF will not be long remembered (vs. 16).

If a wise man hopes for the "immortality" of living on in people's memories and esteem, his hope is useless. People forget surprisingly fast!

REASON 4: THE WORK ITSELF will perish also (vss. 18-21).

"If people forget me, at least I will have improved life on this earth," many people like to say. But...hold it! That's not true! History shows that every peak of attainment is followed by decline and finally by total loss of all attainment. What men do soon vanishes. As Solomon says it, the fool who neglects progress will take over the work of the wise man who wrought the progress and all the work will be lost.

REASON 5: THE WORK ITSELF was wearisome toil! (vss. 22-23).

Although he may have given heart and soul to his work, doing it even with eagerness, yet the work was difficult, accompanied with disappointments and opposition and all manner of griefs. The work also took away his sleep and gave him no peace in his leisure time when he finally had time to reflect on its value. The toil itself was, basically, a wearisome strain.

We can summarize these five reasons as basically two reasons: 1. FOR HIMSELF, a man gains nothing through his labor because the labor itself is frustrating, plus he will soon die and lose its benefits, plus people will soon

forget all about him; and 2. AS FOR HIS WORK, it also has no lasting value because fools soon destroy or lose his work and so future generations must start from scratch all over again.

No wonder Solomon keeps saying all is "vanity and vexation of spirit", "no profit", "I hated life", "the work...is grievous", and "I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labor which I took". Apart from God, how empty and futile it all is!

May God grant us the wisdom of Solomon in his younger years to forsake all labor apart from Him. Rather, may we labor in love for Him Who is both our Creator and Redeemer.

Next time, if He permits, we shall see the other side of the picture which Solomon presents: there is value to our work as we do it for God's sake!

Letter #7. Theme: ECCLESIASTES 2:1-23. "Solomon's Search for Meaning Without God"

Questions:

1. Name the four ways in which Solomon sought to find meaning in life apart from God. (1 = verses 1-2; 2 = verse 3; 3 = verses 4-8a; 4 = verse 8b.)

2. Solomon says that he "rejoiced in all my labor; and this was the portion of all my labor." What does this mean? Was this Godly joy?

3. Solomon does not deny a degree of profit inherent in labor itself during life on earth. Which two verses admit this earthly profit?

4. What is the "one event" of verse 14b which makes all earthly labor worthless apart from God?

5. Name the five reasons why—in the light of death and apart from God—Solomon concludes that work is worthless. Give an example of each from your own experience.

That, therefore, the temptations by which we are continually assailed may not shake our belief in the providence of God, we ought to remember this lesson of instruction, that although God govern the righteous, and provides for their safety, they are yet subject and exposed to many miseries, that, being tested by such trials, they may give evidence of their invincible constancy, and experience so much the more that God is their deliverer. If they were exempted from every kind of trial, their faith would languish, they would cease to call upon God, and their piety would remain hidden and unknown.

Calvin's Commentaries on Psalms, page 572

To Lose the Battle and Win The War
The Janssen Case
Chapter III
The Issues in the Battle (2)

by Prof. H. Hanko

(In the last article. we began our discussion of the views of Dr. Ralph Janssen. We noticed that Dr. Janssen basically denied the infallible inspiration of Scripture. In this article we are going to see exactly how he did this.)

Dr. Janssen said that the student of the Bible must come to Scripture just as he would come to any book. He had to come to Scripture in a scientific way, examining the book itself and all other evidence to decide on the true character of the book.

This involved various different questions. The Bible claims to be the Word of God and not the word of man. The Bible claims to be the Word of God because it claims to be inspired by God. But these claims have to be examined carefully and weighed scientifically to determine whether they are true or false.

Various books of the Bible claim to be written by various people. Paul claims, for example, that he wrote the epistle to the Galatians. But this cannot simply be accepted as true. It has to be examined in the light of all different kinds of evidence and has to be scientifically proven, if possible.

Now, generally speaking, Janssen came to the conclusion that the things which the Bible claimed for itself were true, the problem was that he came at it in the wrong way.

