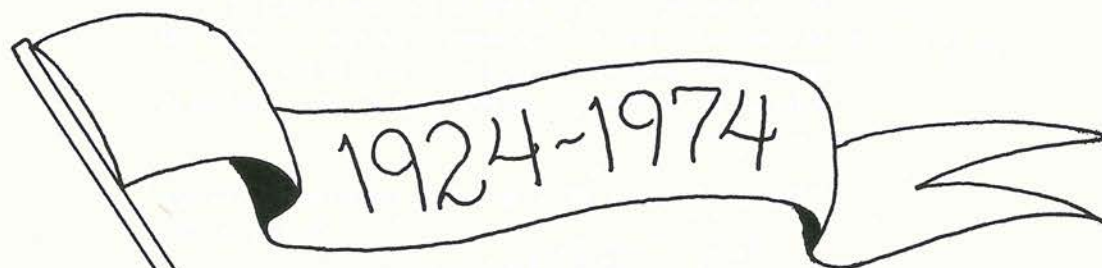


# The STANDARD BEARER



PLAYED BECAUSE

50TH  
YEAR  
OF  
PUBLICATION

PSALM 60:4

A BANNER DIS-

OF THE TRUTH.

THE STANDARD BEARER

EDITORIAL STAFF

Rev. H. Danhof  
Rev. H. Hocksema  
Rev. G. G. Oph  
G. Van Reek

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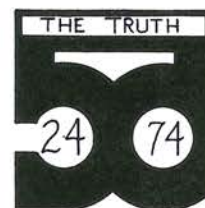
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## MEDITATION



# Jehovah's Goodness

*[Editor's Note: The meditation in this issue is a reprint of the very first meditation ever to appear in the Standard Bearer, from Volume I, Number 1, page 1. It is from the pen of one of the original editors, Rev. Herman Hoeksema. We place this meditation instead of the regular one from the pen of Rev. M. Schipper in observance of the beginning of our fiftieth year of publication.]*

*"The Lord is good to all . . . but all the wicked will He destroy."*

Ps. 145:9a, 20b.

Emphatically, according to the Hebrew original, the poet, who is the inspired author of this psalm, puts it: "Good is Jehovah".

The Lord is goodness essentially.

Apart from any relation to His creatures, conceived all by Himself, in Himself, for Himself, as the absolutely Self-existent, Self-sufficient, Independent One, the Lord is good. His essence is goodness, His eternally adorable Divine Being is only good. Could we enter into the amazing profundity and explore the fathomless depths of His infinite Being, the deepest depths of the incomprehensible divine essence would reveal nothing but goodness.

He is the Light and there is no darkness in Him. He is Truth, Righteousness, Holiness, Purity, Love, Grace, Mercy and Eternal Life, and there is no Lie, Unrighteousness, Defilement, Corruption and Death in Him.

He is *Summum Bonum*, the Highest Good, not in a mere superlative sense, not in a sense that would compare Him with other goods or goodnesses, that might perhaps be conceived as existing next to Him though in a far inferior degree; but in the sense that He is the Sole Good, that there is no good apart from Him or without Him. He is the ultimate and absolute criterion of all good. He is not good in the sense that He answers to a certain standard of goodness that might be applied to Him, but Himself is the only Standard of all that is called good.

He is good because He is God.

Very perfection in all His adorable virtues . . .

Good is Jehovah!

\* \* \* \*

The Lord is good!

And because the very Being of His adorable Godhead is goodness, the Divine Nature in all the glorious attributes thereof is purest perfection and immaculate goodness. Neither is there any reason of want in God why He should need an object unto which to reveal and upon which to lavish His goodness. For as the Triune God He lives from everlasting to everlasting the perfect life of Infinite goodness in and through Himself. Never there arises from the unfathomable depths of His perfect Essence the slightest thought that is not good, perfect, true. Never the faintest thrill of imperfection there is in the Will of Jehovah. Never the most imperceptible discord there is in His divine feeling. Never there is the tiniest ripple of evil on the stream of life flowing from His divine heart.

No shadow of darkness ever bedims the light of life, perfect and infinite, of the Divine Family. Father, Son and Holy Ghost, each eternally subsisting in the unchangeable Essence of limitless goodness, thinking in the Perfect Mind, willing with the Perfect Will is living in absolute Self-sufficiency an uninterrupted divine life of purest goodness, dwelling in a Light that is never in any wise bedimmed.

Yea, good is Jehovah!

Everlastingly, solely, unchangeably good!

\* \* \* \*

Because the Lord is good, the absolute good in Himself, He



is also good to all His creatures.

Good is Jehovah to all!

He is the Overflowing Fount of all good.

All the good His creatures ever receive is solely from Him and is only good because He is good, assumes an attitude of goodness to them. He is full of richest benevolence which He lavishes in profuse abundance upon all the wide creation. His goodness profuses the silvery lustre thruout the starry heavens and arranges their marvellous harmony night upon night. His goodness decks the sun with that glorious attire of wondrous gold, day after day. His goodness adorns the lily of the field with purest beauty such as Solomon never possessed and clothes the royal cedars of Lebanon with strength and majesty. His goodness causes the royal eagle to renew its strength as it sweeps the firmament with powerful wing; and fills the mouth of the young raven crying to Him for food. His goodness remembers the roaring lion and the chirping sparrow on the housetop. His goodness clothes the meadows in velvety green and covers the fields with golden grain. His goodness made man a little lower than the angels, adds keenness to his mind and strength to his arm, and fills his heart with gladness.

Surely, all the works of His hand speak of His goodness.

Good is Jehovah to all!

\* \* \* \*

Nor is this the last word that is to be said about the goodness of Jehovah.

It may be the last in the estimation of a Natural Religion, that knows of no sin and speaks of no grace.

It might be the last word had Paradise not been lost. There in the midst of that Edenic virgin beauty of creation, in that original state of unmarred perfection, where sin had not dropped her stain and misery had not left her scar and the groan of the sufferer was not heard, — there God's goodness displayed itself simply as goodness, overflowing riches of benevolence, poured upon every creature according to the measure of its capacity.

The single light-beam of God's goodness had not resolved itself into the many-colored rays of His grace, tender mercy and loving kindness in contrast with His holy wrath and faultless justice.

But sin entered. And in the wake of sin came death. And with death followed suffering in all its awful forms, agony of soul and body, pain, sorrow, grief, fear. And the curse of God was pronounced upon the creature and subjected it to vanity; the chilling breath of a good God, maintaining Himself in his goodness over against a sinful world, caused the whole creation

to groan and travail together in pain. And even thus the creature made subject to vanity and man in his guilt bending under the cruel scourge of suffering and death are testimonies that the Lord is good and that there is no evil in Him.

But more must be said.

Suffering creation, sin and guilt and misery and death and all the thick darkness from hell only became the occasion for God to manifest His goodness more abundantly. Darkness was employed by Him as a prism thru which to resolve the pure white beam of His goodness into wonderful rays of manifold perfection. First of all, there is, on occasion of sin and suffering, the beautiful and rich manifestation of God's wonderful mercy and lovingkindness. His tender mercies are over all His works. Radiating from the cross of God's beloved Son this tender mercy beams its warm glory first of all upon His chosen people whom He loved with love everlasting, with a love that is always first. Upon them He lavishes His tender mercy in the blood pouring from the heart of His only begotten, and in these streams of mercy He cleanses them from guilt, heals them from sin, redeems them from the power of death, comforts them forever for their misery, and makes them heirs of a glory unspeakable, of a life incomparably richer, fuller, deeper than ever First Paradise knew. They taste His lovingkindness and tender mercy, speak of it and sing of it, showing forth the praises of Him that called them from darkness into His marvellous light. But even as the awful darkness of sin and misery spread from the first Adam till it enshrouded an entire groaning creation in its horrors, so the glad light of redemption radiates from the Second Adam, falls first upon the elect, thence to spread again over the whole creation. Remembering His groaning creature with bowels of mercy and compassion, the Lord stretches the rainbow of an everlasting covenant over all. His tender mercies are over all His works.

The creature is made subject to vanity. It is subject to the yoke of bondage. It is travailing in pain together until now . . .

But in hope!

The whole creation shall be liberated from the bondage of corruption and be made to partake of the glorious liberty of the children of God!

Bowels of mercy!

The Lord is good to all!! His tender mercy is over all His works!

\* \* \* \*

Good is Jehovah.

But all the wicked will He destroy.



