January 1990
Thought On Christmas
From Down Under
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EDITOR'S NOTES: January

by David Harbach

Remember the poem, "My Bible and I," sent to the Beacon Lights by Rev. Rawson from Barnsley, England? My hunch was right that there was a song by that title. Mrs. Catherine Vander Wiel from Pella, Iowa found a song by the same title in the "Let Youth Praise Him" hymnal published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company of Grand Rapids. Thank you Mrs. Vander Wiel for sending me a copy of the song. The words are,

"I have a wonderful treasure,
The gift of God without measure,
And so we travel together,
My Bible and I."

We asked Michael Bosveld of the Burnie Congregation, Evangelical Presbyterian Church to write his thoughts about Christmas celebration in Australia. Although this article appears in the January issue it will serve not only
to know the view about Christmas celebration from down under but also to remind us of the need to examine our motives for celebrating the birth of Christ at Christmas.

Have you made any New Year's resolutions? The world often jokes about making resolutions and breaking them. Bryan Van Baren provides a short piece on resolutions and what they are supposed to be for one of God's children.

Prof. H. Hanko has agreed to write a series of articles prepared for his formal thesis about the history of the Janssen Case. The history of the Janssen case is not only about the common grace controversy but also about the beginning of our own churches. By studying these articles you will come to appreciate our own Protestant Reformed heritage, a heri-
tage given to us by God. Prof. Hanko begins with the introductory article, “To Win The Battle And Lose The War.” We hope that these articles will also serve to encourage those of us who have come from the Christian Reformed Church. We are thankful that Prof. Hanko is willing to write for our young people.

Mrs. Carol Brands begins a new series of articles, “Letters To A Young Friend On The Book of Ecclesiastes,” that have resulted from her correspondence with a young Christian student struggling to understand God’s ways in her life. Mrs. Brands will also provide questions at the end of her articles for us to think about. We look forward to reading her letters to Katrina and wish to thank her for letting us read her letters.

When is it just punishment when adulteries prevail and when vagrant lusts promiscuously follow? You would think that the opposite would be true. To find the answer to this unusual statement read Rev. Harbach’s sixth article, “God’s Controversy With Israel.”

We need to thank Shari Huizinga for providing us with the Beacon Lights Index for 1989. Thanks also goes to Joan Buiter for not only writing the News but also taking on the responsibilities of secretary while we find a replacement for Ruth Blyenberg who resigned because of other commitments. We thank Ruth for her faithfulness in attending the staff meetings and providing us with excellent secretarial work. We know of her busy life as secretary at Covenant High School and pray for God’s blessings in her life’s work.

O how great a thing, how marvellous, a godly Christian’s prayer is! how powerful with God; that a poor human creature should speak with God’s high majesty in heaven, and not be affrighted, but on the contrary know that God smiles upon him for Christ’s sake, His dearly beloved Son. The heart and conscience, in this act of praying, must not fly and recoil backwards by reason of our sins and unworthiness, or stand in doubt, or be scared away.

... When we pray, we must ... certainly hold and believe, that we are already heard in that for which we pray, with faith in Christ. Therefore the ancients ably defined prayer a climbing up of the heart unto God.

M. Luther
THOUGHTS ON CHRISTMAS
FROM DOWN UNDER

by Michael A. Bosveld
Member of the Burnie Congregation
Evangelical Presbyterian Church

Christmas in Australia is a celebration which would no doubt be very similar to the Christmas that the average American celebrates. Most of the different Christian denominations celebrate Christmas much the same as Americans would, with a church service on Christmas Day and other Christmas services on the Sundays around December 25.

The world sees Christmas as a time of humanistic peace and goodwill toward their fellow man; a time of giving presents, going to parties, and on vacations. It is a time of excess commercialization by the shopping retailers, using the birth of Christ as a means to make large profits, while telling everybody how important it is for them to give at Christmas.