The way in which Janssen went about these things was wrong. The believing child of God must come to the Scriptures in faith. We come to Scripture believing that it is the Word of God and that what it says is true. This is the approach of faith. Faith comes to Scripture, believing that it is the Word of God, receiving as true all that Scripture says, and bowing humbly before Scripture, to be taught by Christ Himself.

The approach of Dr. Janssen was the approach of rationalism, which is ultimately that of unbelief. And if one comes in that way, setting up one's mind above Scripture, then really it can never be proved that Scripture is the Word of God.

Supposing, for example, that you would want to prove that Scripture is the Word of God; How would you do that? Well, the way you would do that would be by appealing to those texts in Scripture which speak of that: II Timothy 3:16, II Peter 1:21. But immediately you face a problem. How do you know that these texts actually speak the truth? Well, you say:

They speak the truth because they are infallibly inspired. But immediately your enemy will accuse you of arguing in a circle, for you say that the Bible is God's Word because these texts say they are; and these texts speak the truth because the Bible is God's inspired Word.

All of this does not trouble the child of God, for he comes to the Bible by faith. And that is the important thing. If we do not come in faith, then we will never believe what the Bible says.

But Dr. Janssen did not come in faith.

That was the first thing wrong with his teaching.

And coming that way to the Bible, he taught other wrong things.

Janssen's view of inspiration was called by him, "organic inspiration." The trouble was that Janssen believed organic inspiration to be thought inspiration, i.e., God put various ideas in the minds of the men who wrote the Scriptures, and these ideas were incorporated into the Scriptures in their own way so that their thinking, beliefs, experiences, scientific views, etc. affected what they wrote. The Scriptures were then partly the Word of God and partly the word of man.

The result of this kind of inspiration, in which God only put general ideas into the minds of the Bible writers, was that much of what they wrote came from other sources than God. Some of it came from pagan sources and from influences outside God's revelation to His people. Some of it came simply by reflection and pondering the mysteries of the universe. Some of it came from contact with nations outside Israel.

Let's look at a few concrete examples of this.

Janssen taught that the Bible narrative which describes creation did not come from divine inspiration in which God told Moses how He created all things. The creation narrative came partly from old Babylonian myths and partly from the reflections of some unknown man who pondered the wonders and mysteries of the world and wrote down what he thought had happened.

It is not very difficult to see that this kind of notion immediately leaves room for mistakes in the creation narratives - mistakes made in all good faith because the wonders of science had not yet been discovered and put to use, but mistakes for all that. Now that we are much more scientifically aware, it is clear that Genesis 2 & 2 are all wrong and that evolutionism is, after all, the explanation for the origin of the creation.

The Lord so loved Zion, His people, that He graved them their image in the palms of His hands so that His people are always before him. Not once in all eternity does He take His eyes off them. They are before Him ever as chosen, called, justified and glorified in Christ and the beauty of their likeness is His eternal joy and refreshment. -Rev. G. M. Ophoff, The Standard Bearer Vol. 29

III. THE BIBLICAL TEACHING ON "SYMPATHY"

Concluded

by Rev. G. Lubbers

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Gal. 6:2

"If there be therefore any consolation (exhortation) in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfill ye my joy that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Phil. 2:1, 2

We have now arrived unto our concluding essay on the fascinating theme: sympathy-empathy. As we ponder this deeply, spiritual psychological perfection in God through His Son in the church we are deeply aware that we have by no means exhaustively written. We have merely pointed out what we consider the basic teachings of Scripture on this matter. We trust that our readers have noticed we are attempting to trace the sympathy which is present in the hearts of the justified sanctified saints to Christ the Head of the Church and thus to the fountain of life, as we sing our Psalter #94:

"The fountain of eternal life, Is found alone with thee

And in the brightness of Thy light, We clearly light shall see."

We trust that we have satisfied the request of the Beacon Lights' staff in having given enough food for reflective thought on this great theme. It can be further discussed and digested in our churches, societies and homes. Yes, even in our High Schools.

Hence, we now conclude this short series on a more practical experiential level.

