

The **STANDARD BEARER**



A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Let no one imagine that there is a stopping of the tide of liberalism, once a denomination has set this course for itself. Let no one imagine that any given wrong decision is going to be the last one, or that it is possible for a church-federation to exist in a half-Reformed and half-non-Reformed status. There is no stopping until the cancer of liberalism has ravaged the entire body and the whole structure of the churches' confession. Nor are any half-way measures of reformation possible. Reformation is an all-or-nothing matter. It involves a complete and wholehearted return to the faith of our fathers — no matter what the cost — or it cannot possibly succeed. See Page 100.

December 1, 1973

MEDITATION

A Call To Thanksgiving

*"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.
Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever."*

Psalm 118:1, 2

Another season has passed . . .

The harvest has been gathered in . . .

And we will have been called once more to our respective places of worship to give thanks.

Many there were who did not heed this call, but they used the holiday seeking their own pleasure!

Many no doubt frequented the house of prayer, only to rejoice in the abundance of the things they possess!

What was your response? Was it such that it could bear away the approval and blessing of God?

And being assembled in the house of God, what did you say?

O, indeed, when we come into the house of the Lord, we must say something! And on Thanksgiving Day we ought to say something as to the now!

Let Israel now say . . .!

Let the house of Aaron now say . . .!

Let them now that fear the Lord say . . .!

Indeed, we have here an earnest call to thanksgiving!

Most beautiful and full of meaning is the word "thanks" which is found in this text! It comes from a word which means literally: to point out with an extended hand, and then to praise and celebrate a certain benefactor. Incidentally the name Judah is a transliteration of this word, and that name means: praise.

Now one who does this shows by implication at least three things. First of all, his deep dependence on his benefactor. He senses that he has nothing of himself, but he seeks all in his benefactor. Secondly, he confesses thereby that he has a sense of unworthiness. He humbly confesses his forfeiture of all right to the benevolence bestowed on him by his benefactor. And thirdly, it implies that he knows his benefactor, and would praise him for his goodness. He acknowledges that the benevolence he has received came solely from his benefactor.

And special attention should be paid to the object of this praise and thanksgiving!

The psalmist is not speaking here of some vague and mysterious being whom he really does not know. Nor has he in mind some supreme being whom he philosophically is forced to acknowledge, but whom he, in his practical life always denies. He is not speaking here in terms of some kind providence, or merely of a beneficent governor of the universe, whom he deistically daily puts out of his universe, but on the special thanksgiving day is forced to admit. Nor is it so that the psalmist here would have us understand that his prosperity is due most of all to self and his own wise manipulation of things at his disposal, with perhaps a little help of the father of nations.

Not an idol, the figment of his own imagination, is the object of his praise! The psalmist is not a heathen, a deist; he worships not a blind force, a vague super-being who hovers somewhere in outer space. No; the object of praise and thanksgiving is Jehovah, the only true and living God, the God of the everlasting covenant, and the God of his salvation!

O, indeed, He is the Lord Almighty! Sovereign Creator and Sustainer of the universe is He! Who by the Word of His power called all things into being according to His eternal purpose! Surely, too, He is the God of providence, Who upholds all things by the Word of His power, and so governs all things that they do His bidding. He it is, Who sees to it that nothing is left to chance, but all things, good and bad, righteous and wicked, prosperity and famine, rain and drought, angels and devils, yea, all things serve His purpose, the glory of His Name; while at the same time they work for the good of them that love Him.

But even so, He is not some vague, mysterious super-being, so imposing that He forces you against your will to serve Him with the fear of fright, and to acknowledge somehow on Thanksgiving Day, if at no other time, that He ought to be thanked.

Jehovah, the I AM THAT I AM, is He Who is the object of the psalmist's praises!

The perfectly Self-Sufficient One in Himself! The eternally independent God! Who is in need of nothing, and to Whom nothing can be given, not even our thanksgiving as a payment for the things He gives. To Whom nothing can be added, and from Whom nothing can be subtracted. Who always remains what He is, the overflowing Fountain of goodness!

The unchangeable God! One Who is "I AM THAT I AM" is immutable! The mutable must always say, I am what I became. But God says, "I am Jehovah, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

He is Jehovah, the Covenant God! In this Name He appeared unto His people, as to none other. With them He establishes His covenant. And though they break it, He always maintains it. And He blesses them with all the blessings of His covenant. They who by nature were not a people. He, Jehovah, by His grace, makes to be His covenant friends. And in that covenant He bestows upon them His goodness, and His mercy, the acknowledgement of which, on the part of that people, is true thanksgiving.

O, give thanks unto Jehovah!

The psalmist feels that he cannot adequately give thanks alone. Though thanksgiving is indeed personal. It begins with one's soul. Therefore you hear the psalmist in another place say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all within me bless his holy Name." And in still another place, "I will offer to thee the sacrifices of thanksgiving." And even in the congregation, thanksgiving is a matter of each individual, — "I will praise thee with my whole heart in the assembly of the upright and in the congregation." "I will pay my vows unto the Lord in the presence of all his people."

Yet the child of God can never really stand alone when he gives thanks. "His grateful heart is greedy of men's tongues, and would monopolize them all for Jehovah's glory." It is quite inconceivable that he can be grateful and hide his gratitude. He must tell others and call them to express with him his praise to God.

Let Israel now say . . .!

Surely in this call to thanksgiving, the ungodly are excluded! The ungodly, according to Romans 1, are unthankful. They know God, even to the extent of His power and Godhead; but they hold the truth under in unrighteousness and are unthankful.

Only Israel can give thanks! And Israel is they who fear the Lord. Israel is Jehovah's covenant people. Israel is that people whom the Lord forms for Himself; they shall show forth His praise. Israel is Jehovah's chosen people, His redeemed people, from both the Jews and Gentiles, out of all nations, kindreds, and peoples. Israel is that people that overcomes through weeping and supplication, who by grace have

learned to see that in themselves they are lost and undone, unholy and depraved, but that in Jehovah alone is all their salvation and glory. They therefore extend the hand away from themselves, and point it toward Jehovah, from Whom is all their goodness.

O, give thanks unto Jehovah, for He is good!

Not merely give thanks unto Jehovah for the good things you have received! Thanksgiving is never merely a rejoicing in things!

This does not mean that when we give thanks we are to be totally insensitive with respect to the blessings received. Fact is, that Jehovah's goodness is reflected in the good things He gives us. Therefore when we give thanks we count our blessings, naming them one by one, and seeing what the Lord has done. And let us learn the lesson that blessings are not only good things, but also what we call evil things, which God also makes work for our good. In other words, all things are good when they flow to us from the hand of Jehovah. But we say again, the psalmist is not calling us here to give thanks to Jehovah for the good things He has given us. Rather, he points us away from the things given to the Giver!

Give thanks unto Jehovah; for He is good!

Let that be the contents of your thanksgiving — Jehovah is good!

This means, first of all, that He is purest perfection. He is the sum of all perfections. His being is pure goodness. And it means, in the second place, that He is immaculately beautiful! He is light, pure light, and there is no darkness in Him. He is truth, righteousness, holiness, love, and grace; and in Him is no lie, corruption, or evil. Even to say that He is the highest Good, might leave room for comparison. But Jehovah is the incomparable, the infinitely Good God. This He is in Himself. And therefore is He also the overflowing Fountain of goodness for His people, to those who fear Him.

Understand well, this is not intended to be a cold dogma, and abstract truth, a mere objective fact; but this is a subjective experience! It is as the psalmist expresses it elsewhere: "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." True thanksgiving is created and expressed when we taste spiritually Jehovah's goodness. And it is always the expression that Jehovah is good.

Let Israel now say, that Jehovah is good!

The psalmist is not primarily interested in what Israel will say when they get to heaven. There he knows they will for ever be praising and thanking God for His goodness. Rather, the psalmist urges us to say something now, that is, in the present evil world where we dwell, in the midst of all the vicissitudes and exigencies of life. Whether our barns are

full or empty, whether we be in health or in sickness, whether we be at war or in peace, whether it be in life or in death; always say: Jehovah is good!

But the question arises: on what basis will we be able to say that Jehovah is good, especially when in the now I experience evil, when all things seem to be against me? Won't I then of all times draw a distinction between the evil and the good? Won't I be tempted to rejoice when my way is prosperous, and won't I murmur and rebel when evil is upon me? Won't our thanksgiving die on our lips when our way is dark?

The answer is to be found in the repeated assertion in the text:

For His mercy endureth for ever!

Mercy is that goodness of God, according to which in the midst of all our distresses He pities His regenerated and justified people, and desires to make them perfect as He is perfect. Mercy is that unchangeable desire of Jehovah to deliver from the greatest possible of all miseries, sin and death, and to make us partakers of the highest good.