REMEMBERING CHRIST

We as Christians should be careful how we remember Christ’s birth. Nowhere in scripture is it commanded or even suggested that we ought to celebrate Christ’s birth. The fourth commandment says, “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: But the seventh is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.” (Exodus 20:8-10a) This does not mean that we may not remember the Lord’s birth on Christmas Day, but it does say that the only day that is to be set aside as holy is the Sabbath.

Christ in the New Testament instituted the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Christ requires us to remember Him in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. “And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you (this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying. This is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.” (I Corinthians 11:24-26) But we are not required to celebrate Christ’s birth.

ORIGINS OF CHRISTMAS

The Roman Catholic Church during the fourth century introduced the celebration of Christmas on a pagan festival day to make Christianity more acceptable to the world. The word “Christmas” is a contradiction in itself. Christ is the name of our wonderful Saviour and Lord, Who through one death on the cross paid for all the sins of His elect people. “For then must he often have suffered since the founda-
tion of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Hebrews 9:26-28) The ritual of the Roman Catholic Mass denies the finished work of Christ in His complete atonement for His people and teaches a need for continual sacrifice for sin. Scripture refutes this. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever then that are sanctified." (Hebrews 10:14)

Since the introduction of Christmas, almost all Christian denominations have accepted the yearly celebration as a part of their church calendar, and the word "Christmas" does not carry the connotations it originally did in the Roman Catholic Church. However, just as the celebration began as a pagan festival, the world continues its revellings today. The ungodly might go to church on the day and return home, their consciences salved that they too have been part of the reason for Christ's incarnation, but there is no repentance from sin or desire to obey Christ.

THE UNGODLY'S CELEBRATION

The world celebrates Christmas in a very ungodly way. It does not have as its focus the reason for the birth of Christ.

Parties seem in no way to bring honour or glory to Christ's name. Often, as far as the world goes, they turn into a drunken, glutinous orgy where Christ is not just forgotten, but also blasphemed and despised.

Giving presents is also a part of Christmas that appears hard to justify. It seems strange to celebrate Christ's birthday by giving presents to everyone else. The worldly person gives gifts to others with the expectation that he himself will receive gifts in return. Maybe we as Christians, if we are going to make gifts, should give them to the Lord for use in His Church.

It is worth noting at this point that the world loves the celebration of Christmas. Millions will break the fourth commandment every week, yet they will drop everything on Christmas Day to attend a Christmas service or program. When the world thinks something is good, watch out! We must be careful not to do as the world does. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness. The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words." (Proverbs 15:8, 26)

The world likes to have its religion, so long as it does not offend. That is why Christmas is so acceptable. Christ is presented as a little baby in a manger, and not as the righteous Judge of all the deeds of men. The world can enjoy the religiousness of the occasion and feel a (false) sense of security that they have nothing to fear in an eternity without saving faith in God. That is not to say that celebrating Christ's birth is wrong. But if the Church is seen to approve of the world's religiousness at this time by celebrating Christmas, then the tradition is something that could justifiably be avoided.

THE EPC

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia takes the position that there is one holy day to be set aside, namely the Sabbath. With this in
mind, the EPC does not give Christmas Day any more importance than any other day.

This is not to say that the church teaches that remembering Christ’s birth or preaching about Christ’s birth around Christmas time is wrong. But to make it an expectation that everyone should go to church on Christmas Day is to add to God’s law. There is also the feeling that to do as the world does at Christmas is to give approval to a worldly feast and celebration.

We as a family do not celebrate Christmas in any way nor treat December 25 as anything special. This does not mean that we condemn those who genuinely seek to honour Christ by remembering Him on Christmas Day.

May we conclude with the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 14:5, 6, and 8 where he says, “One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.”

To Win The Battle And Lose The War
THE JANSSEN CASE [1]
Introduction

by Prof. H. Hanko

It is a necessary part of the life of the saints to know their history. Scripture is quite insistent on that point, not just because Scripture wants God’s people to know a lot of historical data — a lot of dates and events; but because history records the works of God, and it is important to know God’s works.