You will have observed, I trust, that we captioned this article with two texts from the New Testament Scriptures, to wit, Galatians 6:2 and Philippians 2:1, 2. In these the Holy Spirit causes Paul as the master builder to place the truth of Christian sympathy firmly and exactly on the Chief Cornerstone, Christ Jesus. What is the a-b-c in our Christian conduct is that we fulfill the law of Christ! Take your Bible and read such passages as Matt. 7:12-14; Matt. 22:37-40; John 13:33-35; I John 4:16-21. In all these passages we see the deep bedded, rock bottom principle of Christian sympathy, yea, empathy for the brother or sister in Christ.

Before we proceed to elicit the relevant instruction from these passages we ought to notice that the terms sympathy and empathy are very closely related in meaning. They are synonym, are they not? But we ought also to notice

that there is the term antipathy.

Concerning these terms just a few words are in order. All these terms are of Greek derivation. In fact they all have in them the term "patheo" to feel, to touch, and in the passive voice to be affected, suffer. The Greek prepositions "sun" and "em" and "anti" show attitude. Hence: sympathy is to suffer, to feel with and empathy to feel in and antipathy to feel against with the intent to oppose or even supplant.

Now in our subject we ought to notice that these Scripture passages deal also with our sinful flesh, which is always anti the work of the Spirit in our hearts (Gal. 5:16, 17) against the Spirit; in fact, it is down against, as is evident from the Greek preposition "kata". The flesh lusts against the Spirit! It is exactly at this point that we need to be exhorted unto the godly walk of Christian sympathy: to bear each other's burdens.

There are two things which I would point out to you dear reader. The first is that we are each to be concerned with our "neighbor" as Jesus points out so rebukingly in the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:33: "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him he had compassion (bowels of mercy) on him." He did not know this neighbor, but he knew whose neighbor he was!!

The second matter which we must take to heart is that although Paul does not designate any particular kind of burden, he does speak of these as being experiences in the life of the fellow saint which is a heavy weight upon the soul of our brother or sister, which indicates that he is in need of our assistance. It calls for the very best in us, extreme effort on our part, self denial which oozes from our reaching love (I Peter 1:22). Is this not the deep compassion of Christ as Jesus expresses this in Matt. 11:28-30? And is such not the implication of Psalm 37:1-11? Here we are to take up our light cross and follow Jesus, as the Cross-bearer touched with our sinful and awful burden of sin.

Besides, I would point out to you that these manifold burdens of the brother are put in a certain class as the burdens which God in His providential love sends to this brother as he does also to us. The definite article (ta baree) is very meaningful. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, it is said. We are not simply to assist the brother, but we are to make the brother's quota of burdens our responsibility.

Let us pursue this just a bit. Let us notice that our bearing of the burdens of the brother is to be a total concern. It must be a sympathy whereby we too are touched with the feeling of the brother's weaknesses as he on bended knee seeks to cope with his burdens, be it the physical, mental, psychological or spiritual. For love of the brother is a spiritual debt. It is what Paul enjoins in Rom. 13:8: "Owe no man anything, but to love him! Yes, he that loveth another has fulfilled the law!! This fulfilling the law is in this case the law of Christ. It is the law which Christ came to fulfill by His Spirit in our hearts. It is the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2) which has made us free from the law of sin and death. Hallelujah, what a lib-

erty!

When Paul writes the fourfold "if" in Phil 2:1 he is writing about this law of Christ as fulfilled in our heart by the Spirit. See II Cor. 3:1-3. If I can appeal to this newness of Christ in you, written not with ink on tables of stone, but written with the Spirit of the living God, then fulfill my joy in that ye be likeminded, all setting your spiritual affections and conscious spiritual endeavors to pay the one debt to your brother, which you pay in the coin of love and still ever owe. O, blessed obligation of love. A love debt which will be such that Christ's law will be our endless blessedness and joy in heaven forever!!

Now if there be that law in your heart, Philippian saints, in which hearts God has begun a good work, then there will be love unbounding. Yes, that will be the fellowship which the Spirit of Christ has wrought in your hearts, and there will be bowels of mercies.