Seemingly there is irreconcilable conflict here. The Lord is good, and yet He destroys. Many a sinful mind will not have it so. Many would dream of a goodness without righteousness, of a grace without justice, of a benevolence without holy wrath. And yet, upon closer investigation this apparent conflict disappears, dissolves itself into most sublime harmony. He will destroy all the wicked because He is good. The destruction of the wicked, God's wrath upon them is but another aspect of His perfect goodness.

The wicked are the vessels of wrath, fitted unto destruction. They are those that love iniquity and hate righteousness. God is not in all their thoughts. They say within their hearts, they express it in their words, they reveal it in their ways, — that there is no God. They are God's enemies and children of their father the Devil. They dwell in darkness and love it. They crucify Christ and persecute His people.

They make the measure of their iniquity full.

So are all the wicked.

But the Lord is good. And because He is good and there is no evil in Him, because He is a light and there is no darkness in Him, therefore, His soul loves the righteous and loatheth the wicked. His face beams with tender mercy upon those that love Him, but burns with fierce wrath upon them that love iniquity; He preserves the righteous but destroys all the wicked.

The Lord is good. Therefore there are in Him bowels of mercy and consuming fires of holy wrath!

Hallelujah!

## EDITORIAL

# Beginning Our Fiftieth Year — Thanks Be To God!

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*



If you took note of the cover of this issue of our *Standard Bearer* when it arrived in your mail, you will already have noticed that there must be something special afoot with our magazine. And indeed there is! Perhaps you have already discovered the nature of this special occasion. For if you inspected the new symbol displayed on the cover, and looked carefully at the reproduction of the very first masthead ever used to identify our magazine, you will have discovered, too, that the occasion is the *beginning* of our fiftieth year of publication.

That in itself means that we have reached a milestone.

Actually, however, we of the Staff and of the Board conceive of matters thus, that we are now, as it were, running the last mile before reaching the more important milestone of the *completion* of our fiftieth year. That, if the Lord wills that we reach it, will be the Golden Anniversary of our *Standard Bearer*. And plans are already under way, through a joint committee of the Staff and the Board, to observe this fiftieth

year in some way in all twenty-one issues of this year, yet so that the observance of this golden anniversary year reaches its climax, its grand finale, upon the completion of this volume-year, the actual Golden Anniversary.

Not only has the committee been laying plans; they have also been hard at work already. The anniversary symbol on our cover is evidence of this, for one thing. Some changes in the format of our magazine are further evidence. The *Meditation* appearing in this issue, and which we deem to be particularly appropriate and in keeping with the note which our magazine has always sounded, is also part of the anniversary-observance in this issue. As noted, it was the first meditation on the first page of the first issue of the first volume; and it was written by one of the first editors, the late Reverend Herman Hoeksema. The committee plans to reproduce a worthwhile article from the past in every issue of this volume. And all the articles pertinent to this anniversary celebration will be marked by the little "50" symbol which is found at the head of this editorial.

The committee also asked your editor to devote a few lines



to this anniversary-beginning, with which request I gladly hereby comply.

\* \* \* \* \*

How does one observe an anniversary?

Naturally, one's first inclination is to reminisce. And I could probably fill more than one page with such reminiscences: not only the more valuable ones which have to do with the treasures of theological and spiritual gold which may be found enfolded in those volumes which go all the way back to 1924; not only reminiscences of the history of its publication — the trials and tribulations through which Society and Board and Business Managers passed, as sometimes they desperately struggled to keep the *Standard Bearer* alive and fiscally healthy, as in the time, for example, of the Great Depression. But also interesting anecdotes, as well as serious accounts, concerning the labors of those two "mighty men of valor," Herman Hoeksema and George M. Ophoff, who for years and years wrote the lion's share of the contents of our magazine. Oh, yes, I could reminisce. Not only can I do that by engrossing myself in the past volumes — and whoever possesses the volumes will know what I mean by that word "engrossing," for one can intend to look up a single article, and in the process of doing so soon spend a couple of hours reading this or that article which is interesting, but which he never intended to read at the outset. But I can also tell many a tale from personal experience and observation. I am only slightly older than our *Standard Bearer*; and I have been directly connected with its publication for not quite half of its fifty years. But I lived as a son in the home of our first editor-in-chief during the early years of our magazine. My first memory goes back to the days when I was a little boy: I can still see my father and Rev. Ophoff and Mr. G. Van Beek gathered around our dining room table, pasting up a "mock-up" of an issue as they used to do in those days. Or I can hear the clickety-clack of the old Remington Noiseless upon arising in the morning; for there were many "S. B. articles" written in the "wee hours" of the morning before the family was awake. Or I can see my mother's embarrassed blush when one of the late Rev. Gerrit Vos's articles came "Airmail-Special Delivery" — right into the Sunday morning church service! I can still see the genial Rev. Vos, too, the next time he met my mild-mannered mother when he was on vacation in Grand Rapids. Rev. Vos was usually not at a loss for words; but for once he was stunned to silence when my mother "bawled him out" for disturbing her worship with his rush-article from Redlands, California. I can remember the rejoicing when the *Standard Bearer* met with glad acceptance even in other parts of the world; I can also remember the dejection of its editors when upon occasion our magazine met with reproach and rejection from supposed supporters. Yes, I can tell many a story . . .

But reminiscences as such are of not much worth. They may be pleasant, or they may be painful.

And they *can* be very carnal! For they can lead to boasting; and boasting on an occasion such as this would certainly be abominable in the sight of God.

How shall we observe this anniversary-year?

By saying from the heart: "Thanks be to our Covenant God!"

And what does that thanksgiving imply concretely?

First of all, it implies that we recount before Him, before one another, before our children, before all the public, His manifold mercies and blessings. The very fact that we have been enabled to publish for all these years is due only to His grace. He has provided the means, even when at times it seemed impossible to continue. He has provided the men — all through the years — to write, to expound, to defend, to hold fast the heritage once delivered unto us, the heritage of the Reformed faith. He has provided the readers, the loyal supporters, the willing givers. Yes, indeed, He has made all things well! It is of the Lord's mercies that we were not consumed long before we ever reached this anniversary year! Thanks be to God!

But even then we have not touched on the most important element. To reach the fiftieth year of publication is wonderful, but only because as we begin this fiftieth year, we do so without any essential change from what we were in the first year of our publication, do so with the same Reformed stance as in 1924!

We have not changed!

Our *Standard Bearer* today bears the standard, the flag, of the truth, even as it did in its very first issue. Yes, there have been many changes: changes of format, changes of personnel, changes of readership. Not only so, but there has indeed been change in the *Standard Bearer* in the sense that we have not stood still. There has been *progress*. There has been *development*. But the progress and development have been a following of the same banner of the truth of God's Word and of our Reformed Confessions which was held high from the very beginning of this venture of faith. This was brought home to me forcibly on a Sunday evening not long ago. After serving as a guest preacher in one of our pulpits, I stopped to chat a few moments with two of the "old-timers," men of the first generation of our churches. One was in his eighties, the other in his seventies. I love to listen to these men; they have insights gained from years of experience. Somehow the conversation turned to the subject of our churches and their heritage. And these two brethren testified as they thought back upon the years: "We have not changed! Our churches are the same in their doctrine and their preaching as they were fifty years ago." They were right! And to hear these elder statesmen of the church say this was music in my ears! But then another brother joined in the conversation, a man of my own



generation. And he said: "Yes, but we have not stood still!" "No," said the two brethren, "we have not stood still. We have developed, but we have developed in the line of the truth." And that was music in my ears, too!

But remember this: that we have not changed is not due to us. No, it is because the Lord has not changed. Great has been the faithfulness of our Covenant God!

Let us recount the lovingkindness of our God, and say, "Thanks, Lord, for Thy unchanging faithfulness and for Thy preserving grace. All the thanks and the praise be only to Thy Name!"

In the second place, however, let this thanks be more than the fruit of our lips. Let our thanksgiving find concrete expression in this anniversary year in rededication and

renewed zeal! Rededication on the part of our editorial staff, rededication on the part of our Reformed Free Publishing Association and its Board, rededication on the part of our readers and supporters! Let us dedicate ourselves anew to the purpose of bearing forth the standard of the truth. Let us with renewed zeal labor to spread abroad the truth which God has given us as a heritage. Let us consecrate ourselves again to the purpose of passing on this tradition of the fathers to our children and our children's children.