When the Holy Spirit in the book of Judges wants to explain why the nation of Israel constantly went after idols and turned away from God, we are told that “there arose another generation ... which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10). The works that the Lord had done for Israel were all a part of Israel’s history. When the nation no longer knew these works, they no longer knew the Lord. Apostasy came with a generation which no longer knew her God because she no longer knew her history.

That principle remains true throughout all time. The history of the church is the history of the mighty works of the Lord which He does for His people. When we confess, in Lord’s Day XXI, Q. & A. 54, that the Son of God “gathers, defends and preserves unto himself a church,” we are told
that the gathering, defense and preservation of the church is the work of the Son of God. The history of the church in the new dispensation as well as in the old, is the history of God’s works for Israel.

It has been said that the nation which knows not the mistakes of history is doomed to repeat them. Something like this is true of the church. The church which knows not the mistakes of the history of the church is also doomed to repeat them. But the great truths of the gathering and defense of the church throughout time are the arsenal of the saints in which are the weapons for her spiritual warfare.

What is true of the church at large, is true of our own Protestant Reformed Churches. We too have a history, and it is important for us to know that history. It is not perverse boasting to say that our history, too, is evidence of “the works which the Lord has done for Israel.” If we are to be faithful to our heritage and maintain our cause, this can only be if we know our history. Locked up in our history is the heritage of the truth which God has entrusted to us. Faithfulness to our heritage requires knowledge of our history.

... ...

If I would ask almost any member of our Protestant Reformed Churches: What was the main event in our history? the answer would undoubtedly be: The common grace controversy in the Christian Reformed Church which resulted in the formation of our own denomination. This answer is, of course, correct.

But the common grace controversy did not drop into the church out of the skies. Another controversy in the Christian Reformed Church really put the subject of common grace on the agenda of the church and forced the church to take a long, hard look at it. This controversy is called, “The Janssen Controversy.” It is an important part of our history.

And it is an important part of our history for more than one reason. The struggle over common grace had its beginnings in the Janssen controversy. That is surely one reason, for common grace played a major role in the history of the beginning of our own churches.

But strikingly, Rev. Hoeksema, the spiritual father of our denomination, was, outside of Dr. Janssen himself, the most important figure in the controversy. He was the leader of the forces that fought against Janssen and that succeeded in persuading the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church to depose Dr. Janssen from office.

However, this is really not yet the whole story. The Janssen controversy, along with the struggle in 1924, really determined the future of the Christian Reformed Church — as well as the future of our own churches.

Why was this true?

It was true because the Janssen controversy dealt with questions that the Christian Reformed Church is still dealing with today. And, at the very heart of all these questions was the doctrine of Scripture. Janssen was deposed from office because he denied the truth of Scripture’s infallible inspiration. And this is at the heart of all the problems which the Christian Reformed Church faces today.

The interesting part of all this is that Dr. Janssen, in support of his views of Scripture, appealed to the doctrine of common grace. He insisted that common grace gave him the right to believe what he did about Scripture; that, in fact, to deny what he taught
was to deny common grace itself. He charged his detractors repeatedly with being the ones who had strayed from the paths of orthodoxy, while he was the one faithful to historic Calvinistic and Reformed thought.

The trouble was that as often as Dr. Janssen brought up the subject of common grace in defense of his position, so often did his accusers refuse to discuss it. The committee which was appointed to investigate the whole matter of Janssen’s teachings refused to go into the subject of common grace even though Janssen repeatedly insisted that that was the heart of his defense. But the Synod of 1922, which finally condemned Janssen, also refused to go into common grace and condemned Janssen without ever saying anything about the subject. This was strange. Yet there were reasons for it, and we shall have to look at some of the reasons in future articles.

What is significant, is that, no more than Janssen was deposed, a bitter fight broke out over the whole question of common grace, a fight which finally led to the deposition of Rev. H. Hoeksema and Rev. G. M. Ophoff, and the beginning of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Rev. Hoeksema, who was a member of the committee to investigate Janssen’s teachings, later regretted that the committee had refused to treat the subject of common grace. In The History of the Protestant Reformed Churches, which Rev. Hoeksema authored, he wrote:

In the light of subsequent history it was evidently a mistake on the part of the Reverends H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema, that they co-operated with the four professors in the Janssen controversy, rather than to oppose his views separately and from their own standpoint . . .