Without mentioning the term "empathy" a term which the Bible does not employ in sixty six books of the Holy Book, here we see an empathy unlike any other. Here we in love understand perfectly the heartaches, the sorrows, the disappointments, the pitfalls and the great sins of the saints for we have been there. Daily we experience them. And we are not on the outside with the wicked world full of hatred and antipathy toward the struggling saints, but we make, under God, their needs our care.

Here we see the image of God restored in the reborn children of God. It is an infallible evidence that we are indeed Christ's disciples. And all men shall see that we are such. Our sympathy-empathy is the new commandments of Christ in our heart.

From The Pastor's Study

FATHER'S GOODS

by Rev. C. Hanko

We are all acquainted with the parable of the prodigal son, as recorded in Luke 15:11-32.

We know that the younger son grew restless in father's house, was lured by the world round about him, wanted to venture out, to be on his own and to do as he pleased.

We also know that he asked his father: "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." And that his father divided unto him and to his brother "his living", so that he went to a far country where he "wasted all his substance with riotous living".

What usually comes to

mind when we read this is a member of the church, who is unhappy in the church, is drawn into the world, where he indulges in the revelries of "wine, women and song". He may become a drunk, or a drug addict. He may "live in" with a woman for a time, may even become a victim of Aids. His money soon is spent, his fair weather friends forsake him, so that he ends up as a lone derelict, searching garbage cans for food and sleeping out on the sidewalk.

Now there is no doubt but that the parable refers to such extreme instances of delinquency, and to a heart-felt repentance as he is drawn by the love of God back to the church.

But is that all that the parable has to say to us? Does it in no way refer to you and to me? Have we possibly overlooked something when we read about Father's goods which he divided among his two sons?

In its spiritual application, what does "those goods" refer to? To money? That comes first to mind, but that can hardly be. Does it refer to the future inheritance in the heavens? That does not fit either. The text tells us that the younger son asked for "the portion of goods that falleth to me". This is later referred to as "his living" (verse 12) and "his substance" (verse 13) This refers therefore to his livelihood, his means of existence, his daily bread.

Applying that to the spiritual means of existence for us as members of God's church, these "goods" refer to the means of grace, the preaching of the Word and the sacraments, and the accompanying communion of saints. These make up our daily bread from a spiritual point of view, even as Scripture teaches, for "man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Deut. 3:3, Matt. 4:4)

We ask ourselves: Was it wrong for the younger son to ask this from his father? The answer is, Evidently not, for the father readily gives to him his portion of the goods, and to his brother also. The wrong enters in when he wastes his substance in riotous living.

There comes a time in the early years of our lives that we do take upon ourselves the responsibility of making proper use of the means of grace. One might speak of doing that when we make confession of our faith publicly before the congregation, or when we neglect to do so by seeking other interests.

This brings the parable very close to home with its spiritual impact upon every one of us. The preaching of the Word and the sacraments serve a very important purpose in our lives. It is through these means of grace that we "become partakers of Christ and of all His benefits". For Christ is the true Bread which came down from heaven, which, if a man eat, he shall live forever. (John 6:51)

We do not attend church on Sunday to hear a certain preacher. To hear people talk, one would think that that was all that is to it. But a true minister is an ambassador of Jesus Christ. He preaches the Scriptures, proclaiming Christ crucified and risen, the Lord of glory, who blesses us through the ministry of the Word

with every spiritual blessing for time and for eternity.

Therefore it can also be said that in the Lord's Supper we eat Christ's flesh and drink Christ's blood. For spiritually Christ's flesh is meat indeed and His blood is drink indeed. As Christ says: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in Him." (John 6:55,56)

That makes catechism classes and young people's meetings so important for the covenant youth of the church. Along with the preaching of the Word, the sacraments and the fellowship of the saints they serve to prepare us for our place and calling in God's church for the rest of our lives. They equip us with spiritual strength to serve God in whatever situation or calling He may place us. If we fail here, we are bound to suffer as spiritual weaklings all the rest of our lives. What is lost can never be retrieved.