May God give us grace to hold aloft, especially in this day of fierce battle against the powers of darkness and the lie, the banner of the truth of His sovereign grace and His everlasting and faithful covenant.

All the thanks and the praise be to His Name alone!

---

## ALL AROUND US

# Threats To Parental Education

*Prof. H. Hanko*

It is that time of the year again when our children have returned to school. This is an important time of the year for covenant parents because the sending of their covenant children to covenant schools is part of the fulfillment of the vows which they made at the time when they presented their children for baptism. They send their children to school with many prayers — prayers for the School Boards upon which falls the responsibility for the operation of the school; prayers for the teachers who have the difficult task of taking charge of this aspect of covenant instruction; prayers for their children that, through this instruction also, the children of God's covenant may be thoroughly equipped to walk as God's party in the midst of the world.

Parents have not only sent their children to school in the realization that these children are precious gifts of Jehovah their God, but also in the full consciousness that the education of these children is a *parental* responsibility. This is a point which, I think, needs no argument among us. We believe that the truth of God's everlasting covenant of grace carries with it the solemn obligation for *parents* to instruct their children in the ways of the Lord. This is also emphasized throughout Scripture. God lays upon parents, and upon them alone, the task of giving their children covenant instruction. No one else is given this task in Scripture. It is for this reason that we have erected parental schools. And they will survive as covenant schools only if they remain parental schools.



With all this I am leading up to a point of increasing concern to me in recent years. I refer to various threats to parental schools which have manifested themselves from time to time. It is well that, at the beginning of a new year of school life we be warned of these threats that we may be on our guard against them and strive earnestly to maintain our schools as parental schools.

There is, of course, the threat of government intervention. This is a very real threat, and it comes particularly in the form of government aid of one sort or another to those who operate and maintain parochial and/or parental schools. This problem of whether government aid to parochial and parental schools is constitutional or not is still not completely solved and still awaits further judgment in the courts. The temptation is always there to ease the "burden" of supporting our schools through receiving government aid. But it is a sure way to bring into our schools government control. The state knows perhaps better than we that the way to mold the minds and lives of men is to educate the youth according to the philosophies which the state believes. Especially in these days of refined methods of propaganda and subtle indoctrination the state is gradually attaining its goal of mass conformity to its godless philosophies. We know that the state is determined that all the populace shall be bent to its will and that not very subtle efforts will be made to include in such education the children of God's covenant. We must steadfastly resist these incursions in whatever form they take. They spell the end of covenant education.

But it is not with this threat that I am particularly concerned in this article. I see, within our own school structures, a three-fold threat to parental education. As most of our readers know, most parental - Christian schools (not parochial) are set up in such a way that a society of parents appoints or elects a Board which is in charge of the operation of the school. To this Board is entrusted the responsibility of raising money, hiring teachers, determining the curriculum, etc. Within the schools the teachers themselves are responsible for the education of the children while an administrator is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school. This, in broad outline, is how the schools are operated.

There is in this set-up a three-fold threat to parental education. That threat arises when either one of the three involved in operating the school (parents, Board or faculty) fails in some way in its assigned task.

It is possible for teachers to threaten parental education. I am not referring to the fact that it is possible to have in the school incompetent teachers who are simply not intellectually and spiritually equipped to perform their task. This, of course, can also happen. But it is not this which concerns me at the moment. What does concern me is the fact that there can conceivably be a spirit on the part of all or some of the faculty in a given school which manifests itself in what I can only call professional arrogance. It is possible that teachers begin to

consider themselves a professional elite who alone are in a position to determine *what* must be taught in a given school and *how* such instruction must be carried out. The argument goes something like this. Teachers are trained for their profession. They go to High School, College and University with the express purpose of becoming masters in their own fields not only, but also with the purpose of learning all the principles of education in the fields of philosophy of education and educational methodology. They consider themselves, as a result, authorities in their fields. Add to this knowledge which they have acquired over the years, a number of years of actual classroom experience in which they have put all they learned to the test of classroom work and have honed to a fine edge their professional abilities, and there is a real danger that these teachers assume that they alone know all there is to know about this matter of education. The conclusion is therefore, that they, and no one else, are in a proper position to determine what ought to be taught in a school and how such teaching should be carried on. In most instances parents are not as highly educated as the teachers, and, if parents have been educated, they are at least, not competent in the field of education. So not parents but teachers must assume the entire responsibility of taking care of the education of the children of the covenant. The whole responsibility then, is taken from parents and given over completely into the hands of a professional elite. This is one threat to parental education.

I am *not* saying that this is happening in our own Protestant Reformed Schools. As far as I have been able to observe, this is not, generally speaking, an *immediate* danger. Nor am I saying that teachers ought to have nothing whatsoever to say about what ought to be taught in the schools; and that they should have absolutely no voice at all in all questions of methods of teaching. Nor am I saying that education of teachers and professional competence is a thing to be scorned. Do not mistake me.

But I am saying three things: 1) The danger is very real. In a proposed statement entitled "Schools in the Christian Community" authored by James H. Olthuis and Bernard Zylstra the whole problem of parental responsibility in education is discussed. The authors come specifically to the conclusion that, "it is our conviction that the school as we envisage it today lies outside of the parents' authority in the home." They add a bit later: "(Parents) execute that responsibility sending the children to a school, within which educational *authority* is exercised by the team of teachers. From this vantage-point the authority of the parents does not reach into the educational process of the school." What is left to the parents? "... when the child is too sick to attend school; what clothes it should wear; whether corporal punishment is to be allowed; in what context homework is to be done, etc." This is a flat denial of parental education and a complete abdication on the part of parents who hand over, lock, stock and barrel, their responsibility to a professional elite. This view has had more influence than we often



recognize. 2) Parents must recognize that teachers are in a position to do much for their children and are certainly, under normal circumstances, better equipped to advise and suggest concerning all aspects of the educational process. But this should be done in closest cooperation with parents. 3) The final and ultimate responsibility under God rests with parents and with them alone. They must have the right to have the final say in all matters of education. No teacher may ever deny a parent the right to have a voice in the education of the children — although this voice must be expressed in orderly ways. No teacher or group of teachers may ever set their professional competence above that of the parents' responsibility before God to instruct the children of the covenant of grace in the fear of Jehovah.

The second danger which is a threat to a parental school is the danger of what we may perhaps call "boardism." An example of this lies at hand. It has been said to me that we should not elect to our boards in our Christian Schools any men except those who have had at least a college education. We should not entrust the operation of our schools to uneducated parents, nor should we permit boards composed of parents without some educational degrees to be in charge of the affairs of the school. Behind this plea lay a supposition which amounted to a claim that all the power for the operation of the school should rest with the Board. I have, in my own experience, met with Board members who conceived of the relation between a School Board and a School Society as being analogous to that of a Consistory to the congregation. The argument was then that just as a Consistory is invested by God with authority to rule over the congregation, so was a School Board invested with the authority to rule over a School Society. Hence, the Board and the Board alone have the "say" in the operation of the School. This Board not only determines on its own all matters which pertain to the School, but it is not answerable to the Society for what it does. And the implication is once again that the majority of parents are nincompoops who do not have sufficient education or intelligence to fulfill the responsibilities which God has given to them and to them alone. This is a threat to parental education which is to be avoided like the plague.

The third threat to parental education is a threat which arises from the failure on the part of parents to exercise their God-given responsibilities. Whether this is the greatest threat or not I do not know. I do know that within our own school system parental neglect and indifference to covenantal instruction lies at the root of many problems which the teachers and the Boards repeatedly face. It is almost true

sometimes that teachers take upon themselves decisions which they ought not because there is thrust upon them the necessity of making these decisions by parental sloth. The attitude often prevails among us that, because we have excellent schools, dedicated teachers, consecrated School Boards, we as parents can safely leave the whole matter of covenant instruction to these teachers and we need not bother our heads about the whole matter.

There are two aspects to this evil which we ought briefly to remember. One aspect of the problem is the failure on the part of parents to concern themselves in almost any way with the education which the children are receiving in the schools. These parents never (or seldom) inquire of their children concerning their instruction, progress and work. They never supervise homework. They rarely talk to the teachers about their children. They do not even, as a rule, attend society meetings. The education of their children is a process of which they have no awareness — until disaster strikes in one form or another. And then the teacher gets all the blame. Most, if not all, teachers welcome the active interest of parents in all aspects of the educational process. They want the parents to be involved as much as possible. And they fret when parents show little or no interest.