He was referring here to common grace and expresses the wish that he and Rev. H. Danhof would have simply entered into the whole common grace question when Janssen brought it up.

But this was not to be. History was, under God’s providential guidance, to be different from this.

To help us, therefore, understand the whole common grace controversy and, in this way, to help us understand the beginning of our own churches, I have been asked by the Beacon Lights staff to prepare this series of articles. It is my hope and prayer that it will help our young people, not only to know and understand our history, but to appreciate more fully our own Protestant Reformed heritage.

As many of our readers know, this material was first prepared in the form of a formal thesis. That thesis is available from our Seminary. Here, for the purposes of making the thesis more understandable, and, I hope, more enjoyable to our young people, I am re-writing most of it.

The way to grow strong in Christ is to become weak in yourself. God pours no power into man’s heart till man’s power is all poured out. The Christian’s life is one of daily dependence on the grace and strength of God.

Spurgeon
NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS

by Bryan Van Baren

It’s that time again! Time for those traditional New Year’s Resolutions! We get a new start, a clean slate, a fresh beginning! This year we’re going to do things right!

Now is the time when we resolve how we will live our lives in the coming year. These resolutions may range from quitting smoking, drinking less alcohol, or losing weight; maybe we even go to the extent of resolving not to sin in whatever areas of our lives we have special problems. If we take such resolutions seriously, how should we go about making them?

A resolution, by definition, is a firm determination to accomplish something. All rational human beings make resolutions; it is an important part of decision-making. However, many people attempt to accomplish all their resolutions in their own strength. Surely even those who are not elect are able to stop smoking or lose weight. But they only can do this out of a selfish love and in order to calm their conscience. By making resolutions in such a manner, man makes a god of himself and his own ability.

Now we, who are in the body of all believers, may not make resolutions in such a manner. For we trust not in man, but in God, who enables us to accomplish all good things. The moment we rely on our own strength, we fail utterly. Thus our resolutions must be different from those of the world.

The question remains: How must our resolutions be different? Our resolutions must be prayers, that is, specific prayers to God asking Him to keep us from those sins which are present in our lives. It is essential that we come to our heavenly Father with such matters, because in God alone can we obtain the resolve to keep from sin. This we must do to the glory of God and out of thankfulness for our salvation.

So let us not make resolutions like those in the world who make gods of their own will and ability, but rather, let us pray to God and seek His help and guidance. For in Christ alone can we find the strength necessary to accomplish that which we resolve to do. We must always remember Philippians 4:13 which says, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” This year let us make New Year’s Resolution Prayers, and let us not just do this on the first day of the year, but every day throughout our lives. May we live our lives to the glory of God!

He that loveth little prayeth little, and he that loveth much prayeth much.
Augustine
Letters To A Young Friend
On The Book ECCLESIASTES

by Mrs. Carol Brands

Over a period of approximately one year, the author wrote a series of some sixty letters to a young Christian student who was struggling to understand God’s ways in her life. The letters were written because the author was at the same time studying ECCLESIASTES in Ladies’ Bible Study and was amazed at the tremendous value of the book. The letters are here being shared with BEACON LIGHTS’ readers because ECCLESIASTES is equally valuable for all of us. May we all learn ECCLESIASTES’ lesson: God first = happiness.

I guess you will find out exactly what I have in mind only after I have begun writing but I will try in this letter to explain somewhat what I have in mind. I have often started making notebooks of my personal Bible study in one Bible book or another but for various reasons have gotten interrupted and have never finished such a notebook. I would like to start such a study again and this time share my thoughts with you, a Christian friend.