And this is not simply a passing whim, and ineffectual desire that is never realized. Rather, His mercy is for ever. It is as eternal as God is. And in history, in the moments of time, He reveals His everlasting mercy. He showed it when He sought out our fallen first parents, Adam and Eve, and covered their nakedness with skins of animals whose blood had

been shed. He disclosed His mercy to righteous Noah, when He saved him from the wicked world by the waters of the flood. He displayed His everlasting mercy when He saved His beloved Israel from the arms of Pharaoh and Egypt by the waters of the Red Sea. He remembered His mercy when He delivered His people from Babel's bondage, and resettled them in their own land, and visited them in temple and sacrifice. The central manifestation of that eternal mercy He clearly demonstrated in the cross of Calvary, when He laid on His only Begotten Son the iniquity of us all, and covered us with His own righteousness through the resurrection of His Son, our Lord, from the dead. And so unto the end of time as we know it, He will show unto us the goodness of His eternal mercy, in prosperity and adversity, in war and peace, in health and sickness, in life and in death. That goodness of Jehovah whereby He purposes through all the changes of time and circumstance to deliver us and make us blessed as He is blessed.

O, indeed, Jehovah is good!

And His mercy endureth for ever!

Give thanks, therefore, O people of God, who are as the apple of His eye!

Stretch out the hand, and point with the finger, and exclaim with your tongue, — O Jehovah, how great is Thy Goodness!

Thy mercy is an everlasting mercy!

Thanks be unto Thy Holy Name! Amen!

EDITORIAL

Infant Baptism Denied in the Gereformeerde Kerken

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

By this time it is hardly possible to be shocked any longer by news of deviations from the Reformed position in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* (synodical). It seems only to be a question of *which* truth will be the next victim of free-thinking assault — first by some learned individual or committee, and then by the official decision of a synod.

And yet when such a characteristically Reformed doctrine (and practice) as infant baptism is bartered

away in the interest of ecumenism, it makes one sit up and think — or, it ought to do so — and weep! For when something like this takes place, does it not become plain that nothing distinctively Reformed is held sacred any longer? And does it not become plain, too, that once a denomination sets foot on the path of error and of doctrinal-freedom, the end can only be the denial and forfeiture of the entire precious heritage of the faith, and that, too, with pious phraseology and pompous ecclesiastical pronounce-

ments — all, mind you, in the name of the very Christ Who will only spue such a church out of His mouth.

We had not noticed reports of this development in any of the American periodicals which occasionally carry news about the Dutch churches. But in *De Reformatie* of September 22 the lead article is a report and critique concerning this latest departure. [*De Reformatie* is a paper of *Gereformeerde Kerken* (Liberated) in the Netherlands.] The article is entitled, “Infant Baptism — Yes or No?”

Here is the sad tale, the facts of which we have gleaned from *De Reformatie*.

There has been a joint commission of the *Hervormde Kerk*, the so-called State Church, and the *Gereformeerde Kerken* preparing a “Concept Pastoral Advice About Infant Baptism.” Those who have followed developments in the Netherlands will know that the *Gereformeerde Kerken* are busily courting the *Hervormde Kerk*, from which they separated in 1834 and 1886, under De Cock and Kuyper respectively. The leadership of the GKN is hot-bloodedly seeking to consummate a remarriage with the *Hervormde Kerk*. A joint synodical meeting of sorts has already been held, and in various ways the two denominations are working together — all with a view to eventual reunion. The joint commission on the matter of infant baptism is part of this movement toward reunion. Meanwhile, it should not be overlooked that there is something radically wrong when synodical commissions prepare and synods hand down “pastoral advice” on various subjects. The pastoral function belongs with the local consistory and in the local congregation. Synodical “pastoral advice” is a high-sounding phrase for usurpation of power, a euphemism for “hierarchy.”

On this joint commission, according to *De Reformatie*, the GKN were represented by J.P.C. Boodt, Rev. H.A. van Bottenburg, Dr. O.C. Broek Roelofs, Prof. Dr. J. Firet, and Prof. Dr. G.P. Hartvelt.

And what does the learned commission declare?

This: “A church which is really church of Christ in this world must have the strength to accept in her midst as officebearers also those who have serious objections against the baptism of little children.”

True, the commission is also reported to have testified “that we must also emphatically defend in our time the good right of the baptizing of the little children of the congregation.” But this “good right” amounts to nothing more than that “little children *may* be baptized and on the ground thereof *may* all

their life be exhorted unto obedience.” (italics added)

As *De Reformatie* points out, the report tries to be even-handed in its proposed pastoral advice. For it also pleads the good right of objections against infant baptism. It claims that such objections arise out of the fact that such people take seriously the Scriptural injunction to conversion and sanctification of life on the part of the congregation and the individual. And it asserts that the criticism which is made of a careless practice of baptism, in which often all who are presented for baptism are baptized, is not only completely understandable but also justified from the Scriptures. It fails to point out that a wrong practice of infant baptism does not justify abandonment of the principle of infant baptism; and it fails to point out that the solution to this problem of a careless baptismal practice is the proper exercise of discipline in the churches, discipline of leaders and of members. Instead it takes under its protection the rejection of infant baptism. And it advises that the churches should accept with full rights of membership those who thus reject infant baptism. And they must have the strength even to accept such persons as officebearers.

This, mind you, is the duty of the church “which is really church of Christ in this world.”

It should hardly be necessary to point out that in Reformed churches infant baptism is not optional, but mandatory, and that those who make it optional literally forsake their Reformed basis. According to our Baptism Form, covenant parents acknowledge “that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore, as members of his Church *ought* to be baptized.” (italics added) The 74th Answer of our Heidelberg Catechism states the same mandate: “Yes: for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they *must* therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the christian church; and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant.” The Netherlands Confession of Faith, Article 34, teaches the same: “. . . therefore we detest the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with the one only baptism they have once received, and moreover condemn the baptism of the infants of believers,

whom we believe *ought* to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as the children in Israel formerly were circumcised, upon the same promises which are made unto our children. And indeed Christ shed his blood no less for the washing of the children of the faithful, then for adult persons; and therefore they *ought* to receive the sign and sacrament of that which Christ hath done for them. . . ." (italics added in both quotations from our confessions)

Plainly, therefore, and in the literal sense of the word, this is a departure from our Reformed basis.

And it is not a minor departure!

For implied in this denial of infant baptism in the abandonment of what has always been recognized — along with the truth of God's sovereign grace — as one of the chief characteristics of the Reformed faith: the truth of God's eternal covenant of grace.

If the GKN, therefore, had not previously lost the right to the name "Reformed," they have done so now.

But, you say, this is only the advice of a commission.

This is correct. However, in the first place, this should not be minimized. For this advice represents the view of those who are officebearers, among them some who are theological professors. Do you not see that the GKN are lost as Reformed churches when it is possible that such advice can even be conceived, much less proposed, by those whose responsibility it is to train future ministers? This simply means that the course of liberty of teaching and the course of neglect of doctrinal discipline has been followed to the bitter end. It is now possible for officebearers openly and officially to propose that the churches forsake their confessions and to flout a key truth of the Reformed faith. This is much worse than the errors of men like Kuitert and Wiersinga, who individually and in their own name proposed heretical views. It means that this cancer has reached the ecclesiastical vitals.

And, in the second place, I do not hesitate to predict that sooner or later this advice will also be adopted. It may undergo some changes — to mollify the feelings of those who will have objections. And it may pass through a lengthy ecclesiastical process; this is but part of the method in the madness of the liberals. It is part of the strategy of the liberalizing process. But sooner or later — and couched in learned words that are smooth as butter — the position will

be adopted.

And why not? The GKN as a denomination no longer care about being Reformed! If the minority of Reformed dissenters are ever to move toward reformation, it is high time!

Meanwhile, what ecclesiastical hypocrisy! A few decades ago, in the 1940s, these same churches ruthlessly cast out officebearers in a controversy about the covenant of grace and about the meaning of the baptism of infants. Today it can be proposed officially to abandon infant baptism by making it a mere option both for members and for officebearers — and with it to abandon the entire idea of the covenant of grace.

Is this not the judgment of God for the ecclesiastical injustices perpetrated at that time?

And is it not ironic, too, that in these same GKN there should be at present a renewed attempt to gain ecclesiastical restoration to honor for those who were so shamefully treated in the 1940s, the late Dr. K. Schilder and the late Dr. S. Greijdanus? Would not our Lord rebuke the GKN for building the tombs of the prophets whom their fathers have slain — except for the fact that some of the perpetrators of those injustices are still living?

But there is a lesson in all this. Let no one imagine that there is a stopping of the tide of liberalism, once a denomination has set this course for itself. Let no one imagine that any given wrong decision is going to be the last one, or that it is possible for a church-federation to exist in a half-Reformed and half-non-Reformed status. There is no stopping until the cancer of liberalism has ravaged the entire body and the whole structure of the churches' confession. Nor are any half-way measures of reformation possible. Reformation is an all-or-nothing matter. It involves a complete and wholehearted return to the faith of our fathers — no matter what the cost — or it cannot possibly succeed.

This is the lesson of history in general.

This is the lesson of the sad history of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.

This is the lesson which the "concerned people" in the Christian Reformed Church and other denominations in our own country must learn to understand.

This is the lesson which none of us must ever forget!

Let us be always vigilant! And let us guard our heritage with our lives!

QUESTION BOX

About God's Attributes

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

I have no less than five questions on hand at the moment. I will try to answer a couple of them in this issue.

From a reader in the far northwest corner of our country comes the following question: "Recently in our Men's Society we discussed Article 1 of the Netherlands Confession of Faith. In this article God's attributes are mentioned. The question is: are *all* God's attributes mentioned in this article? What must we believe about God's love? Is the love of God an attribute of God, or are God's attributes in His love?"