The other aspect to this problem is the failure of parents to perform their own covenantal tasks in the home. Just because our children are regularly attending Christian schools does not mean that we have nothing more to do in the calling and responsibilities of covenant instruction. The fact of the matter is that the instruction which children receive in the home is still the spiritually *decisive* instruction of the covenant. So true is this that without faithfulness on the part of parents in their calling, the best Christian Schools will flounder and be of no avail. Teachers, dedicated and consecrated teachers, not only know this is essential, but must, in the nature of their task, assume that parents are fulfilling their responsibilities all the while these same children are attending school. In the final analysis, any successful education in the school becomes impossible without it.

These are present day threats. I speak of them to warn you against them that you may be on your guard. We must, for the sake of the precious truth of God's everlasting covenant of grace and for the future of our Churches, maintain the principle of parental education.

**REFORMED DOGMATICS, (Second printing). \$9.95 postpaid.**



## CONVOCATION ADDRESS

# God's Word Like A Fire And Like A Hammer

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

*(Editor's note: The following address was delivered at the convocation of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, held this year at the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids on Sept. 5, 1973.)*

This school year bids fair to be an historic year for our seminary. Last Friday evening I visited 4949 Ivanrest. Our new building is taking shape. Walking, in the quiet of the evening, through the already-erected framing, I could readily discern the shape of the building and of the various rooms and could begin to visualize somewhat how things will be upon completion of the building, hopefully about midway through this term of our seminary. As I was there, I began to think, too, about the fact that the Lord has graciously heard our prayers, and has already sent us our third professor, the Rev. Robert Decker. And though I was aware beforehand of our enrollment for the coming term, this morning at registration I could not help but be struck anew by the fact that the Lord has given us a larger number of students at our school than we have had in many, many years.

And what were my reactions?

My first reaction was that all this seems almost like a dream. When one thinks back on our history — and I needed only to think back over the brief span of the fourteen years that I have served at our seminary — it seems almost to be unreal, too good to be true. And then there welled up within me an overwhelming sense of gratitude: how good the Lord has been to us, and that, too, in spite of all our unworthiness! And with that came, thirdly, a sense — almost as a note of caution — of the grave responsibility that is incumbent upon our seminary, the school of our churches. After all, a fine building, an enlarged faculty, a comparatively numerous student body, an increasing degree of recognition — all these are in themselves of no worth, and are not worthy of consideration, UNLESS our Theological School and all its labors are devoted wholeheartedly and unreservedly and antithetically to the Word of God and to the faithful ministry of that Word.

Something of this I want to convey to you at this convocation, on the basis of the Word of God as found in

Jeremiah 23:29, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" This is a word which is found in the context of one of the most severe warnings against and condemnations of the false prophets and the pastors who destroy and scatter God's sheep. And for that reason it is all the more timely and pertinent in the peculiar days in which we live. If you read over the chapter in which this word is found, it is almost alarming to note how the description of the circumstances in Jeremiah's day accurately pictures the circumstances of our own day. Well may we give heed, therefore, to this Word of God.

## The Idea of God's Word

When Scripture here speaks of the Word of God, it is evident at once that it is referring to God's Word as God Himself speaks it. The text here says that the Word of Jehovah is like a fire and like a hammer, that is, effectual. And we feel at once, therefore, that here we have to do with that Word of God as *God Himself speaks it*. This is a broader concept than the idea of Holy Scripture. I do not mean by this, you understand, that we must conceive of several different Words of God, as is the presentation of some. Nor do I mean that we must differentiate thus, that God's Word, the written record of that Word, the revelation of that Word as to its *content*, is not completely identical with Scripture. The latter is indeed true. The revelation of the Word of God is not merely *in* Scripture, but it *is* Scripture. The two are coextensive in content. Depart from this, — and I mean this in the strictest sense of the word — and you have destroyed the very nature of Holy Scripture, and with it all possibility of a revelation of God to us. If we depart from this, we have no revelation left. But we must distinguish as follows. Scripture without an operation of God, without a speech of God, does not constitute an effectual word. It does not accomplish anything, and it is not capable of accomplishing anything. The Bible in itself as a mere book, is a dead letter. The same is true of the word of a preacher, even though the word of the preacher is according to the Scriptures. It is not in itself an effectual word; it is not able to accomplish anything. All this arises exactly from the fact that God Himself speaks His own Word. God is the only One Who is able to speak the Word of God. If God does not speak it, there is no Word of God. There may be, and there



is, a record, a written record of God's Word, that is, a written record of the *contents* of God's Word, a record of *what* God has spoken. But that is not the same as the idea of the Word of God. The Word of God is the word which God Himself speaks. And it is through that speech, or speaking, of God that the Word, whatever may be its content in a given instance, becomes effectual, like a fire and like a hammer.

Hence, the idea of the Word of God is that it is God's own expression of His divine thoughts.

We have a very weak reflection of this concept in our human word. We humans may have thoughts about various things. And we express those thoughts in words. That is the idea of the human word: they are human thoughts and human words, a human speaking. Thus it is with God on an infinite and perfect plane. There are in God divine thoughts. Those divine thoughts God expresses through a divine speech. And that act of God whereby He in divine fashion expresses His divine thoughts — that is the Word of God as it occurs in Jeremiah 23:29. It is the Word that goeth forth out of God's mouth, as Scripture calls it elsewhere.

The content of that Word is God Himself. We must remember this, also when we consider the Word of God as it proceeds outside of Himself. In the deepest sense of the word, the Word of God is always a Word of Self-revelation. It was something of this that gripped and deeply moved the prophet Jeremiah, according to verse 9 of this chapter, when he referred to "the words of his holiness." He says there: "Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness." The words of His holiness are exactly words of His holiness because they are the Word of the Self-revelation of the Holy One! This we must always remember, therefore. When God speaks, the content of that speech, whatever God says and about whatsoever God may speak, is always in the deepest sense of the word, as to its content, God Himself. This is not true of our word. We are creatures, and as such we always consider things that already are. For that reason our thoughts and our speech are never really original. But God's thoughts are only concerning Himself, and therefore His speech is altogether of Himself — original. God knows and thinks Himself, and there is no one and nothing beside Him. He alone is God. And therefore all God's thoughts are thoughts concerning Himself. And therefore the content of God's entire Word, His speech, is also *Himself*. God is the speaking Subject, and God is the Predicate. He speaks out Himself, and speaks of Himself. His Word has Himself for its contents — in the deepest sense of the word always and in all His speech!

This is true, first of all, in God Himself. In the divine economy itself, that is, in the life of the ever blessed Trinity, this speech of God takes place in the Son, the Word, the Personal expression of all the divine thoughts concerning

Himself, the express image of God's substance. This speech of God, of the Father, in the Son, through the Holy Spirit, is the speech of God in God Himself. This is the idea of the Word as God Himself alone can know and understand it. In the Son God speaks of Himself to Himself.

In the second place, there is the speech of God outside of Himself. God also speaks an outgoing Word, a Word that proceeds outside of Himself. We may remark parenthetically that here we approach the idea proper of revelation. God has from eternity willed to reveal Himself, to speak of *HIMSELF* outside of His own Being. This eternal thought and will and purpose of God to speak of Himself outside of Himself is, of course, God's counsel, His eternal wisdom in relation to all things. And this counsel and purpose of God, which includes all the divine thoughts, forms the content of God's *Word outgoing*. It includes all that takes place in time, and that too, in creation and in re-creation. We cannot take the time now to recount in detail the content of that speech. We only call attention to a few chief "moments" of this divine Word. And then we note, in the first place, that the chief content of that Word outgoing is God Himself, His glory! We must remember this. God's Word outgoing is the Word of *SELF-REVELATION*. I believe, let me say in parentheses, that this is forgotten and overlooked in much of the current discussion about the nature and authority of Holy Scripture. The thinking is not theological, but soteriological. There is much discussion about the question whether the Word of God is always a saving Word or not, a redemptive word or a non-redemptive Word. But it is overlooked that the chief and controlling idea (and glory!) of the Word of God lies exactly in the fact that it is a Word of Self-revelation. Our thinking must be theological also here. Secondly, this glory is centrally expressed in Christ, the Word made flesh, the Son of God in our nature. Thirdly, to that Christ a people is given, the Church, His body. That is the Word of election. The fourth "moment" which I would mention is this: that people is realized amid the chaff of the reprobated, ungodly world, along the lines of sin and grace. In the fifth place, for the realization of that people in Christ, the Firstborn of every creature, all things in heaven and in earth, in creation and history, are conceived and presently *SPOKEN*. And, finally, all converges in the fulfillment of God's eternal covenant at the parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ, when all the wicked (speaking now in terms of the simile of our text) shall be crushed and shall be burned up, and when the everlasting kingdom shall be ushered in. Such, briefly, is the content of that Word which God speaks, which goes forth from His mouth through all the ages.