Why do I want to do this? Well, to be honest, as much for myself as for you, I think. It is so easy to be lazy and not persevere in personal Bible study but such study is the heartbeat of the Christian life and we need it. I do not refer to just a casual, absentminded reading of the Bible, or even to a reading which is thoughtful but in which I may still be putting my own interpretation on Scripture, but to a real study in which I have searched the Scriptures carefully to understand them and to apply them to my life.

I have always enjoyed it whenever other people have written me letters about their current studies in the Scriptures. My father, especially, used to write so well his thoughts that I treasured any letter of this type from him. And so I am hoping that you, too, if you are the Bible student whom I believe you to be, will enjoy such a
study. Then together we can greatly profit from this unique kind of Bible study: two Christians studying the Word together even though far apart in distance.

Ready to begin this study? Until next time, then. . . .

Sharing Your love for God's Word,
Your friend in Him,
Carol Brands

P. S. for BEACON LIGHTS' readers:
To the end of future letters, I may add a postscript of questions for you to think about. These questions weren't in the original letters but will help all of us to study just a bit more alertly, being careful to understand what we study. And maybe - just maybe - somewhere along the line I'll enclose a quiz or a test between letters. After all, I used to be a teacher, right? Did you ever see a teacher without a test here and there? Well then, be ready!

Again, CB

Truth Vs. Error

6. GOD'S CONTROVERSY WITH ISRAEL

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

II. D. The worst judgment: divine abandonment (17)

"Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone."

The Lord does not intend to lead Israel to repentance. For His decree is, Conscience, let him alone; Ministers, let him alone; Spirit of God in the Word, let him alone. There comes a day, too, when godly parents must let him alone, for they die and pass on to heaven. They can not exhort and warn him any more. Let him be oblivious to his backsliding until he slides into hell. He loves his enslavement to sin preferring to be let alone! He does not want to be pestered by his concerned brothers and sisters in the Lord, nor to be bothered by the elders and the minister. He gives them all a wide berth. But if left alone in sin he shall die in his sin.

Ephraim is Israel since Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin in the idolatrous superstition of the golden calves. He was the source of all this evil. Jeroboam's intention was not to displace Jehovah with idols, but to use the figure of an ox, or bull, as a symbol of power, i.e., of God in His power. It was not to be the worship of images but of God represented by the images. This is the rationalization of the Roman Catholics in defence of their image worship. But we in our churches have trouble with idols. One has a
problem with the idol of alcohol. Another with the idol of drugs; still another bows down to Baal and Ashtoreth, going around a whoring. Or one has listened for decades to the preached Word but is always a stony-ground hearer. How awful to persevere in any idol-sin to the point where God is provoked to hand down the sentence, Let him alone! Then it is that “he . . . being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Prov. 29:1). So the Lord was done with the Pharisees. “Let them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind.” (Matt. 15:14). Finally, the Lord says, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still . . . .” (Rev. 22:11).

What happens when God lets a sinner alone. gives him up (Rom. 1)? Like Cain, he goes out from the presence of the Lord. Like the Jewish Sanhedrin, he becomes a persecutor of believers. Like the son of perdition, he gets deeper and deeper into sin. His conscience becomes seared and sin-hardened. He becomes a scoffer, a sceptic, an enemy of truth. Then no more does the Lord say to the devil, Let him alone. Nor will He say to Death, Let him alone. He will not say to Judgment, Let him alone. He will not say to infinite, eternal misery, Let him alone.

Then ought not we to pray in conviction of sin, of righteousness, and judgment, “God helping me. I will not be one of those of whom God shall say, ‘Let him alone’”? II. D. The worst judgment: divine abandonment (17).

1. They shall not correct one another (4).

“Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another; for thy people are as they that strive with the priest” (4). Ordinarily, we are to reprove the sinner (Lev. 19:17), but here is a command to do so no more. Why not? Because there comes a time when the Lord will cease to call all men including the reprobate to repent (Acts 17:30), because the time has come to abandon them to destruction (v. 6, 14), and because they will not cease from sin, no matter what! (Rev. 16:10, 11). We have good commentary on “for thy people are as they that strive with the priest.” We find this in II Chron. 25:16. The priests were given to Israel to preserve them in the truth and in the knowledge of God. The prophets were sent to call them back to the truth and knowledge from which they had departed. But there comes a time when the prophet, directed by the Lord, will no more strive with nor reprove those who have apostatized. He, representing God, let them go to determined destruction.