Reply

First of all, let us get the article before us: "We all believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, that there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God; and that he is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good, and the overflowing fountain of all good."

In the second place, the answer to the first question above is: no, all God's attributes are not mentioned in this article. Such attributes as God's Self-existence, God's omnipresence, God's omniscience, God's holiness, God's veracity, God's mercy, God's love — all of these receive no separate mention in this article. Evidently it is not the purpose of this article to be exhaustive in its mention of God's attributes.

In the third place, as I have already indicated above, God's love is indeed one of His infinite perfections. As Scriptural grounds for this contention, I would point to a passage such as I John 4:7, 8: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." Notice that this passage teaches plainly that love characterizes the very nature of God. God Himself *is* love. This is why it is true that he who is *born* of God, and is, therefore, like God, necessarily

loveth. When God begets His children, He begets children who are after His image and likeness, conformed to the image of His Son. And because this is true, those whom He begets (who are born of Him) will love. If they do not, that is a sure indication that they have not been born of Him. For love belongs to the very image of God. Thus, Scripture also calls God the "God of love," II Cor. 13:11.

For a working definition of love as an attribute of God, I would propose the following, quoted from Rev. H. Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics*: "The love of God is the infinite and eternal bond of fellowship that is based upon the ethical perfection and holiness of the divine nature, and that subsists between the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity." For a detailed discussion, I refer the reader to this same work, pages 103-107.

Finally, I am not quite certain as to the meaning of the alternatives posed in the last question. Although I would not phrase it in this way, I could conceive of answering *yes* to both parts of this question: love is an attribute of God, *and* God's attributes are in His love. By the latter I mean, then, that there is perfect harmony among all the attributes of God, and that all God's attributes are perfectly *one* in Him. This is the truth of God's simplicity. Thus, for example, God's love is eternal and incomprehensible and unchangeable and is characterized by perfect wisdom, holiness, righteousness, etc. There is never any disharmony and conflict in God Himself or in His attributes as He reveals them in His dealings with the creature. This is also emphasized in our Heidelberg Catechism, which teaches that His mercy can never be in conflict with His justice, Lord's Day IV.

From this same questioner I received a question about Isaiah 1, but this will have to wait until next time. For I must also try to satisfy another questioner.

About A Christian Philosophy

From a Grand Rapids reader I received the following problem:

"A question has been bothering me for a long time, and I hope you are willing to answer this and explain a few things for me.

"Throughout the history of mankind men have been raised up who by their thinking and example have led part of mankind, or perhaps the whole of mankind, in a certain direction and way of life, for worse or for better. Plato and Aristotle have influenced the Greek people and even following generations. Marx, Nietzsche, Hitler have molded the lives of modern men. Hinduism and Brahminism have molded Asian peoples. My question is this: may man establish or make a Christian Philosophy and try to lead or influence mankind or part of mankind in a good direction for their general welfare, and call this thinking also a Biblical Philosophy? Some say 'yes'; others say 'no.' But what is your opinion?"

Reply

First of all, I would remark that I could wish for a few more specifics. I think there are some big questions involved here, and questions which are important, too, for our understanding of our Christian calling. But my questioner is not very concrete. And there is no definition furnished of several ideas mentioned. Thus, for example, what is meant by a "Christian philosophy" or a "Biblical philosophy"? And what is meant by influencing mankind in a good direction and for their general welfare? Does my questioner have in mind, for example, the improvement of the ungodly reprobate and the taking over of this present world and all its life "for the kingdom of God?" I am quite certain that my questioner has in mind the so-called Toronto Movement, or the A.A.C.S. and the philosophy which it promulgates — sometimes called Dooyeweerdian Philosophy. And there is much to be said in criticism of this entire movement. In fact, the *Standard Bearer* has reflected from time to time on various publications of this movement. Now I can hardly enter into a thoroughgoing critique of the A.A.C.S. or of Dooyeweerd's philosophy in Question Box. But if my questioner will furnish me with specific quotations and with

specific points of their rather wide-ranging view, I will be happy to answer on these.

In the second place, I have grave doubts as to whether there is such a thing possible as a Christian Philosophy. We speak now of philosophy not in general, as a kind of view of things; but we speak of it in the technical and accepted sense. In that sense, I am inclined to think that the terms *Christian* and *Philosophy* are mutually exclusive. To my mind, Philosophy always implies rationalism, i.e., is the product of sinful, human reason — reason not dominated by God's Word, the Scriptures. As soon, of course, as you have Christian thinking and a Christian view of things, you have thinking and thoughts that are dominated by the Word of God and based upon and developed from Holy Scripture. Then you get not philosophy, but Christian dogmatics (Reformed dogmatics, to be specific), a Scriptural theory and method of thinking, and so-called Christian ethics, or a Christian world-and-life-view. So I would say — without becoming too technical — that as soon as a would-be philosophy is truly Christian, then it will no longer be acknowledged by the philosophers as being genuine philosophy. But I suppose all the would-be Christian philosophers would fall upon me like angry hounds for saying a thing like this.

In the third place, — and here, perhaps, we are getting to the heart of the matter — I will say without hesitation that a philosophy which proposes to improve this present world, to make something of it, and to work for the general welfare of mankind and to influence mankind in a good direction — such a philosophy is not Christian. I will say without any reservation whatsoever that the Christian has no calling to improve mankind, that the very idea of improving this present world is an impossible myth, and that since the fall it has become impossible to carry out the cultural mandate, about which the A.A.C.S. talks so much. The Christian has but one calling, and that is to live from the principle of regeneration in the midst of this world and in every segment of the life of this world. It cannot even be shown that separate Christian organizations are a *must* for the Christian. That in some instances they are a practical option I

will not deny; that they are a *must* I emphatically deny. This does not mean, remember, that the Christian has the option to be a part of all kinds of worldly organizations. The latter is impossible for him if he lives from the principle of regeneration and antithetically. But our calling is to shine as lights in the midst of the darkness of this present world, Matt. 5:16, and to walk as children of light, Eph. 5:8. But improve this present world and influence mankind in general in a good direction? Impossible; one cannot cure rotten meat! Moreover, it is a dangerous, post-millennialistic dream to imagine that we can take over this world for the kingdom of God. On the contrary, we must become prepared for the time when the

Antichrist will take over this world for a time, and when the people of God will be allowed no standing room because they have not the mark of the beast. And the time is at hand, according to Scripture!

Finally, for anyone who wishes to make further study of the culture-issue involved in this discussion, I would recommend the pamphlet by Rev. H. Hoeksema, *The Christian And Culture*, available through our Business Manager.

In conclusion, my questioner is welcome to call again — with more specifics.

Another question from this same reader will have to wait until next time, D.V.

ALL AROUND US

Watergate And The Fifth Commandment

Prof. H. Hanko

It is not the purpose of my brief remarks to enter into a prolonged analysis and discussion of the Watergate fiasco. I suppose that we, who live in a democracy, are obligated in some sense to pass judgment on what transpired. But it is difficult to know the truth of the matter. The news media are not to be trusted by any means. Many who are crying the loudest for justice and the impeachment or resignation of the president are not men whose works can stand the light of day. It is all a reminder of the old adage: the pot is calling the kettle black. But my concern is not to investigate in how far the president is guilty of any crime, if indeed he is guilty at all.

Nor do I think it proper to engage in a kind of national self-incrimination and national confession of sin. There are those who write for the ecclesiastical press who think that the opportunity has come for this. One writes: "The paranoia that led to Watergate and the black veil of deceit that was subsequently laid upon it bespeak our national sinfulness. The determination in Congress and in the Justice Department to expose this sinfulness to public view and to label it as sin bespeaks the grace of God, which, even in judgment, is healing and redemptive in its effect.

"It is to be hoped that through Watergate the

American people will be both sobered and renewed." (*Reformed Journal*, July-August, 1973).

C.S. Lewis, in essay on "Dangers Of National Repentance" discusses the fact that particularly the intellectual "youth" of England were fond of engaging in national repentance for the sins involved in the Second World War. He writes:

The young man who is called upon to repent of England's foreign policy is really being called upon to repent the acts of his neighbor; for a Foreign Secretary or a Cabinet Minister is certainly a neighbour. And repentance presupposes condemnation. The first and fatal charm of national repentance is, therefore, the encouragement it gives us to turn from the bitter task of repenting our own sins to the congenial one of bemoaning — but, first, of denouncing — the conduct of others. If it were clear to the young that this is what he is doing, no doubt he would remember the law of charity. Unfortunately the very terms in which national repentance is recommended to him conceal its true nature. By a dangerous figure of speech, he calls the Government not 'they' but 'we'. And since, as penitents, we are not encouraged to be charitable to our own sins, nor to give ourselves the benefit of any doubt, a Government which is called 'we' is *ipso facto* placed beyond the sphere of charity or even of justice. You can say anything you please about it.

You can indulge in the popular vice of detraction without restraint, and yet feel all the time that you are practising contrition.

It is this latter which has bothered me in recent months. The news media must bear a large part of the blame. Terribly evil things are being said about the president; unseemly jokes and cartoons are printed almost every day which hold up to ridicule the man whom God has placed in authority over us. It is time then to remind ourselves that the fifth commandment is still in force. Our own Heidelberg Catechism interprets, correctly, the fifth commandment as requiring of me that "I show all honor, love and fidelity, to my father and mother, and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it please God to govern us by their hand."