In the parable the younger son is not happy in Father's house. He goes to church on Sunday because this is expected of him. He actually does not enjoy sitting in church The singing has no appeal, the prayers especially are too long, the sermon is uninteresting, even boring. His thoughts wander back to the pleasures of the week. They are so much more appealing to him than anything the church can offer.

Not only are the sermons a bore to him, but also the catechism classes are dry and meaningless. Most of the time the minister talks over his head, and again his only satisfaction in being there is that he can allow his thoughts to wander to the far more pleasant affairs of daily life.

After all, his chief interest is to get out of life all that satisfies the flesh The music on the radio the programs on the TV, the movies and the dance have far more appeal than reading the Bible, or even spending his time in prayer. Prayer is convenient only in time of trouble.

The question is: When the responsibility is laid upon us, what do we do with Father's goods? We profess to be children of God, brought up and having our home in the church. God richly supplies us with daily Bread, our daily sustenance, in a spiritual sense. But is there possibly something wrong with our appetite? Have we developed the wrong appetite? Have we built up a wrong set of priorities? Do we allow the flesh to reign over the spirit, allowing carnal lusts to undermine our spiritual life? Have we chosen wrong companions as our friends?

Have we failed to develop a spiritual appetite for the things that are of primary importance in our lives? Do we fail to listen when God speaks to us through His Word? Have we allowed our prayer life to suffer, so that our prayers have become mere repetitions and formalities?

Is it time, high time that we repent and return to the Lord, lest He give us over to our sins? Sin is such a cruel monster. When he takes hold of us he holds us in his bondage, leading us from sin to ever greater sins.

The prodigal son ended up at the swine trough, wrestling with the pigs for his daily bread. How

horrible for a professing Christian to lose himself in eating and drinking the slop of the swine of this world, the lustful TV programs, the corrupt, passionate novels, the devastating music; in one word, that we end up in the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

What horrible memories of sin and its misery remain with many who turn to the Lord, drawn by His grace, only after having experienced the depths of Satan!

The wonder for us is that Father's love never changes. He never casts away His children, but always draws them back to Himself. Aware of this we confess: It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed!

DOWN UNDER PRESBYTERIANISM

by Daniel Kleyn

Maybe you are wondering what this is? Yes, you knew there were a lot of different Presbyterian churches, but you have never heard of this one! Well, in the light of this issue containing an article on the history of the Presbyterian/Scottish Reformation, I have been asked to write about the history of Presbyterianism in Australia, the land that many of you call `Down Under'. I myself come from Australia, so I guess that is why I have been asked to write this article.

The Reformation in the 16th century caused many great changes in the lives of God's people. They were freed from the bondages of the Catholic religion, and the Christian Church made a stand for the Bible as the supreme and final authority. Because everyone that claims the Christian name professes a belief in the Bible, it is right and necessary that creeds and confessions are written to set forth what the Bible is understood to teach. It was because of this that in 1647 the Westminster Confession of Faith was formulated and written by delegates from England, Scotland, and Ireland, and this confession has since then been the confession used by reformed Presbyterians.

At the time of the Reformation in the British Isles Australia was still an unsettled country. Presbyterianism was brought to Australia by settlers who came from Scotland. Several Scottish families, who migrated to Australia in 1802 and in 1809, settled in the western parts of Sydney, on the East Coast of mainland Australia. In this settlement they erected a stone structure for the purpose of

a Presbyterian Church and school. Shortly after this the first Presbyterian minister came to Australia in 1823, and he founded Scots Presbyterian Church in Sydney. Other ministers of the Established Church of Scotland followed, and in 1840 a Synod of the Presbyterian churches in Australia was formed. This Synod of Australia in connection with the Established Church of Scotland was an independent church with the same standards, formularies and laws as the parent church in Scotland.

In 1843 the event in Scottish history known as the Disruption also caused division within the established Presbyterian Churches in Australia. The issue in Scotland was over the intrusion of the civil authority into the spiritual government of the church. This caused the formation in Scotland of the Free Church of Scotland, which was opposed to the civil authority having the power to become involved in the government of the church. In Australia there was no interference of this kind from the government, but the Synod of Australia was connected to the Established Church of Scotland, and so they therefore had to make a decision on this issue. The Synod decided not to change their name and connection to the Church in Scotland. As a result of this, two other churches were formed, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Autralia, and the Free Presbyterian Church of Australia Felix.