2. God will not punish them (14).

“I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses (husbands) when they commit adultery; for they themselves are separated with whores; and they sacrifice with harlots; therefore the people that doth not understand shall fall.”

Not being punished, i.e., not being stopped dead in their tracks, for the scandal and disgrace brought on their families for the sexual immoralities committed by both the single and the married women, they would continue in it until their apostasies all worked through to ruin and judgment. Calvin says that it “is a just punishment when
adulteries prevail and when vagrant lusts promiscuously follow.” So that not to punish is a form of punishment! “For they themselves,” i.e., the husbands, for the men were primarily responsible and guilty. They were the ones who “went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves to ‘that Shame,’ and their abominations were according as they loved.” (Hosea 9:10b). “They themselves are separated with whores.” They had separated from their wives, and from God and His pure worship to separate themselves to the Baal-peor god of shame.

“Therefore, the people . . . do not understand.” Why not? because (1) they had not been taught by the priests in the knowledge of God. They had not been catechized. An uncatechized people are an unreformed people, and are especially exposed to the lusts of the flesh and all kinds of spiritual seductions. (2) The priests led the people into carnal and spiritual whoredom by their own idolatrous and immoral practices. In turn, the whorish examples of the parents led the children into the same impurities.

There are so called ‘churches’ today where the “ministers” encourage the “Father Divine” miscegenationistic life-style notorious in a Negro cult kingdom of the twenties and thirties. (W.R. Martin, The Kingdom of the Cults, chap. 8, “The Reign of Father Divine,” 213-221).

“Shall fall” by the seductive snares set by heathen whores (cp. Prov. 7:10, 22; 22:14). Baal-peonism is far from being stamped out of the churches. It is, as we have previously noted, all a part of ecclesiastical Babylon, Rev. 17:5. So we can agree that “all fictitious modes of worship, however much adorned by a specious guise . . . (are) adulteries and whoredoms.” (Calvin).

3. Rather, they shall temporarily prosper (16). “For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer.” Calvin says “a backsliding heifer” means a wanton (lascivious, licentious, lustful) heifer. This is correct. “The Lord said also unto me (Jeremiah) in the days of Josiah, the king. ‘Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? She is gone up upon every high mountain, and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot” (Jer. 3:6. See also 7:24; 8:5, 6).

“Now the Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place.” (Cp. Jer. 11:19 with 12:1-3). Matthew Henry said, “If they wax fat and kick, they do not wax fat for the butcher.” The wicked do often-times prosper. But it is to be pulled out of a fat pasture (the large place) as sheep for the slaughter. As they are fed and fattened in the large, lush, fat pasture, it is that they might fill up their cup of iniquity to be ripened for destruction and judgment. “The Lord would leave them in their luxuries to gorge themselves according to their lust.” (Calvin). It is a punishment when God gives men and women up to their own lusts (Rom. 1:24. 26). Asaph had admitted that he “was envious . . . when I saw the prosperity of the wicked . . . the ungodly . . . prosper in the world: they increase in riches.” (Psm. 73:3. 12). Why was it that the Lord had brought them into such prosperity? Surely it was to set them in slippery places to cast them down to destruction (73:18). For “when the wicked spring like the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever” (92:7). “The
sheep that are designed for the slaughter are put into the fattest pasture.’” —Matthew Henry.

Therefore, let none boast that they are sheep; that is not sufficient. For the biblical distinction is between “not My sheep” and My sheep.” Those “not My sheep” do not believe. “Unspeakably solemn was (and is—RCH) this word. They were reprobates, and now that their characters were fully manifested the Lord did not hesitate to tell them so.” (A.W. Pink). At the same time the Lord identifies the character of “My sheep.” “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me (John 10:26-27). A stranger they will not follow (v. 5); and I give unto them eternal life” (v. 28). “My sheep” is “equivalent to God’s elect” (Pink) as verses 14 and 16 of this chapter clearly show.

