

Potpourri

John H. Piersma

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.... 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 unmistakable and embarrassing evidence of their puerility.... Alas, the desire to sit alone.... is often but the expression of the juvenile yearning to unmistakably 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*? ... 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, Muster, 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 Papatheodorakoumanttourigiomichelakapoulas 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. S. 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".

* * * *

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 treasures, you may turn to notes and what God has said to us through scholarly and holy men..."

Originally Published in:
Vol 3 No 1 October 1942