### The Power Of God's Word

Now the Scripture here emphasizes that this Word of God is *effectual*. This is expressed in the figure of speech in verse 29. There is a comparison here: the Word of Jehovah is likened here to a fire and a hammer. We will not go into detail as to all the various suggestions that have been made in connection



with these two figures. We will only point out positively that the fire here represents the power to burn up something, the power to consume. And the hammer is the symbol of great and invincible and irresistible strength: a force able to smash in pieces the rock (the rock representing that which is apparently unchangeable and unmoveable in all of creation). And the significance of these figures as applied to the Word of God is, I think, very evident. In the context of this chapter which speaks of the word of the false prophets, who say, "Thus saith the Lord," when the Lord has not spoken, these figures are obviously used here to portray the Word of God in its negative, destructive power. And then the figures together denote that God's Word is effectual, powerful. There is a very ominous note of warning in this expression. And there is this difference of emphasis between the two figures of speech: the fire emphasizes the effectualness of the Word of Jehovah as such. As the fire burns up the fuel upon which it feeds, so the Word of Jehovah is going to consume those who prophesy falsely. For our God is a consuming fire. And the figure of the hammer applied to the Word of God emphasizes the innate, unconquerable strength of that effectual power of the Word of Jehovah. His Word is not a little power, effectual to accomplish only small things. But it is a great and irresistible force. That which is apparently most stable and immovable will be crushed and smashed to pieces by that Word: His Word is like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. Such is the significance of these figures.

Hence, this is the meaning. God's Word goes forth from His mouth. He sends it forth, speaks it. And God speaks and sends forth His Word to His purpose. And that Word is not merely a sound, as is the human word, accomplishing absolutely nothing. Such, indeed, is our word. It occurs after the fact, not before it. Things exist, and things take place: and only then can we and do we speak of them. God's Word is different. It is a mighty, living power. It accomplishes that which it says, that is, all that God pleases, thinks, all of His eternal counsel, His good pleasure.

Thus it is, first of all, with respect to God's Word as He speaks it in Himself, as the Triune God. God eternally speaks His Word to Himself. And that Word is the power of eternal generation. It is effectual. Within the Divine Being the Word proceeds from the Father from eternity to eternity as the image of the eternal Son, the Logos, through the Holy Spirit.

Thus it is when God speaks His Word outside of Himself in creation. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God. God spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. The Word of God in creation is an effectual Word.

Thus it is also in re-creation. God is not finished speaking with creation. The world must, along the way of sin and death, be raised up through suffering and death to eternal life. And God speaks His Word in Christ, the Word of the Holy Gospel, the Word which shall not be wholly spoken till all shall be

finished in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through that speech of God comes the enmity of Genesis 3:15, and God's covenant is maintained in the midst of sin and suffering and death. Through that speech of God comes the flood: and God's church is saved by water from this present world. Through that effectual Word of God comes Abraham: and God's covenant is established with him and his seed. Through that Word of God comes Israel, comes the exodus, comes Canaan, come the enemies of God's people, comes the captivity, comes the deliverance and return from captivity. Through that speech of God in the fulness of time comes Christ out of the virgin, comes the cross, comes the resurrection, comes the exaltation of the Word made flesh. Through that same effectual Word of God comes the church of the new dispensation, gathered from among all nations. And presently, through that effectual Word of God shall come the new creation and the new Jerusalem. And always — because Zion shall be redeemed through judgment — that Word of God not only acts effectually in a positive manner, that is, to save and finally to usher in the everlasting kingdom of glory in the new creation, but acts as a fire and a hammer, to consume and to crush all the powers of darkness. And when all shall be finished, then all shall witness of the glory of God's eternal Word, spoken in the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ and displayed in the many Words of His holiness!

### The Significance of That Word

That Word God has caused us to know. He has not only revealed to us the content of that Word. But He has also revealed the power of that Word, and caused us to know it. He has made known to us what He through all the ages speaks and brings to pass by His Word.

Thus it was already in creation, in the state of rectitude. There was a revelation of God in the "book of creation." But there was also a man created to read those Words of God and to receive them. That latter element belongs to the concept of revelation.

And thus it is in re-creation. Jehovah reveals and declares His new work in the Holy Gospel: through patriarchs and prophets and apostles, and centrally in our Lord Jesus Christ. That Word, the written record of it, we have in the Holy Scriptures in their entirety. But that is not all. God also forms by His almighty and effectual Word of grace a people that can believe and that can through faith understand that Word of the Holy Scriptures. God has made known to them His Word. And the reason for this lies in God's covenant of friendship. In that covenant His people are of His party; they are His friend servants and that people enters into the secret of Jehovah, which is for them that fear Him (Psalm 25:14). He speaks with them as Sovereign Friend with His friends. He has no secrets from them, but His secret is with them. And the purpose is that His covenant people should know Him and tell forth His virtues. The purpose is that in their deepest ways they might know God's high thoughts and put their trust in Him.



And if I may apply all this specifically to the occasion of this convocation, then I must say this. To that Word and its ministry our seminary is and must be devoted. That is true for the faculty with respect to all the branches of instruction. That is true for the student body. It is true for you seminarians, whose work is more nearly and more directly geared to preparation for the ministry of that Word of God. But it is also true for you pre-seminarians, though your work at this stage is more distantly and indirectly geared to preparation for that ministry. None of us must forget this. In all our labors and in all our studies this must be our purpose.

There is a warning here. There is an ominous note of warning in this Word of verse 29 as it occurs in the context of this severe condemnation of the false prophets and the pastors who scatter the sheep. (And remember: it is precisely the false prophets, who depart from the Word of God and speak their own word in the Name of the Lord who scatter the sheep and fleece them, instead of gathering and feeding them.) And that word of warning is this, to you and to me: should any of you ever think of going the way of the false prophets, who say,

“thus saith the Lord,” when the Lord has not spoken, then remember this: your word will never stand and will never endure, and you will never stand and never endure. For Jehovah’s Word will act as a fire, to consume, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces! Be warned, therefore, and never depart from His Word, which for us is always the Word of the Scriptures.

But there is also a sure and reliable encouragement in this truth. It is an encouragement to learn and to know and to speak His Word, and to say, “Thus saith the Lord,” in truth, that is, according to the Scriptures. For His Word, which we then proclaim, is an effectual Word. It is living and powerful. It shall surely stand, and it shall accomplish all to which God sends it.

Only thus, but also surely thus, the task of preaching is hopeful!

His Word is like a fire and like a hammer!

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## *SIGNS OF THE TIMES*

# Famine On The Earth

*Rev. G. Van Baren*

We have been much preoccupied by shortages in our land lately — whether these have been contrived or real shortages, they have been affecting our land and our lives. We are even inclined to complain: against the government; against farmers; against the middleman. Such complaint or dissatisfaction is rather strange — since we still have food in such abundance that it almost literally “comes out of our ears.” Much is still thrown away after meals are finished. We have such variety yet that kings of old could hardly equal. And when we read of the literal and terrible famines now affecting large areas of this earth, we might well be ashamed of speaking any word of complaint.

Yet these shortages remind us again how close we can be to times of actual lack — of real famine. Nor ought we to think that we, in our country, are immune from such things. We may readily speak of the

productivity of American farms. We might point to the huge surplus which had been built up year after year. We could point out that where there is lack in one part of our country, other parts can readily make up the difference. But God directs all things. God can send drought over large segments of our country. God can send diseases which destroy large amounts of crop and cattle. Our surpluses have been depleted. Famine could conceivably also affect our land.

I do not mean to be a “crepe-hanger.” I am leading rather to the point of emphasizing what Scripture declares concerning famine as a sign of the end of this age.

## THE FAMINES OVER THE EARTH

Famines have been part of the recorded history of this world almost from its beginning. One reads of



famines in Scripture. The instances mentioned in Genesis of famine in the lifetime of Abraham are well known. It was a famine in Canaan which became the occasion of Abraham's journey to Egypt. Later, a famine brought Jacob and his family to Egypt where they remained for almost four hundred years. Famines occurred with regularity in the land of Canaan and surrounding countries. That there are famines, therefore, is not a new phenomenon.