It will perhaps be argued that the president has lost the right to claim our "honor, love and fidelity." Two things need to be said. There has been as yet no court decision which has found him guilty of any crime. He has only been tried in the news media and found guilty. Nothing more. But apart even from that, the obligation to honor, love and respect him does not rest in the determination made by us or others as to whether he is worthy of this. It rests in the command of God. As long as he is president, we owe him this. God has set Nixon in the White House. God is ruling us through him. We must recognize this by obeying the fifth commandment for God's sake. Peter called the Church of his day to just this obligation; and he was writing when Caesars sat on the throne of the Roman Empire — Caesars who were persecuting the

Church and who had become guilty of every moral and legal crime. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." I Peter 2:13-15. "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God Honour the king." I Peter 2:17. And this is, of course, what Paul writes in Roman 13.

It has been argued that because we live in a democracy, the final responsibility for ruling this country rests in the people. From this it is supposed to follow that since the people have put their president in office, these same people have the right to take him from office. Hence, it is perfectly proper for the populace to try the president in the court of public opinion. Apart from the fact that our Constitution provides the necessary machinery for impeachment, the fact remains that, whether we live in a democracy or not, God has placed the president in office. Whether God has done this through the majority vote of the populace or in some other way, it makes no difference. The fifth commandment is not abrogated in a democracy.

We must be afraid of such a violation of the fifth commandment. We live in a lawless age as it is, where the fifth commandment has all but ceased to exist. If we openly flout this commandment in our homes, in the Church, in our conversations with others, we shall reap a bitter harvest, for we shall find that we have planted the seeds of disrespect for authority which will grow into an awful harvest of a breakdown of authority in every sphere of life, including our homes and churches.

Key 73 - A Failure

It seems as if Key 73 has flopped — badly. This is evident from several considerations. For one thing, no one hears much about it any more. The shouting and the tumult has died — with a whimper. Even though the year has not yet officially ended the campaign, almost nothing is being said about it. For another thing, the financial support for the program was so meager that many important projects had to be dropped, and the budget was, at last report, still in the red. Since another evidence of the demise of this program is the fact that those who claim it was a

success are hard put to point out any real and genuine successes. Mention is made of what was accomplished in such language as:

40 million Scripture portions were distributed (Denver was among the cities saturated, and more than six tons of Scriptures were handed out at the 35,000-student University of Toronto). In Quebec, 22,000 French-Canadian Catholics gathered for two "love feasts" that featured preaching and Bible study — and an altar call. Success stories were reported from a number of other communities and from even

the committee's hotel dining room, where a waiter sought to be converted.

Christianity Today, Nov. 9, 1973

This is a far cry from the announced aims of the leaders to confront all North America with the gospel in 1973 and to begin a continent-wide revival which would sweep the land with the fires of repentance and conversion.

The blame is being parcelled out; and it is not surprising that a great deal of the blame for the lack of

success falls upon those who opposed this movement. It would be good if this were true; we gladly would assume such blame.

But leaders are not convinced that the idea should be dropped. Already plans are being made to hold meetings to diagnose the ailments of Key 73, take corrective action and proceed on with new plans for 1974 and subsequent years.

It would be better if it could be said of Key 73 what was said of Jehoram, king of Judah: "And he departed without being desired." II Chron. 21:20.

Growth In Private Schools

An interesting article appeared in *U.S. News And World Report* recently concerning the spectacular growth of Protestant private schools. Among the points made by this article were the following:

Tens of thousands of students are transferring from public schools to private schools. The reasons are not only because of integration and forced bussing, but also because of academic laxity, robbery, drug abuse, classroom disruption.

Private school enrollment is, generally speaking, on the decline registering a drop of nearly one and a half million in the last ten years. But this is primarily due

to the fact that nearly 3000 Roman Catholic parochial schools have closed their doors in the last eight years.

It is therefore nonpublic schools other than Roman Catholic which are multiplying. Some of these private schools are not church-affiliated. But many are. Especially the Lutheran Churches have been adding schools and increasing enrollment in existing schools to keep up with increased demand.

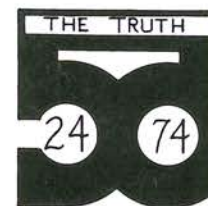
It is obvious, however, that this growth is not the result of a growing interest in Christian education, but is merely a reaction against the deplorable conditions in existing public schools throughout the land.

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November 15 issue.

The Standard Bearer

In Retrospect

Prof. H. Hanko



I think it was our editor who remarked a few issues ago that it was extremely time-consuming to look up anything in back volumes of *The Standard Bearer*. This is not because the articles one is looking for are necessarily difficult to find — although this may also sometimes be the case; for, while there are excellent textual indices available for back volumes, there is no good subject index. But the reason is that one becomes so engrossed in all sorts of interesting articles that, before he knows it, several hours have slipped away and he has not yet found the article for which he is looking.

Such has been my experience also in perusing the first ten volumes in search of worthwhile articles to reprint. This was most time-consuming: for there were so many articles which were worth reading once again, and there were so many memories which were stirred in paging through these first ten volumes which were written in the years 1924 to 1934. Rather than including in this article a reprint, we have decided to give a brief survey of the contents of these volumes, and try to pick out some of the outstanding features of them to give our readers a bit of an idea of what these first ten volumes were like.



The men who did most of the writing for these first volumes were Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff and Mr. G. Van Beek. These three men also served as editors. How these men did all the work it is sometimes impossible to imagine. Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff not only had their own congregations in which they preached and did the congregational work, but they both also taught full time in the Seminary in those years when the Seminary was just beginning and when there was a mountain of work in the preparation of material for the students who were studying there. Talking a few years ago to one of Rev. Ophoff's sons, I was startled to hear him say that his memories of his father in these early years were memories of a crack of light shining beneath the door of his father's study — no matter what time of the night one would get up from bed. It is really no wonder that in some respects, these men were old before their time.

Two of our readers have sent in a couple of early pictures which are of Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff. The first picture was taken in the year 1923 at Gun Lake, where Rev. Hoeksema and his family were vacationing. [Editor's Note: Believe it or not, there are two editors pictured here. Your present editor is the babe in arms in the picture. HCH] The other was taken at Tunnel Park near Holland on August 24, 1938 at a Young People's Outing. On the second picture, Rev. Ophoff is the farthest left, Rev. Hoeksema is in the middle, and the one nearest the camera is Mr. M. Van Antwerpen who served for a number of years as janitor in First Protestant Reformed Church.



The material in these *Standard Bearers* ranges over a wide variety of subjects.

It is not surprising that the earlier volumes are filled with a great deal of material concerning common grace. There are many important articles among this material. And it would even be very worthwhile to reprint some of it. But this is difficult to do because many of these articles were written in direct response to attacks which were made by others against the Protestant Reformed Churches and the stand which these churches had taken in the common grace controversy. They are articles therefore which are highly apologetic, are filled with names of individuals, and are dated by the circumstances of the occasion for their writing. In reading them, however, one is impressed with the fact that the early editors clearly saw what fruit common grace would bring forth in the years to come. They saw how common grace would vitiate Reformed theology. They saw how common grace would open the flood gates of worldliness. They saw how common grace would weaken the Church and bring about a situation which, in fact, exists today.

Yet there were many other articles on many other subjects. There was positive doctrinal development. There are many articles in which the Reformed faith is defended strongly, but there are also articles in which the heritage of the Reformed faith is developed and clarified at key points. It is especially in these doctrinal articles that one already begins to see the emphasis which was being placed on the doctrine of the covenant, a doctrine which was to play such a major role in the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches and which was to occupy such an important place in the theology of Rev. Hoeksema.

There was also a concern for events which were taking place in the world. One can find many articles which comment on events in the church world and in the history which was being made at that time. It is clear from these articles that the editors firmly believed that God's people should be students of their times; for without being aware of what was going on about them, they would be unable to "redeem the times, for the days are evil." It is interesting to note, for example, that *The Standard Bearer* took the time to comment at some length on the Roman Eucharistic Congress which was held in 1926.

Practical matters also came up for a great deal of discussion. The doctrinal articles stressed repeatedly that common grace had done damage to the truth of the antithesis. But *The Standard Bearer* spoke often in a positive way concerning the doctrine of the antithesis and how it was to be applied to the problems of life. There are articles on such questions as membership in worldly labor unions, worldly amusements, divorce and remarriage, etc.

Strikingly, however, there was from the beginning, a great deal of emphasis placed on the whole question of Christian education. As early as volume three, articles appear on every conceivable aspect of this subject. It is possible that we shall have opportunity to reprint some of the more important articles, but what is interesting and worth our notice is the fact that our leaders very early not only saw the need of Christian education in general, but also the need of Protestant Reformed Christian education. It is doubtful if there is one volume of *The Standard Bearer* which lacks an article on Christian education; and there are many which have a large number of articles on this important subject.

In the year 1927 there first began to appear articles which would later become books. Those of our readers who have purchased books from the Reformed Free Publishing Association may be surprised to learn that the books "Believers And Their Seed" and "Behold He Cometh" were begun already in these early issues.