III. The Warning to Judah Against Apostasy and Judgment

A. Avoid places of idolatry (15)

1. Text

“Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come yet not unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, ‘The Lord liveth’."

2. Temples

For example, Christian tourists should not visit, at the hours of worship, heathen temples. Muslim mosques, Jewish synagogues, or Roman Catholic churches. Do not attend the mass,” which is an “accursed idolatry.” Calvin warns, “Let all, then, who are neighbors to idolaters beware, lest they contract any of their pollutions.”

3. Gilgal

“Judah had greater advantages than Israel, having the temple, the priesthood, the place to offer sacrifices — in Jerusalem, a king of the house of David. Therefore, “let not Judah offend.” Much more is expected of Judah than from Israel. Judah has more to answer for if they do offend. Judah then, must avoid the places of idolatry, avoiding Gilgal, where all Israel’s wickedness erupted. Hos. 9:15. So they were forbidden to enter Gilgal (Amos 5:5), for (1) Gilgal was where transgression was multiplied (Amos 4:4), and (2) Gilgal was destined to go into captivity, so coming to nothing.

4. Beth-aven

is Bethel, House of God, ironically called Beth-aven, House of iniquity. (Aven is many times rendered iniquity, and two or three times nothing, idols being regarded as nothings.)

—To be continued, D.V.—

THOUGHT FOR CONTEMPLATION

“There is no real or desirable joy, unless in reference to God . . . however the wicked may exult in their pleasures, and abandon themselves to gratifications, still, since tranquility of conscience, which alone brings true rejoicing, is wanting to them, they do not enjoy the merriment into which they plunge themselves.”

John Calvin
WHAT’S HAPPENED

by Joan Buijer

BYRON CENTER (Michigan)
A conference on Reformed Evangelism was held at Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church on November 10 and 11.

HOPE (Walker, Michigan)
The Hope Heralds held their annual concert. Tapes are available. Call Steve Lotterman at (616) 453-6552.
Deb Kuiper and Nicolas Kleyen were united in marriage June 24, 1989. May God bless these young people as they begin their life together.

LOVELAND (Colorado)
The congregation was invited to a picnic on the church and school grounds on September 4 (Labor Day). The choir began its new season on September 17.
Ladies Discussion Group began their session on October 3.
The Ladies Circle sponsored a hot dog roast September 23 on the school grounds.
Young Peoples’ Society opened their new season on September 10. Discussion is from Revelations.

HUDSONVILLE (Michigan)
Randy Dykstra and Sue Ondersma were united in marriage October 7 in Hudsonville Church.
Brad Kuiper was received as a baptized member from the Lacombe, Canada congregation.
The membership of Mr. and Mrs. John Oudman and their two baptized children were transferred to the Holland congregation.

SOUTHEAST (Grand Rapids, Michigan)
The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to Seth Andrew Wierenga, the infant son of Chip and Laura Wierenga.
The public confession of faith and adult baptism of Betty De Jonge took place October 1.
Also on October 1 Timothy Block and Jonathan Eldersveld made public confessions of faith.
A singspiration was held on October 15. (If you were not there, you missed a good one!)

IMMANUEL (Lacombe, Edmonton, Canada)
David Kuiper and Michelle Veldink were united in holy matrimony.
Linda Pikkert made public confession of faith on October 8.
The sign and seal of baptism was received by Steven John, the infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Irwin (Yvonne) Tolsma.
Bryan and Sharon Bevaart with their daughter Johanna requested their membership papers be sent to the Protestant Reformed Church in Lynden, Washington.

SOUTHWEST (Grand Rapids, Michigan)
Joel Huiskens made public profession of his faith in our Lord Jesus Christ on October 1.
Mr. and Mrs. Joe Brummel and their six baptized children transferred to the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church.
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Feenstra and Mrs. Patricia Bekkering transferred to the Faith Protestant Reformed Church. John Ophoff and Patricia Kamps were married October 5 in the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church.