And Scripture foretells the coming of famines. There are more passages than I can presently point out that speak of the coming of famines. I remind you only of a few. These speak not only of the possibility of famines, but of the fact that God Himself sends these. We read in Jer. 24:10, "And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers." Or, again, "So I will send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it." (Ez. 5:17). It is clearly God Who sends the famine, and sends it in His wrath upon the workers of wickedness.

Jesus also spoke of famines as signs of the end of the age. In Matthew 24, Jesus responded to the question of the disciples, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (vs. 3) Jesus said (among other things), "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines . . ." (vs. 7) This is specifically presented as a sign of the coming again of Jesus and the end of the world. At the same time, Jesus reminds us in verse 8 that "these are the beginning of sorrows." The literal idea is that famine and other "natural" disasters represent the birthpains of the new creation. Each time these are seen on the earth, the child of God is reminded that the "birth" of the new creation is that much nearer.

But famines shall increase as the end of time draws near. Concerning the third of the four horses of Rev. 6 we read, "And I beheld and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine." The blackness of the horse is a reminder of the blackness associated with the famished. A measure of wheat would be that amount which one man needed to live each day — to be purchased by a penny, the amount that a man could earn in one day. This indicates a time of scarcity and want. The wine and oil, the luxuries of this earth, are untouched: the rich are not apparently affected by the scarcity of the ordinary daily necessities. The balances in the hand of the horseman also indicates a careful measuring out of things; there will be no superabundance when this

horse runs.

The third horse, of course, runs throughout the history of this age. But he still runs today — and increasingly is he evident. The concern about wheat shortages in our own country surely must be a reminder of the "measure of wheat for a penny."

Though "Watergate" dominates the news lately, one does note repeated references to terrible famines in our own day in certain areas of the world. *Time*, in a brief article, explained (in Aug. 20, 1973 issue):

The pinch on U.S. supplies of grain and beef is only part of a worldwide scarcity of raw materials. For almost every important commodity — meat, wheat, rice, soybeans, wool, cocoa, copper, lead, rubber — world production is falling behind ravenous demand . . .

The situation stems largely from a temporary combination of foul weather for crops and metal miners' strikes in Chile and Zambia. But trouble may not be shortlived. World reserve stocks of many major farm goods have been so badly depleted that years of bumper harvests will be needed to rebuild them.

The Grand Rapids' *Press* has been giving brief reports on occasion. On June 11, 1973, this newspaper stated:

The United Nations' early warning system for famine is signaling a red alert.

The Food and Agriculture Organization lists 28 countries stricken by drought this year. The prolonged series of dry spells, the worst in 25 years, has killed cattle and reduced crops in wide areas of Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

The droughts came at a time when the U.N. unit was already warning that food production in the hungry nations was falling behind the population explosion.

And other factors, many of them economic, were reducing thinly stockpiled food reserves in the industrial nations. Floods on the Mississippi River caused millions of dollars' worth of crop losses in the United States, a country that traditionally makes up food deficits in the hungry areas of the world.

The United States and Canada also sold millions of dollars worth of grain to the Soviet Union to help it to recover from a disastrous harvest.

Experts at F.A.O.'s headquarters here estimate that more than one billion people live in countries where there is not enough to eat because of drought.

That's nearly a third of the world's population.

Again, the *Press* of June 13, 1973 reported:

Remote and legendary Timbuktu, often a synonym for the end of the world, has become a major distribution point for relief food to thousands struck by the four-year-old dry spell . . .

It has destroyed vast acres of crops, wiped out millions of cattle and, according to United Nations officials, could bring death to some six million Africans through famine.

Then in the *Press* of August 9, 1973, one could read:



Thirteen million people, twice as many as earlier believed, are now facing famine because of drought in Sub-Sahara Africa, the League of Red Cross Societies said Wednesday.

It said half of these people are children less than 15 years old.

Of the 24 million inhabitants of the six Sub-Sahara, or Sahelian countries, 12 million are threatened, the League said.

A further one million persons are in danger in Ethiopia, which is not actually a part of the region, it said.

Adding to the human suffering, the League reported, is the loss by drought victims of 80 per cent or more of their livestock . . ."

This all sounds frightening. In this world where men boast of their ability to maintain productivity, where men are able to transport vast quantities of materials by ship or plane, where only a few years ago we heard of vast surplus of grain in this country and farm-land was placed in the "land bank," now major portions of the earth are threatened by the third horseman. Surely, it is a fulfillment of Christ's Word, and it is a sign of the nearness of the end of this age.

#### SEVERAL THOUGHTS CONCERNING FAMINES

In the first place, the famine is a clear sign of God's judgment. Thus is it presented especially in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. God sends this in His wrath upon the disobedient. It is evidence of His wrath against mankind who is born totally depraved out of his first father and representative head, Adam.

But also God reveals His wrath against the corruption evident in any one period of history. Today especially the wickedness of man has manifested itself in unbelievably terrible ways. There is no regard, even in an outward way, to the law of God. Man does what is right in his own eyes. Nor may man think that with impunity he can escape the judgment of God. Man who evilly uses the material things of God's creation, man who readily uses his inventions in the service of sin, that man will also taste of the terrible wrath of the just God. And these go together: man's wickedness and the evidence of God's wrath. Both serve as reminder that soon the end comes and the judgment of God will be expressed in its full and final form.

Secondly, the earthly famines remind one of another sort of famine increasingly seen in the earth. This other sort of famine is what Scripture calls the "famine of the Word." Amos 8:11 states, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of the hearing the words of the Lord." Such a famine is seen in the land today. It shall become more and more evident. That kind of famine is far worse than physical famine. But the two again go together. In connection with the wickedness of man who turns from the Word, God in His wrath also takes away his physical food.

But the child of God continues to look to God for his daily bread. And he knows that shortly he shall be delivered from this world of famines, for the coming of "the Lord is at hand" (Phil 4:5).

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## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# Christian Liberty (2)

Rev. J. Kortering

We discovered in our previous article that it is difficult to define the scope of Christian liberty. We recognize that there is an area of our Christian calling in which the individual Christian must determine for himself whether a thing is good or bad. One Christian may decide it is bad for him, while another Christian may deem it proper. Since it is not clearly defined, it gives rise for debate and sometimes severe judgment of fellow Christians. On the one hand, a Christian may become overly cautious. We quote from John Calvin's *Institutes*, Book III, Chapter 19, page 134,

In the present day many think us absurd in raising a question as to the free eating of flesh, the free use of dress and holidays, and similar frivolous trifles, as they think them; but they are of more importance than is commonly supposed. For when once the conscience is entangled in the net, it enters a long and inextricable labyrinth, from which it is afterwards most difficult to escape. When a man begins to doubt whether it is lawful for him to use linen for sheets, shirts, napkins, and handkerchiefs, he will not long be secure as to himp, and will at last have doubts as to tow; for he will revolve in his mind whether he cannot sup without napkins, or dispense with handkerchiefs. Should he deem a daintier food unlawful, he will afterwards feel uneasy for using loafbread and common eatables, because he will think that his body might possibly be supported on a still meaner food. If he hesitates as to a more genial wine, he will scarcely drink the worst with a good conscience; at last he will not dare to touch water if more than usually sweet and pure. In fine, he will come to this, that he will deem it criminal to trample on a straw lying in his way . . . When men are involved in such doubts, whatever be the direction in which they turn, everything they see must offend their conscience.

Then there is the other side of the picture, permissiveness. Calvin also warns that things which are in themselves neither right or wrong may be used wrongfully.

Certainly ivory and gold, and riches, are the good creatures of God, permitted, nay, destined, by divine providence for the use of man, nor was it ever forbidden to laugh or to be full, or to add new to old and hereditary possessions, or to be delighted with music, or to drink wine. This is true, but when the means are supplied, to roll and wallow in luxury, to intoxicate the mind and soul with present, and be always hunting after new pleasures, is very far from a legitimate use of the gifts of God. Let them therefore, suppress immoderate desire, immoderate profusion, vanity, and arrogance, that they may use the gifts of God purely with a pure conscience. *Institutes*, Book

III, chapter 19, page 136.

Since the question of Christian liberty comes to the foreground in a special and personal way in the life of a young person, we do well to investigate this aspect further.