It was also in the year 1927 that one finds the first minutes of the General Classes which were held. Our Churches did not begin to hold Synodical meetings until 1940. Prior to that date all the Consistories met at regular intervals throughout the year in a Combined Classis Meeting. These minutes alone record the history of our Churches with all their trial and triumph, heartbreak and happiness.

In 1930 the first articles began to appear concerning the theology of Dr. K. Schilder and the history of his movement in the Netherlands. In the Forties and Fifties Dr. Schilder and his Churches were to play an important role in the history of our Churches. We cannot talk about that now. That is another story. But it is striking that only six years after the Protestant Reformed Churches began there were events stirring which would have such great repercussions in later years.

In 1931 the whole format of *The Standard Bearer* was rather radically changed. It was at that time that regular departments were begun. There was an editorial department and a department which dealt specifically with the Confessions of the Reformed Churches. Year by year new departments were added; sometimes some were dropped; but always effort was put forth to make the magazine as attractive as possible to the readers and to make it speak in a clear Reformed voice to the ecclesiastical and theological issues of the times.

In 1933 an attempt was made to organize branches of the R.F.P.A. The idea was to organize such branches in the Chicago area, in the Pella area, in Sioux County, Iowa, in California, and in Michigan. A kind of concept Constitution was drawn up which can be

found on p. 240 of Volume IX. Although these efforts apparently failed, it is perhaps time for us to think along these lines once again.

There is another striking feature about these early *Standard Bearers*. I refer to the fact that laymen did a great deal of writing in those days — far more than now. This is especially striking because in the early history of our Churches, the number of laymen who had acquired an extensive education — something beyond grade school — was in the minority. Yet their writings added greatly to the value of our periodical. Now there are many more with extensive educations. Everyone has high school; many have college educations; many beyond college in graduate work. And yet we see very little in our paper from people other than ministers. This is too bad. From time to time, in

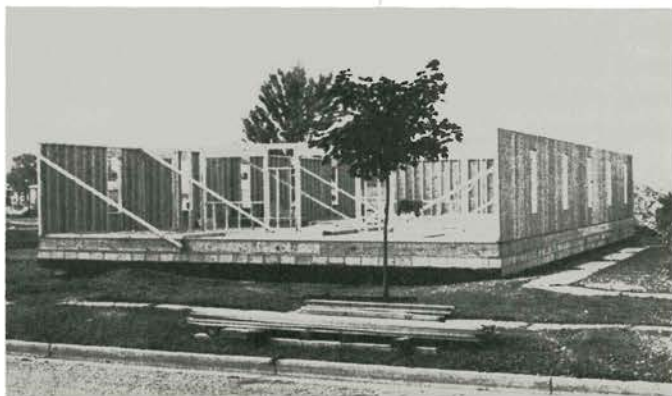
the past years, the editorial staff has tried to enlist laymen to contribute to the paper; but these efforts have, for the most part, proved unfruitful. I would like this article to serve as encouragement to our readers to give serious thought to the matter of writing for our paper.

And so we must close this article. *The Standard Bearer* has come a long way since these early years. The format has changed, the nature of the articles has changed; the editorial staff has changed; the times surely have changed. But the truth remains unchanged. And the truth of the Reformed faith as set forth in these first volumes is still the truth which appears on today's pages — a truth which we love and confess. May God keep us faithful to it.

NEWS FEATURE

Building Project - Protestant Reformed Church of Randolph, Wisconsin

Rev. M. Schipper



Those of our readers who follow the reports of classical and synodical meetings will have noticed a request of our Randolph, Wisconsin congregation for permission to seek collections in the churches for their new building. Perhaps your curiosity was aroused, as was mine. Not having visited Randolph for a while, I had no firsthand information as to the progress of their building project. Hence, I sent a



request to Randolph's pastor, the Rev. Wayne Bekker, for a little information and a picture or two. This brought some results which I would like to share with our readers. Perhaps this will also stimulate your giving when those collections are announced in the various churches: for it is always better, I think, to have some idea of the project for which one is giving and of the need for help. And our sister-congregation

of some 22 families in Wisconsin is in need of help, and also deserving of encouragement in this undertaking.

Have you ever visited Randolph, tucked away in the beautiful and rolling farm country of central Wisconsin, not too far from the famous Wisconsin Dells?

If you have spent a Sunday at their services, you will have to agree, I'm sure, that a new church edifice is a much-needed improvement. For many years — I believe that it is since the days that the late Rev. Henry Kuiper was their pastor — the congregation has been worshipping in the rather uninviting little basement-building which is almost dwarfed, in the accompanying picture, by the completed shell of the new building. I will not go into detail as to the defects and disadvantages of the old building; I would rather accentuate the positive. I am certain our Randolph people will be happy to be out of the basement in the near future; in fact, their new building, though it is very simple and serviceable, will represent sheer luxury for them. And let me add: our Protestant Reformed witness in Randolph, Wisconsin is *deserving* of such a better house of worship!

The Rev. Bekkering informs that "on the 5th of June, 1973 the work on Randolph's new church building began. Since that time the work has progressed very well, although there remains much work to be done, especially on the interior, before the new

building will be finished."

Here are a few facts about the building, which, by the way, is being constructed on land which the congregation foresightedly had purchased along with their present building. The church building is 74 feet long and 40 feet wide, with a seating capacity of 200 persons (room enough for Randolph to double its size!). Bench type seats, with padding, will be used in the auditorium. The ground floor plan includes a large foyer, the auditorium, a storage and work room, and a study for the pastor. The basement has a furnace room, restrooms, a kitchen, a classroom, and a large fellowship room.

The estimated cost of the building was nearly \$50,000. The actual cost of the building is less than the estimate, due to the fact that nearly all of the work is being done by the men of the congregation. A number of the men who are employed in the building trades have given freely both of their time and talents, along with others who have willingly helped in whatever way they could. The pastor writes that "a spirit of good cooperation has prevailed, and the men have enjoyed working together on the project."

While no definite date has been fixed for completion, it is expected that the new church will be finished some time in the spring of 1974.

Congratulations, Randolph! We look forward to the announcement of your dedication program next spring, the Lord willing.

IN HIS FEAR

Thoughts On Labor ... Retirement ... Vacations ... Leisure

Rev. D. H. Kuiper

Today the emphasis is on witnessing. The search is on for exotic ways by which the Christian can reveal his Christianity. The normal methods for doing this are completely overlooked so that the danger is run that the testimony of the regular life stands in conflict with the special things a person sets out to do. It is well to stress that rather than demanding of us extraordinary efforts and methods of witnessing, the Bible lays upon us the demand to be faithful witnesses of God as we do the things we are given to do. It is in the area of our daily labors that the child

of God has the opportunity to reveal the power of God's grace in his life. In our work we come into contact with the greatest number of people, usually people with worldly outlook and practices. No matter what the occupation, farmer, businessman, factory or office worker, there you meet the world and there you meet church members of greatly differing persuasions. In these contacts the matter of practical Christianity comes to a head. Why do you work? How do you perform your labors? What is your attitude towards your employer, your wages, your

work and leisure time? More and more industries are moving toward a four-day work week. Fringe benefits such as retirement and vacation are uppermost in the workers' minds. And you, what occupies your mind as you go about your work . . . hour after long hour? To what do you look forward? Surely not *retirement!*

WORK A GOOD THING

We have been put on this earth to work, and work is a good thing. That might strike us as strange. To the young person hoeing in the garden swimming is a good thing. To the father sweating in the factory, sitting in the backyard with the sports page is far better. The farmer would rather go to a sale than clean out the barn. And the minister often times would rather read a book than go about the difficult work of searching out the Scriptures. Laziness belongs to our natures. Easily we delude ourselves with the thought that having nothing to do is better than sweating honestly. The remark of the proud soldier's mother comes back, "He doesn't have to do anything. He just sits at his desk all day and drinks coffee." She thought that was good for her son. This strange way of looking at toil and labor derives from the fall of man in Paradise. Briefly we ought to remember that Adam was busy in the garden; he was placed there to dress the garden and to keep it, and he had dominion over all the earthly creation. The fall, however, altered this matter of labor in two ways. First, due to the cursing of the ground for man's sake, the matter of making a living became a difficult thing (see Gen. 3:17-19). Secondly, man came under the curse in such a way that he lost the image of God and received a depraved nature. The point is that with a darkened mind, an obdurate will, and with impure affections man views labor as a distasteful thing to be avoided. So lazy is he that he must be sent to the ant to consider her ways.

Redemption in Christ makes the child of God a willing servant and causes him to take a sanctified view of work and activity. In fact, since redemption touches not only the elect, but creation, time, and every other creature, we may say that the whole area of activity and calling has been set free of the curse. Therefore labor is a redeemed creature, a good thing. Perhaps we are not properly aware that the fourth commandment teaches this very thing. It is true, the emphasis of the fourth commandment is that we remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. But when God says, "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work," He is also commanding us to work. The implication is even present that if we are to observe and fully enjoy the Sabbath, we must work six days. The man who enters into the enjoyment of the rest prepared for him by Christ, on Sunday is the man who has been faithful all the week long.