By the late 1800's Presbyterian churches were established throughout all of the states of Australia. Many of these were independent churches. In 1901, however, the Presbyterian Church of Australia was constituted. This union provided a basis on which the main churches in each state could federate and yet preserve their separate identities. This body is by far the largest Presbyterian body in Australia, and it became very liberal in theology. However, in 1977, many left this denomination to join with the Methodist churches and form the Uniting Church. This somewhat cleared the church of the more liberal minded element, but there are very few congregations that are still Reformed. What is especially true of many of the churches is that the congregations are conservative or liberal, depending on their minister, and in this sense they are quite independent of each other. There does not exist among these churches a unity to uphold the Truth, as we have with in the Protestant Reformed Churches here in America.

The conservative and Reformed Presbyterian churches are generally very small in size, and in quite a number of cases are just single congregations. Many of these churches have broken away from the declining main—stream Presbyterian churches. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, among others, has come to the Reformed faith out of an Arminian background, and so they have battled with trying to grasp the precious truths of the gospel. This has been difficult because of their Arminian upbringing, but yet God has blessed them and enabled them to grow in their knowledge of the Reformed faith.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, which

would be the most Reformed Church in Australia, was established in July of 1961. In the 10 or so years preceding this there were groups of people from different denominations, such as Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, who were concerned with the departure of these churches from the essential truths of the Reformed faith. Within these churches the complete authority and infallibility of the Scriptures was being denied, and the lives of the members was being more and more in conformance with the world. Eventually these concerned Christians left or were forced out of the churches where they were members, and in the early 1950's a loose fellowship of believers came together.

For a number of years these people struggled to get established and to find a direction. They went to and held many evangelical meetings, and many came and made decisions for Christ, but still they did not grasp the real understanding of the gospel. In the late 1950's they came across some Reformed writings, such as Charles Spurgeon, and through this there was a revival of the truth. The preaching was no longer man—centered, but became God—centered, as they grasped the truth of man's depravity and the sovereignty of God. It was then that they were formally constituted in Tasmania, and ordained three pastors, and also elders, in each congregation.

Many other struggles still had to be overcome. Problems arose in the John Knox College, where the students for the ministry were being trained. This was over the important truth of how the gospel is to be proclaimed. The professors were teaching Arminianism, saying that it was up to man to accept Christ. Because of this the students left the college and were trained under the ministers within the E.P.C. Since then the church has continued to grow in their knowledge of the Reformed faith, and have come to grasp the covenant and the other precious truths of the Scriptures. Even recently they have had to stand up against the error of saying that Christ in His human nature loves all men.

At present the E.P.C. consists of five congregations and two preaching stations. There are congregations in Queensland and in Tasmania, with three ministers, and the other congregations getting supply from taped sermons or a visiting minister from another congregation.

As members of the P. R. C. we are in a church that has had a long history in the Reformed faith, and so we have a great heritage to be thankful to God for. Let us be aware of the struggles that other churches go through in order to grasp and uphold the truths of the Scriptures, and let this remind us of all that our forefathers have done in establishing us in the truth. We also are in a continual battle to uphold the truth, so may God give us the strength to fight this spiritual battle. Above all, may we give thanks and praise to our covenant God for all that we have received and still receive daily from His gracious hand.

WHAT'S HAPPENED

by Lora Bouwkamp

FIRST, GRAND RAPIDS

Mrs. Elizabeth Hagedoorn celebrated her 81st birthday Aug. 2.

Rev. George Lubbers celebrated his 81st birthday Aug. 6.

Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary Aug. 17.

Mr. Charles Pastoor celebrated his 87th birthday Aug. 9.

August 12 was the date of Mrs. Marguerite De Young's 83rd birthday.

Mrs. Betty Pastoor mourns the death of her sister Gertrude Van Donzen Aug. 1.