### YOUTH AND CHANGE

We may well ask: why does the question of Christian liberty come to the foreground so often in the life of a young person? Isn't it interesting that the examples given by John Calvin in the 16th century are still a burden to parents regarding their young people: dress, wine, leisure time, music, etc. Why are they so sensitive in relation to youth?

Part of the answer has to be that youth advocate change. Young people like what is different. Certainly, the styles (or lack of it) of clothing, music, entertainment, all prove that the clever manipulators of the youth culture are taking advantage of this fact of life. This has been true for every generation. The difference is that the present generation has the time and money to take full advantage of it. Young people want their own marks of identity, and the way to get them is to accept the latest fad in order to stay one step ahead of grandma who is bound to catch up.

This puts young people in the forefront of the conflict. As soon as something new comes along, young people are psychologically ready to grab it. Look around you: long hair, thick soled shoes, grubby washed off denim pants, the baggy look, rock music, sports cars, and on and on. When young people grab these things, they force themselves to face a moral question, is it all right? Usually the older generation shouts, *no!* The young people say, *yes!* The area of change produces this area of conflict and moral evaluation. In forming these moral judgments, we have to discern as to what is sinful and what is included in Christian liberty.

### DO YOUR OWN THING

In addition to the fact that young people like change, we must also observe that they like change *en masse*, they want to accept the new together with their friends. In psychology this is called peer identity. We cannot help but be amused by the cliché of youth, "Do your own thing"; yet they are so afraid to be a little different from their buddies. This was forcefully pictured in a cartoon. A young bearded fellow was sitting on the side of the highway strumming his guitar, his bare toes projected from beneath his flared jeans. He had a sign, "I'm doing my own thing." Soon you



realized that in the distance the cartoonist drew another one doing the very same thing, and farther and farther in the distance you could see up to half dozen, all exactly alike, each bearing the same sign. How true! Perhaps you parents have tried the same tactic I have as a minister. If everyone is doing his own thing, why isn't it easy today for fellows to have their hair cut reasonably, so they can be distinguished from a girl? Why cannot Christian young girls wear skirts and bathing suits that at least cover them decently and not flaunt their bodies with the latest nude look. Be different! Yes, they will be different from mom and dad, but not from their own generation.

The point that is so important here in connection with the place of Christian liberty is this: what is their generation? We cannot isolate the entire question of dress, entertainment, sports, drugs, etc. from the character of this generation. There is no doubt in my mind that the present generation is more hell bound than the former one. Each generation is getting morally worse; we believe in the development of man in sin, don't we? This generation is getting close to the end and may produce the last generation of which Christ said, "It will be like the days of Noah," Matt. 24:37-39. If you want a sobering description of our present generation look up II Peter 2 and read it.

It is not difficult to point out distinct features of the youth culture of our day. Consider rebellion: they are driven by a passion to throw off tradition, they laugh at the morals of their parents and the past generation, they justify their evil ways by erecting the barricade called "generation gap." Morals are relative, times change; therefore all is well, we just act differently, pooh on parents, preachers, teachers, and anyone over twenty. Try lust: the morality of the youth of the world stinks, they wallow in their sexual license worse than animals, and they call this sexual liberty. Think of pleasure: television is by and large a spoof on life and everything sacred; what a mockery! Look at the sports craze. Yes, this is the Pepsi generation which has a lot to live. The gals are spurred on, "You've come a long way, baby!" How about sensationalism? Young people like to wow people, especially adults. They want you to look at their grubby clothes; it's their revolt against rich materialism. Why those bold zippers on the jeans and blouses? They want you to say, Wow! You wince at their loud music: it's their way of saying, "Stay away, we're feeling our way to utopia."

We can be sure that God's judgment rests upon such a generation. Why has venereal disease become epidemic? Because God has a way of demonstrating that the wages of sin is death. Why are so many young people ruined by drugs? Because God is not mocked. Why do broken homes, divorced couples, abandoned children, follow modern marriages? Free love has its price. Why the increase of the occult and satanism?

Because the end of such a path is complete rejection of God and a worship of the devil.

### CHRISTIAN LIBERTY – USE INDIFFERENTLY

In this setting, the quotation of John Calvin is very important. Let us quote it once more,

They say there are things indifferent: I admit it provided they are used *indifferently* (emphasis mine j.k.). But when they are indulged in luxurious profusion, things which otherwise were in themselves lawful are certainly defiled by these vices. *Institutes*, Book III, chapter 19, page 136.

Our young people are surrounded with many things that seem indifferent in themselves, but when considered in light of the powerful movement called the "Youth Culture," they cannot be viewed as indifferent. Here we face the important question of identity, if we dress and act like the modern youth who dress and act out of rebellion against God and violate all things morally required in His Word, we have a different situation. Our young people may well ask, do we use some of these questionable things *indifferently* or *defiantly*. The latter use is sin.

One thing that gives us reason to be thankful to God for our young people is that God gives to them a conscience.

Surely, young people within the sphere of the church have a sinful nature that is drawn to the enticements of the world. From this point of view they like to go along with the "youth culture." It sounds exciting to assert their independence. They like the life style of this generation, it seems so carefree.

But, they have more than that. They have a regenerated heart and a soul that has received instruction from the Word of God. Their conscience is bound to that Word of God. True covenant young people cannot get away from that. They are often torn between the temptations of the flesh and the clear mandates of the Word of God. This is the precious difference. God has made them different from the generation that is heading for destruction.

Here is the important point. Because young people have their sinful nature, which is drawn to ways of sin and the pleasures of the world, they would like to be able to go along with the times and not have a guilty conscience. They would like to have parents, preachers, teachers, tell them it is all right, that they may join in the fun of this age, because this is their Christian liberty.

If we give this to them, the results will be devastating.

We owe it to our young people to guide them in discerning what belongs to Christian liberty and what doesn't. Never may we give them the liberty to sin against God. Never may we call the wrong way good.

Next time we will consider, D. V., how young people and adults can work together to evaluate Christian liberty and use it properly.



## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

# Saved By Water

*Rev. John A. Heys*

Yes, Noah and his family were saved by water.

We usually think of them being saved from the waters of the flood and by the ark.

Now this is certainly true. While all the other inhabitants of the earth were swept out of the land of the living by those waters of the flood, Noah and his family were saved from such a calamity. And the means which God used to save them while He was destroying the rest of the human race was the ark. We have no argument with those who would state the facts that way.

However, the Almighty Himself tells us also in I Peter 3:20 that "eight souls were saved by water." And then the idea is that they were saved *in* the ark and *by* means of the water. From the wicked world, from the hordes of unbelievers, from the multitude of their enemies Noah and his family were saved by those waters of the floods. The lives of these children of darkness were snuffed out by the flood, and life for the church of that day was made safe again. The Cains and the Lamechs, the murderers of brothers and of fellowmen, the unregenerated who wanted to put an end to Enoch's testimony by taking his life — while God crowned it by bringing him to a higher life in heaven — were rendered powerless; and the church received a breathing spell.

The first prayer in our Baptism Form refers to this truth when we read therein, "O Almighty and eternal God, Thou, Who hast according to Thy severe judgment punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world with the flood, and hast according to Thy great mercy saved and protected believing Noah and his family . . ." Here reference is made to the fact that with the flood God punished the unbelieving and unrepentant world. The flood was His tool, or instrument, to bring down His just judgment upon them. And it is stated that according to His great mercy He saved believing Noah and his family. Put the two together, and we find that this flood was an act of God's mercy according to which He brought a severe judgment upon the enemies of His church and saved them from those who, because of their unbelief and unrepentant hearts, could only want to destroy the man of God whom they had so often and evilly ridiculed for his faith, and hated for his preaching of righteousness.

But, be that as it may, when we look more deeply for the reason why God saved the one by that flood and

destroyed the other by those same waters, we find that God had told Noah why He was doing this. For God had said to Noah in Genesis 6:18, "But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy son's wives with thee."

There are several elements here worth noting, and this is a good time to pay closer attention to this statement of God, which was given before Noah began to build the ark. It has special force while he safely rides high and dry on the waters and is completely delivered by them from all his fleshly enemies. Let it be remembered, then, that the essence of God's covenant is friendship and fellowship. In the ark Noah was God's guest in His house. Recall that in Genesis 7:1 God had called from out of that ark to Noah with the words, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark." As such a friend of God Noah at once begot the enmity of the world. Because God's covenant was established with him so that God in His grace makes Noah spiritually different from the fallen human race, the unbelieving and unrepentant world can only hate him.