That to be busily engaged is good for man may also be shown from the fact that in heaven we are going to be busy. And since there is no night there, we are going to work non-stop forever. Let us not entertain the thought that in heaven we shall lie about under shade trees, strumming on golden harps; or sit around banquet tables, eating delicacies. According to our place and position in the host of the redeemed, according to our capacities, according to the new names we shall receive, we will spend eternity working. It will not be toil in the sweat of our brows, it will not be work in the sense of our present labors. For then all activity will be perfectly directed toward God, His praise and adoration. The labor that the Christian accomplishes on earth must somehow anticipate that heavenly activity. Surely there are certain features of earthly labor that will pass away: the Bible teaches that we must work if we are to eat, we must be gainfully employed so that we can support the ministry of the gospel, mission work, the seminary, Christian education. Besides, one reason for working even if we don't need the income is that we may have to give to him that needeth. But these particular reasons will pass away with the present heaven and earth.

Nevertheless, there is a similarity and likeness between what we now do and what we shall perfectly do in heaven, a similarity that lies in the direction of the labor and the basic reason for performing it. "Whether ye eat, or whether ye drink, *or whatsoever ye do*, do all to the glory of God." That first of all. When we work, get our pay, buy groceries and eat them with our children, we are to do so with the acknowledgement that God is our Father, that He is faithful and good! And then we are to use the new-found strength in performing the labors He has given us in such a way that our very *work* shows the power of His grace in our lives. It is in this way, secondly, that we show that "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." As the workmanship of God we are to walk in good works. But where ought we to be walking in those good works more than in our jobs and occupations? No matter what we do each day, we labor here and now as citizens of the kingdom of heaven so that how we work, our attitude while we work, what we do with our gain . . . all belong to our calling. And to get back to the idea of witnessing. When a child of God so labors, he will be observed by those round about him, and God will use this testimony to bring others to Christ! (Lord's Day XXXII)

SEVERAL DANGERS

There are dangers that present themselves here which, if not successfully resisted, will completely

vitiates the Christian's witness. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus places great emphasis upon the necessity to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and to seek it *first*. Take no thought for such questions as what shall we eat or what shall we drink or wherewithal shall we be clothed? Those things belong to pagan concern, but not to the Christian's. If a child of God gets entangled with that sort of thing, he forgets about his heavenly destination, he loses his sense of direction, and he fails to give a pilgrim witness. "The world is too much with us . . . getting and spending," said the poet Wordsworth. How True! We do not live by bread alone. No man does, but we ought to know better. The implications of Jesus' words, spoken when He was tempted by the Devil to change stones into bread, are that if we are to live we must obey all the Father's words. There is no life in the way of disobedience. His way must be followed if we are to experience the blessedness of life.

In close connection with this general danger of losing sight of our heavenly destination by getting involved with the pursuit of the things of this world are several other pitfalls. There is the pressing problem of unionism. Much has been written on these pages concerning labor unions; it will be sufficient here simply to point out the following. Membership in the labor union movement is out of bounds for the child of God because it is thoroughly materialistic and avowedly earthly minded; it is membership which demands of its members the assuming of a yoke which for the Christian is an unequal yoke. And membership involves each member in terrible violations of the fifth commandment in that it flagrantly flouts God-ordained authority. The second thing to be observed here is the whole matter of leisure and free time. The work week is not six days as it should be, but it is generally five and is going towards four. Vacations which used to be only for the idle rich are now considered to be the right of every man, every year. And people either retire willingly, or are forced to retire, long before they cease to be productive, able workers. The result is *idle time*, and if we know ourselves a little bit that ought to scare us! It has been said that the Devil's workshop is idleness. When you are busy, one devil tempts you; when you are idle, a hundred. Idleness is sin not only because being idle you are not doing some positive good, but also because you can never be truly idle. Paul tells Timothy, for example, that "the idle wander from house to house, being tattlers and busybodies, speaking those things which they ought not." But there is more. When people indulge in various forms of inactivity, not only do they harm themselves, but they rob the church of their resources and earning power. We know how we can spend all

kinds of money on ourselves, on vacations and recreational items, but how we pinch the penny when it comes to worthwhile causes; then we can make all kinds of excuses why this or why that does not measure up to our standard of giving. And finally, when we allow visions of retirement to dance in our heads, we deny to one and all that we are on a journey to another and better country. How our talk can betray us! So many years and I will retire. And I will retire on so much per month and I will do this and this. Can this sort of talk be distinguished from the babbling of the rich fool, "Soul, thou hast much good laid up in store for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." This premature endpoint called retirement may not be the object of our lives.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS POSITIVELY

Be content! How the Scriptures celebrate the spiritual grace of contentment! Natural man supposes that gain is godliness. He imagines that he is well-off and God-pleasing when he continues to gain and increase. But such a man is a covetous man and thus an idolater, for he serves not God but himself. His discontent is found in the fact that riches do not please but are deceitful. His bread is the bread of sorrows and he never finds satisfaction. But godliness with contentment is great gain. Does that sound strange? Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content. Be content with your job, with your wages, with your life circumstances; such a contentment consistently displayed will result in a powerful witness! If you suffer patiently at the hands of an unjust employer, if you avoid petty bickering, if you show you have interests other than wealth and pleasure and retirement, you will have an *impact* on those around you and they will ask you questions concerning the hope that is in you.

Secondly, the laboring Christian always prays. As a youth already he makes a matter of prayer what he shall do in this life. God knows, of course, what each one shall do. He has planned our lives with infinite care. It remains for us to discover that perfect will, and the discovery comes about through prayer and the study of the Word. Covenant youth, pray about these things, consider your abilities, consider the needs of the church for laborers, discuss with your parents what is worthwhile labor and what is not. And be sure that the Lord will show you the way! Then, too, pray *as* you labor. Pray for your daily bread, for contentment with your portion, for wise stewardship in respect to the use of the things God has given, for deliverance from the love of money which is the root of all evil.

Finally, and this ought to be encouraging, labor in the knowledge that the hour is late and the return of Jesus Christ for His Church is imminent. Do you do

well and suffer for it? Are you mistreated and do you suffer wrongfully? With Christ, commit yourself to Him which judgeth all things righteously. The time approaches when all things hidden shall be revealed and all things done in secret shall be made public. Then labor and toil, hardship and trouble, pain and injustice will all cease. God shall wipe all tears from

our eyes. Our weary pilgrimage shall have come to an end, and we shall have rest! And even as we have joy and peace because we are righteous in Christ, we shall be busy in God's house, serving Him and loving Him with all our being. Is that your hope? Let it be revealed in your present labor.

STUDIES IN ISAIAH

Consequences of Israel's Apostasy (Isaiah 1 : 5-9)

(Continued from November 1st issue)

III. Israel, Incurable, Nearly Destroyed in Judgment. "Your country, a desert! your cities, burnings! a fire! your land — in your presence (but beyond your power), strangers devour it, yes, a desert, as an overthrowing by strangers," (v. 7). This was accomplished partly in the captivity and fully in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. Jesus prophesied of this in the words, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Mt. 23:38). "And left is the daughter of Zion as a hut in a vineyard, as a hovel in a field of cucumbers, as a city blockaded," (v. 8). There is such desolation that not a human being is to be seen anywhere. It is as we have read in Josephus' account of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. under the Roman military officer, Titus. The people lie hidden, completely out of sight; the attackers, laying siege, do not venture into the no-man's-land around the city for fear of snipers and ambushments. This no-man's-land is denuded, like malpais, bad-lands, lava beds, devastated, both by the besieged themselves, executing burnt-earth policy to leave nothing the enemy can use, and by the enemy who cut down all the trees around Jerusalem and suburbs to leave nothing for the citizenry to use. Jeremiah also foretold of the same desolation of Jerusalem. "Make mention of the nations; behold, publish against Jerusalem, that watchers (besiegers) come from a far country, and give out their voice against

the cities of Judah. As keepers of a field are they against her round about, because she hath been rebellious against Me, saith the Lord," (Jer. 4:16, 17).

IV. Israel Comforted in the Hope of a Remnant. "Unless Jehovah Tsebaoth left to us one escaped (a survivor; a minority of true believers in the midst of the unbelieving), almost we had become as Sodom (with only four human beings escaping), and become like to Gomorrah (which was totally and justly annihilated)," (v. 9). Here God is revealed under the name *Jehovah Tsebaoth*. This is probably an abbreviation, since Jehovah is never in the construct state. The Hebrew never has *Jehovah of* (anything). It is probably an abbreviation of the longest form, "the Lord (Adonai) Jehovah the God of (construct state) hosts," (Amos 3:13). *Tsebaoth* simply means *hosts*, but especially in reference to warfare. Jehovah is Lord of warrior hosts, as when Goliath, who represented "the host of the Philistines" was opposed by David "in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel," (I Sam. 17:45, 46). Besides the martial idea, it is also the name of the Lord in the manifestation of His omnipotence. Psalm 24 reveals "the Lord *mighty* in battle" as "the Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory" (vv. 8, 10), the former clause reaching climax and higher thought in the latter. The

name is never found in the Pentateuch, nor in Ezekiel, nor Daniel, nor directly in Joshua or Judges. It occurs 12 times in the Psalms, 80 times in Jeremiah, 14 times in the two chapters of Haggai, and 24 or 25 times in Malachi. Jehovah is above all *hosts*. This includes, (a) the heavenly hosts (Gen. 2:1; Neh. 9:6; Isa. 40:26). "The true *explanation* of the name must be derived from the phrase, 'the host of heaven,' *tsebha' hashamayim*," (Oehler). Hence the name is one of the most exalting names of God, just as *Adonai* signifies the highest exaltation of and also complete, absolute subjection to the Lord; (b) the angelic hosts (Gen. 32:1, 2; Isa. 6:1-5; 1 K. 22:19; Ps. 103:20, 21; Lk. 2:13); (c) saints (Josh 5:15), and (d) sinners (Jud. 4:2; 2 Sam. 10:16; 2 K. 5:1). The sovereign Lord of hosts marshals all these hosts to fulfill His eternal purposes and to help His people in need. (See Jud. 5:20; 1 S. 11:8-11; 2K. 6:16-17; Isa. 10:16; 14:24, 27; Acts 4:27-28). This is the distinctive name of God for Israel's help and comfort in time of his division and failure. (See 1 K. 18:15; 19:14; Isa. 1:9; 8:11-14; 9:13-19; 10:24-27; 31:4, 5; Hag. 2:4 — no wonder the church takes comfort in the assurance that "the Lord of hosts is with us", Ps. 46:7, 11; — Mal. 3:16, 17; Jas. 5:4). Finally, according to Isa. 37:16, Lord of hosts means God of the *kosmos*, Lord of the universe!

"Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant!" Here is predestination, with its two parts, election and reprobation. The Lord will utterly devastate the land and destroy the city, yet out of the general ruin of the whole nation a remnant shall be saved, (Ro. 9:27). As Jeremiah expressed it, "It is of the Lord's mercies that *we* (the elect) are not consumed," (Lam. 3:22). So that, although in every

age, the world deserves judgment and destruction, and in measure gets its just deserts, the church, however small, is always preserved in the world. It shall not, in any time, utterly perish. According to chapter 11, the tree of the nation will be cut down to nothing but a stump. In fact, only a *seed* shall remain (Rom. 9:29), out of which a shoot will grow to a Branch. In God's eye, all things are ordained with a view to that Seed (Gal. 3:16), that Branch (Zech. 6:12), and the whole organism He represents. The chaff, which in quantity often seems greater than the wheat, is ordained for the preservation of the wheat, the preferred and chosen. The Lord Jesus himself took comfort in the sovereign eternal purpose of God when He prayed, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and intellectual, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." Then in the same vein He comforted His disciples, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

There is always, even in the worst times, an elect remnant, preserved in mercy and kept from abominable iniquity, from destroying judgments, as Noah and his family in the flood, as Lot in the destruction of Sodom. This was done "*unto us*," or *for us*, a clear reference to the elect church, as in 9:6, "*Unto us* a child is born, *unto us* a son is given," and as in Romans 8, "the Spirit himself maketh intercession *for us*," "if God be *for us*, who against us?" God "delivered Him up *for us* all", i.e., *according to the next verse*, "*God's elect*." Christ "also maketh intercession *for us*." This truth is expressed in the words "all things for the elect's sakes," (2 Tim. 2:10).

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THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Safely Home

(2)

Rev. John A. Heys

On leaving home for any reason one always desires a safe return. No matter how eager one is to go on a journey to some distant land, or to go and visit some nearby beauty spot, or even to visit a relative or friend, one always has deepest in one's soul the desire to return safely at home.

The minute the car drives off the yard, the moment the bus leaves the curb, the train leaves the depot, the ship leaves the dock, or the plane leaves the terminal, one departs in the hope of a safe arrival and of a safe journey home.

We need not doubt, therefore, that Noah and his family, when they went into the ark, even though they had implicit trust in God, yea because they had such implicit trust in God, looked forward to a safe return to the dry land, which was their home, the minute they walked into the ark.

It was wonderful to be safe in that ark while all those around and outside of that ark were perishing because of the flood. Yet this ark is not where they belong forever. The hand of God that fed and kept them without sickness and disease for a year and ten days in the ark is the hand that created them to live on dry land.

And here again we come across such a simple statement that is so full of meaning. It is that which we read in Genesis 8:4, "And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat." Think it through once. The ark came down in some mountainous country. The whole region is called "the mountains of Ararat," and the ark did not necessarily rest on

that peak that today is called Mt. Ararat. It came to rest in the region that is called "the mountains of Ararat."

But what a hazardous place for the ark to come to as the waters began to recede! Why did it not come to rest in the plain of Shinar? Should it have come to rest on the steep slope of a mountain, the whole ark could have slid to a crashing halt, killing many if not all of its occupants. Or it could have come to rest in the midst of a thick woods, and granted that the trees might have been dead — although God did preserve them as well, though they were under water for a long period of time — this could have tipped the ark over and given it anything but a safe landing. Or, drifting along, it could have come to a submerged peak that would have destroyed it, as so many ships have been destroyed by hidden icebergs.

But no, this cannot be. The God Who sent the flood to save Noah and his family by the waters of that flood gently set it down in a clearing that was level, even though it was high in the mountains. It "rested" on the mountains of Ararat. Is there not something reassuring in that little word? It did not come to a jarring stop. It did not bang down on the hard rock. It rested.

Its work was finished. That ark had safely brought Noah and his family from the old world to this new world. And we foolishly try to find that ark today. Let us beware lest we try to worship the creature. And you may be sure that had the ark been found, pieces of it would be worshipped and cherished today as though they were holy and had some magical

power in them. God in His wisdom kept that ark from the hands of men who would worship it instead of the God Who caused it to protect His Church and to usher them into the new world. It is Christ, of Whom that ark was a picture and shadow, that we must worship.

He finished His work of justifying us before the judgment seat of God, and then He rested. He is still working our sanctification and glorification. But He cried in triumph on the cross of having finished the work that blots out our guilt. And it is exactly on the basis of this that now He is performing that work of making us holy and of preparing glory for us and of preparing us for that glory. Worship Him as He now rests at God's right hand, enjoying not only the finished work of having paid for our sins by His blood, but also of His own glorification as our Head. And let the remains of that ark — if indeed they are in a condition after all these years that would clearly indicate them to be the remains of the ark — rest quietly where they are. Let us look to the Christ and away from the types and shadows, which have served their purpose, lest we fall into idolatry ourselves.

For Noah, however, it was not such a simple thing that, when the ark rested, he and the animals came out and entered into their new home. There still was a patient waiting period required. They undoubtedly were aware at once that the ark settled on that mountain and was no longer adrift. They were conscious of stability again and that the ark no longer

moved. In this they were also conscious of the hand of God's providence and grace.

For not only did they, the day they entered the ark, look forward to a safe journey in it and safe arrival in the new world, they also looked forward to such an arrival in a new world. They knew that they would not spend the rest of their lives in the ark. Hebrews 11:7 says that Noah being warned of God by faith prepared an ark to the saving of his house. By faith, then, he saw safety in the ark, in a time when by faith he saw a flood which was not as yet. But by faith he also looked forward to living on the dry land once more. About this he had no doubt. That whole ark full of land animals made no sense, if they were not to return to their habitat. The wood that surrounded those who were inside that ark, had grown on the dry land and had protected them from water which would have taken away their life, were it not for that ark that was constructed on the dry land and out of the timber grown on the dry land.

Noah therefore was aware of God's intent to bring him back home to his natural habitat, and he likewise knew, when the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, that he must patiently wait until God had assuaged the waters to the point where there was room and a place for him and the animals to live. And to ascertain the moment he first sent out a raven and a dove. He had opened a window which God had instructed him to put there while he was building the ark. The proportions of that ark are a bit of the

Although, therefore, I thus affirm that God did ordain the Fall of Adam, I so assert it as by no means to concede that God was therein properly and really the *author* of that Fall. That I may not, however, dwell extensively on this great point now, I will only express it as my view, belief and sentiment, that what Augustine so deeply teaches on this matter was fulfilled in God's ordaining the Fall of Adam: "In a wonderful and unutterable way *that* was not done *without* the will of God (says he), which was even done *contrary* to His will; because it could not have been done at all, if His will had not *permitted* it to be done. And yet He did not permit it *unwillingly*, but *willingly*." The great and grand principle, therefore, on which Augustine argues cannot be denied: "That both man and apostate angels, as far as they were themselves concerned, did *that* which God *willed not*, or which was *contrary* to His Will; but that, as far as God's *overruling omnipotence* is concerned, they could not, in any manner, have done it *without* His will." To these sentiments of the holy man I subscribe with all my heart. I solemnly hold that man and apostate angels *did*, by their sin, *that* which was *contrary* to the will of God, to the end that God, by means of their *evil will*, might effect that which was *according* to His *decreeing will*."

—John Calvin
The Eternal Predestination of God
 pg. 127

wisdom of God, and not of Noah. And the design of the door which God closed upon Noah, and of this window which Noah used to let forth the raven and the dove were divinely determined and given to Noah.

Diverse these birds certainly were. Much is made today of the hawks and the doves, the former being figurative language of those who are war-minded, and the latter as a figure of those who are all out for peace, often at any cost. But here the idea is specifically between the flesh-eating birds and the plant-eating birds. There is, of course, a difference in size and strength as well. But the two, wisely chosen again by God and not by Noah, except as God put the idea in Noah's mind, serve to relate to Noah the rapidity or slowness of the abating of the waters.