On August 18 Mrs. Lena Baar celebrated her 87th birthday.

Baptism was administered August 26 to Sara Lynn, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Pastoor, and to Jeffrey William, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Hofman.

Mrs. John Prince celebrated her 89th birthday Aug. 21.

Mrs. Hattie Dieterman celebrated her 84th birthday Aug. 21.

Mr. Ralph Meyer celebrated his 85th birthday Sept. 1.

Mrs. J. Beiboer celebrated her 93rd birthday Sept. 6.

HULL, IOWA

Susan Gritters, Terresa Hoksbergen, Lisa Hoksbergen made confession of faith July 29.

Mr. and Mrs. Veryl Heynen were blessed with the birth of a son Heath William.

The sacrament of baptism was administered July 22 to Thomas Jeffrey, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Andringa, and to Jordana Ann, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Alden DeJong.

Best wishes to Terry Jansma, Vern Hoekstra and their wives in their marriages.

The sacrament of baptism was administered to Brett Allen, son of Mr. and Mrs. Gary Westra, and to Mitchell Jon, son of Mr. and Mrs. Nick Kooiker.

Cheryl Bleyenberg and Randy Corson were married July 20.

The church picnic was held July 9.

SOUTH HOLLAND

The sacrament of baptism was administered July 8 to Lukas David, son of Troy and Becky Maatman.

On July 15, Derek John, son of Duane and Mary Bruinsma, was baptized.

The church picnic was held August 25.

Mr. Henry Zandstra passed

away July 21 at the age of 70.

Tim Lobbezoo made confession of faith July 1.

LOVELAND

Mrs. Louise Griess celebrated her 83rd birthday Aug. 19.

SOUTHEAST, GRAND RAPIDS

Christian sympathy is extended to Elder G.J. De Vries, the Bos, Meulenberg, and De Vries families in the death of Kevin Bos in Florida.

Sympathy is extended to Sue Hoving in the death of her grandmother, Mrs. Reka Kloote.

The papers of Joy Ophoff were transferred to our Loveland PRC.

REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA

Baptism was administered August 26 to Brandon Paul, son of Mr. and Mrs. Berrit Meelker.

Mrs. Jo Polder passed away August 9.

The membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Karsemeyer were transferred to our Faith PRC.

Mrs. Jeanette Feenstra celebrated her 88th birthday.

Everett and Audrey Van Voorthuysen celebrated their 40th anniversary.

Mrs. Kate Veldman celebrated her 87th August 12.

HUDSONVILLE, MICHIGAN

Mr. and Mrs. Duane Veele rejoice in the birth of Mitchell Dean.

Mr. and Mrs. Jim Westing were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Nicole Jean, August 16.

Mrs. Jack Arens celebrated her 88th birthday Sept. 5.

Mr. and Mrs. Peter Lubbers celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary September 5.

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Mrs. Brenda Gerdes rejoices in the birth of a daughter, Michelle Rose

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Schmidt rejoice in the birth of Wilfred Allan.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ferguson celebrate the birth of Kelsey Jannet on July 27.

We extend our Christian sympathy to Rev. and Mrs. Arie den Hartog in the sudden death of Mrs. den Hartog's father and stepmother.

INVITATION

Please send all church bulletins to Lora Bouwkamp, 4820 Eisenhower Hudsonville, MI 49426. We would love to include your news in the Beacon Lights.

"The faithful hearer accuses not his minister for particularizing him. It does not follow that he aimed, because the arrow hit. Rather, our parishioner reasons thus: 'If my sin be notorious, how could the minister miss? If secret, how could he hit without God's direction?' "

- Thomas Fuller

FORGIVE US, LORD . . .

We say that we believe in God, and yet we doubt God's promises.
We say that in God we trust, yet we worry and try to manage our own affairs.
We say that we love Thee, O Lord, and yet do not obey Thee.
We believe that Thou hast the answers to all our problems,
And yet we do not consult Thee.
Forgive us, Lord, for our lack of faith
And the wilful pride that ignores the way, the truth, and the life.