FIRST (Grand Rapids, Michigan)
The sacrament of baptism was administered to Denise Leanne, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Doezema. We extend congratulations to Mr. Roy Vanden Berg and Mrs. Mina Bouwman who celebrate their 89th birthdays October 1. The Fall Fellowship Dinner was held on September 20th.

FIRST (Holland, Michigan)
The annual Sunday School Picnic was held at the Deane Wassink farm on September 9. The public confession of faith of Mark Vanden Berg took place on August 13. On September 11, the Lord took to Himself Mr. Carl Haveman. Sympathy is extended to his family and friends. The membership papers of Rev. Wilbur and Mrs. (Mary) Bruinsma and four baptized children were received from the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids.

SOUTH HOLLAND (Illinois)
The sign and seal of holy baptism was administered to Jordanna Beth, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dave Dotson, to Jesse Miles, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Lanting, to Robert Todd, son of Mr. and Mrs. Andy Birkett, and to Tyler Jordan, son of Mr. and Mrs. Homer De Jong. Mrs. Anna Morehouse and Mr. Peter A. Poortenga passed away. We extend Christian sympathy to their families and friends. May the Lord grant comfort to their hearts in the knowledge that the death of His saints is precious in His eyes (Psalm 116:15).

The consistory has sent the membership papers of Mariel (Petersen) Grevengoed to her home at her request, in order that she might join with the Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Hanover Park. A new Adult Bible Study Society held its first meeting on September 21. The Christian retreat sponsored by the South Holland Young People was held November 3 and 4 at the Timber-Lee Conference Grounds in southern Wisconsin. The theme was “Discovering God’s Will.” The Church Picnic was held on September 16. A conference “Having A Heart For God” was held on September 22 and 23. The Ladies Auxiliary held their Annual Autumn Festival and Auction on October 13.

HULL (Iowa)
David and Joel Moore made public confession of faith October 8. The Ladies Guild held a Harvest Sale on October 20. The Young Adults Bible Study is studying I Timothy. The Bible Study for college students at Dordt began September 11. They are studying the book of Acts.

COVENANT (Wyckoff, New Jersey)
Charles De Groot and Maria Mertens were married on August 19. The lecture of Prof. Hanko entitled “I Believe In God the Creator” was held on August 25. Mrs. Maria De Groot made public confession of faith September 24. October 27 a lecture was held commemorating Reformation Day on the theme “The Reformation: The Return To The Preaching Of The Word.”

THE FEDERATION BOARD
The Federation Board sponsored a
Beach/Volleyball/Hamburg Fry at Holland Beach on September 9.

**BEACON LIGHTS**

Two new members joined the *Beacon Lights*’ staff: Bruce Miedema as Associate Editor and Joan Buiter as News Editor.

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by Shari Hulzenga

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**AUTHOR'S KEY**

AK - Abraham Kuyper  
A - Anonymous  
BR - Book Review  
BJ - Bruce Jabaay  
CB - Carol Brands  
CH - Chad Huber  
DH - Dave Harbach  
DW - Deanne Wassink  
ED - Editorial  
JM - Jeremy Huizinga  
JMF - John M. Faber  
KM - Kristi Moelker  
PRD - Prof. Robert Decker  
RBG - Rev. B. Gritters  
RBW - Rev. B. Woudenberg  
RCT - Rev. C. Terpstra  
RJH - Rev. J. Heys  
RKK - Rev. K. Koole  
HMJ - Rev. M. Joostens  
RRCH - Rev. R. C. Harbach  
RRD - Rev. R. Dykstra  
RSK - Rev. S. Key  
RBW - Rev. W. Bekkering  
RB - Ruth Bleyenberg  
SH - Shari Huizinga  
SL - Sue Looyenga  
TH - Truet H.
Singspiration Schedule

February 18       Byron Center
March 18          Southwest
May 20            Hope
August  Pre-Convention 1st Jenison CRC