The raven never returned. Being the carnivorous bird that it was it found food in the form of the carcasses that still floated upon the waters. And not being particular where it rested its feet, it found no need of going back to the ark. The dove found not only no food but also no place for her foot. She is quite particular where she sets her foot down and welcomed the comfort and food of the ark. And God, Who had created this bird with its nature, used it now to keep Noah informed as to the condition of the earth upon which he belonged. God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. Weakest means fulfill His will, mighty enemies to still. And when God moved the dove, after being let go one week later, to pluck off an olive leaf and to bring it to Noah, He gave Noah the sign for which he had been looking. And he waited patiently seven more days and then removed the covering of the ark and looked and saw the dry ground.

What mixed emotions he might have had are not recorded. Certainly there must have been a sense of joy at seeing the dry land again after all those weeks of confinement. But there certainly was also a sense of sadness and even of loneliness. How different the world looked! For, even though he embarked on his journey from a sin-cursed harbor, his ship had now come to the end of its journey in a land that clearly showed the effects of God's mighty wrath and its destructive powers. It may have been a breathtaking view which Noah saw from out of the ark and before he abandoned ship, but it certainly was a different world. The land may have been richer because of the upheaval of tons of rich sea-bottom soil through the flood, when the fountains of the deep were opened up, but this was only a reminder of the wrath of God that had sent that flood.

And here they were, eight souls in a big world! They had had to live with each other in close confinement for a year and ten days. And that may have had its problems, for they all had their flesh.

However, the arrival at their destination, their coming to their new home did not take away an awful awareness that they were the only human beings in a new world which they had to explore without the help of natives who knew the land.

Contrast all this with that of which it all is a type, and see how much more wonderful the reality is than the shadow. In Christ we are all safe — and will be safe when the judgment of fire comes upon this earth — and will surely arrive in not a new world but a new creation. Though the body may be in the grave much longer than a year and ten days, and even longer than a millenium and ten decades, it will ultimately enter the new creation, as well as the soul, which enters into the presence of God the moment of death. There may be a violent death. There may be visible the death struggle that so often occurs as the body reluctantly gives up the soul. But that soul gently comes to rest in the glory of heaven. There will be no jarring entrance and landing. As the ark rested quietly upon the mountains of Ararat, the soul of the child of God swiftly but gently floats to an immediate and delightfully comfortable place in the glory of heaven. And we can only wonder at the tremendous surprise and contrasting jubilation that shall in the twinkling of an eye be experienced by the child of God who comes there, after a painful or violent death.

We will arrive in no world that manifests God's wrath and the curse, but into a realm that speaks of His love and radiates blessedness. Just read Revelation 21 and 22. For that land we are headed. There we will arrive as surely and as gently as Noah and his family arrived in the new world.

And you will not feel lonesome. Nor can you possibly be lonesome there. You will be received by God's holy angels and be with Christ and with the host of the other saints. Human words can never express all the wonder of such an arrival and of such a life. By faith we can see it darkly in the Scriptures as through a glass. But the face-to-face enjoyment is surely coming. And for every child of God there is a safe journey to that home. As the waters of the flood saved Noah and his family from the world of enemies, the fire of the day of Christ will separate us forever from the enemies of the church and bring us also to that phase of our salvation.

Let us change the prayer in the hymn to a confession of faith:

Jesus Saviour pilots me
Over life's tempestuous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treach'rous shoal:
Safer, though, I could not be —
Jesus Saviour Pilots me.

News From Our Churches

News which has, apparently, appeared in all of our church bulletins is that the Mission Committee, in a joint session with the Consistory of First Church, "decided to suspend labors of Rev. Lubbers in Jamaica in December until the 1974 Synod meets." The bulletins noted that "Rev. Lubbers feels that his work there is finished and therefore his presence is no longer required." One bulletin gave the added information that Rev. Lubbers plans to arrive in the states on December 11. Another noted that the Mission Committee intends to "send two emissaries to the island in the Spring to evaluate the field. . . . The emissaries will report their findings to the Committee and then they can come to Synod with a proposal concerning future labors in Jamaica."

Rev. Moore, we understand, intended to preach two Thanksgiving Day sermons — the first in Doon at 8:45, and the second in Hull at 10:15. This sort of sister-church cooperation came about on account of the absence of Hull's pastor, Rev. Kortering, who was busy in what appears to be the most promising of the labors being conducted by our churches in various parts of the country. We refer to that in Houston, Texas. Reports are that as many as eighty individuals have attended the morning services. And, according to a Hudsonville bulletin, "fourteen families have requested further labors there." According to another account, "each one who has been there has given a very favorable report." Those who have been there include, first of all, Rev. Lubbers who, you perhaps

recall, stopped there briefly while enroute to Jamaica last July. Subsequent to that visit, the Mission Committee decided to investigate further in that area. The result has been that, beginning with Sunday, September 30, several of our ministers have spent consecutive three-week periods in Houston. The first of those visits was made by Rev. Engelsma, the second by Rev. Kuiper, and the third by Rev. Kortering. That would bring us through Sunday, November 25. Because, as Southeast's bulletin pointed out, "the nature of this work demands that there be continuity," our efforts in Texas will be carried on further by Rev. Schipper, who has been requested by the Mission Committee to spend the first three weeks of December there.

In other news, we find that Professor Hanco spent the first week-end of November in Maine "upon the request of the congregation there." Rev. Engelsma has declined the call extended to him by our church in Prospect Park, New Jersey. Rev. Lanting, incidentally, preached there on the last two Sundays of October and the first of November. Rev. Van Baren declined the call from South Holland.

* * * * *

You might be interested in knowing that the recent Seminary Fund Drive has brought the total cash and pledges, as of October 31, 1973, to \$122,222.98. Outstanding pledges amount to approximately \$28,000. The October 31 total, by the way, suggests an average per family contribution, throughout our

(continued on back page)

ANNIVERSARY

On December 10, 1973, the Lord willing, our dear parents, MR. AND MRS. WILLIAM FEENSTRA, will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our Heavenly Father for keeping them in His loving care these many years.

We pray that God will continually bestow His grace upon them in their remaining years.

Their grateful children:

Lawrence Alan Feenstra
Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Baker
Mr. and Mrs. David De Jong
Steven Neal Feenstra

IN MEMORIAM

The Men's Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, mourns the loss of its faithful Bible leader and President, PETER BYKERK, who passed away Thursday afternoon, November 8, 1973.

His firm confession was - "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. . . ." II Timothy 4:7, 8a.

Chas. Pastoor, Vice Pres.
Art Bult, Secretary

IN MEMORIAM

On Thursday, November 8, 1973, it pleased our Heavenly Father to take to eternal glory our very dear husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather MR. PETER BYKERK at the age of 70 years.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15).

Mrs. Peter Bykerk
Mrs. Winnie Saurman
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bykerk
Mr. and Mrs. Arie Bykerk
Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Bykerk
Miss Lubertha Bykerk
15 grand children
5 great-grandchildren

Have you made use of

the "green sheet" in our last issue?

own seminary building. That's really wonderful, it seems to me. Wonderful it is too, that quite a number of contributions (some of them considerable) have come from outside our denomination.

* * * * *

The past couple of months has, as has become somewhat customary at that time of year, seen a goodly number of public lectures sponsored by our various churches. In South Holland, on October 15, Rev. Kortering spoke on "Biblical Evangelism." In First Church, on October 25, Prof. Hanko lectured on "The Gospel and the Free Offer." On November 16 he delivered that lecture in Randolph. On that same evening, Rev. Engelsma was speaking in the Loveland Community building. The topic of his "Reformation Day lecture" was, "The Reformation and Good Works." That program was sponsored by the Loveland Church Extension Committee, which noted that "the emphasis will be on the necessity and obligation of the believer to do good works, something which is not the replacement of grace but rather the fruits of it. The lecture will be advertised in the Loveland, Longmont, Fort Collins, and Greeley newspapers, in addition to announcements over KLOV."

The Reformed Witness Committee (of Doon, Edgerton, Hull) sponsored a series of lectures in Holland, Minnesota. On October 17, Rev. Lanting spoke on predestination. The antithesis was the subject of a speech by Rev. Moore on October 24. And, on October 31, Rev. Kortering lectured on the Reformation. The committee also planned to sponsor two lectures in the public school auditorium of Sioux Center. On November 12, Rev. Engelsma was to deliver his address on Key 73, and on Dec. 3 Rev. Kortering will speak on "Biblical Evangelism."

Just a little further back is the series of lectures sponsored by the Reformed Witness Committee of Grand Rapids Hope Church. The lectures were held in the Coopersville High School auditorium on the evenings of September 20, October 4, and October 18. For the first in the series, Rev. Van Overloop spoke on "The Organism of the Truth." The topics of his second and third addresses were "The Relationship Between the Truth and Life," and "The True Church."

D.D.

THE STANDARD BEARER

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CONTENTS

A Call To Thanksgiving	98
Infant Baptism Denied in the Gereformeerde Kerken ..	100
About God's Attributes	103
About A Christian Philosophy	104
Watergate And The Fifth Commandment	105
Key 73 - A Failure	106
Growth In Private Schools	107
The Standard Bearer in Retrospect	108
Building Project - Protestant Reformed Church of Randolph, Wisconsin	110
Thoughts on Labor ... Retirement ... Vacations ... Leisure	111
Consequences of Israel's Apostasy (Isa. 1:5-9)	114
Safely Home (2)	116
News From Our Churches	119