What now was the unbelief of that first world? Was it merely that they did not believe that God was going to send the flood? Is that all that we can say of the unbelief of the present world, namely, that it does not believe that Christ is coming in judgment soon, and that there is salvation only in Him and His cross? Of course not! This article of unbelief — for though we have articles of our Christian faith, the unbeliever has his articles of unbelief — is due to a more profound one. He does not believe in God the Father Almighty Maker of heaven and earth. He believes Satan's lie that he can do as he pleases with God's earth, and can decide for himself what is good and what is evil. He is atheistic and an idolator before he is antichristian. And his unbelief is not simply a lack of trust in God — which is certainly true, even as in Adam's temptation there was that element of getting him to cease trusting God as the one Who was seeking his good — but it is also a wholehearted hatred of God. As Paul writes to the Roman church, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Romans 8:7. And of this hatred it never repents, and cannot repent. For Paul, having said that the mind wherewith each man is born into this world is enmity against God, adds not only that "it is not



subject to the law of God," but adds even to this very significantly, "neither indeed can be."

On that background, as we see Noah and His family safe within the ark, we must see also that covenant which God established with him and because of which He now saves him as His friend. The world is one camp of enemies of the living God, a generation of the seed of the serpent that hates God and all the seed of the woman which that covenant of God brings forth through Christ and His cross and Spirit. But here is one who is different. Here is one who loves God, rejoices in being God's friend, enjoys His friendship in His ark, safe and sound *with* Him amid all the howling storm of His fierce, destructive wrath, amid thunders and lightnings, the windows of heaven being opened, the fountains of the deep being unstopped, volcanoes erupting, earthquakes of indescribable violence shaking the whole earth and disturbing the waters of the sea! Serene and calm in an atmosphere of friendship with God, a man and his family calmly ride out the storm, and are, in fact, benefitted by it! How wonderful is that covenant which God establishes with us in Christ! Therefore we one day also will be delivered fully from the whole anti-christian world and are safe in the arms of Jesus.

But take away that covenant which God established and according to which Noah becomes His friend, and because of which He makes Noah live in friendship with and not enmity against Himself, and you can never explain so terrible a destruction to save so few people. Look at the almost unbelievable upheaval that formed such an island as this one of Jamaica, (on which these lines are being written) with mountains literally rising up out of the sea, with chasms and canyons in the interior that have sheer walls and unbelievably steep sides, with valleys that are interrupted by tree-covered peaks that rise up with towering heights reaching in a perpendicular line toward the sky, and all this in valleys that themselves are so very narrow to begin with, that fold upon fold of rock appears in an area so small that even the idea of a road through such country is ridiculous. And God did all this all over the world for eight souls?

Well, no, not for eight souls, but for a hundred forty and four thousand, for the whole church, for all His covenant people, for all His friends whose spiritual minds, by the grace of that covenant are not filled with enmity but with love toward God, are subject to His law, and indeed can be because He established that covenant with them in Christ.

But make no mistake here. God established that covenant with Noah. Noah did not establish a relationship of friendship with God. If it depended on Noah and on man, then this is not an everlasting covenant — which it certainly is. For shortly after Noah and his family came safely out of the ark into a new world, he reintroduced the sins of the old world,

and the covenant would have had to end right there, if it were conditional and a two-sided covenant. God established it with Noah. He took the initiative. He gave the promises. He supplied the grace that would make Noah faithful in that covenant. It is, in every respect God's covenant. And it is ours only to enjoy in the way of faithfulness to it with a faithfulness which God must and does give us.

Believe that, and you will have confidence for the final judgment upon the world. If it depends upon us, there will be no Noah and his family. There will not be eight souls left on this earth for whom Christ will come with fire to save from the Antichrist and his universal kingdom. There will not be found even one who is worth saving. There will not be one friend of God anywhere on the face of this earth. Friends of God, faithful servants of Him are not brought forth by man or by the will of man. They are brought forth by the grace of God's covenant. They are children of God because He brings them forth. And that is why we are sure that there will always be a covenant people of God to the very end. They may be only a handful as at the time of the flood. But they will be there. And they will be as few in number or as numerous as they will be, because that is the way He wants it to be.

God did not succeed in coaxing into the ark eight souls. That is all He eternally intended to save by water. He spelled out just exactly how many animals were to be saved in the ark; and He determined to the last man who would of the human race be delivered from all the rest! He established that covenant with Noah and did not accept what man was ready to offer to Him. Man has nothing to offer Him except that which He cannot and will not receive. All man has is that carnal mind that is enmity against God. Can the Holy One of Israel accept such an offering? Can that carnal mind that is enmity against God want a covenant of friendship with God? All it can do is hate Him. All it wants to do is fight Him, break His law, ignore Him and use all His creation to rebel against Him. And this they showed very clearly when He came in our flesh, for they used His iron, and His tree to seek to take away His life. They used the judicial body of His church and His judge in the State to get Him condemned. They set all creation against its Creator.

From that wicked world God has in principle saved us already. And soon He will by a judgment of fire save us completely because it pleased Him eternally to choose us in Christ and to establish His covenant with us in Christ and make us friends whom He desires to save from His and our enemies. And it is only because He has established His covenant with us in Christ that we are sure of being saved not only from His wrath but by His wrath. For by His awful wrath against the devil and his kingdom of darkness He will send His Son back at the proper moment to deliver us from all of our enemies, including that last enemy that is death.



## CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

# Eschatology -- The First Period

(80 - 250 A.D.) THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST

*Rev. H. Veldman*

The church of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, during its New Testament infancy, probably looked upon the second advent or coming of Christ as near at hand. We must not misunderstand the expression, "during its New Testament infancy." This expression does not refer to the infancy of the church as during the early years of the New Dispensation. We must bear in mind that the church of God has been in existence throughout all the ages, from the beginning of time. This is also the position of our confessions, as expressed, e.g., in our Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21. In answer to the question, "What believest thou concerning the 'holy catholic church' of Christ?", we read: "That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof." So, in this answer we read that the church of God exists from the beginning of the world. When, then, we speak of the New Testament infancy of the church, we refer, of course, to its infancy as during the New Dispensation, the infancy or early years of the New Testament. We have already called attention to this expectation of our Lord's early return as very common in the church of God during these early years. This expectation of an early return of Christ undoubtedly was fed and received impetus from the fierce persecutions which raged against the church of Christ during these early centuries. I suppose that the people of God assumed that Christ could not permit these fierce attacks upon His flock to continue very long.

From the notes of the late Rev. H. Hoeksema on the History of Dogma, we now quote the following from what he writes concerning this first period, 80 - 250 A.D.:

From some parts of the New Testament it is evident that even at the time of the apostles there was a rather general expectation of an early second advent of the Lord. This expectation was kept alive and continued in the early church during the period under discussion. This was especially true in the first part of this period and under the pressure of more or less severe persecutions which the church had to endure. It may also be said that there was a strong tendency

toward a chiliastic conception of Christ's advent, although it cannot be maintained that millennialism was generally accepted by the church. Some of the fathers do not speak of a millennium at all; others oppose the idea. Nevertheless the chiliastic conception was found not only by some Judaizing sects, as the Ebionites but also by such fathers as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. And they often picture the millennium as a kingdom of peace in very strong and realistic colors. The teaching of the glorious resurrection of the body was general in this period. It was generally accepted that the same body that was buried would be raised in the last day. The resurrection of the body is not a new creation. Several rather speculative questions were raised even at this time in connection with the resurrection of the body. These questions concerned especially the form of the resurrection body, and more particularly those members for which there will be no place and no function in glory, as for instance, the digestive organs. As far as the latter was concerned, Irenaeus uses the rather less appealing illustration of the mule. Origen makes an attempt to eliminate from the conception of the resurrection all these elements to which reason might object and in that way of rationalism sometimes almost loses the reality of the resurrection. As might be expected the Gnostics denied the resurrection of the body entirely. Closely connected with the resurrection in this first period was the doctrine of the last judgment. Both the righteous and the unrighteous would be called out of the graves and appear before the judgment seat of God. With some of the fathers the idea is found that the Father Himself would appear in judgment. Others, however, teach that all judgment is delivered to the Son. However, this may have been a mere difference of emphasis.

Since the end of all things and the perfection of salvation were waiting for that final judgment, the question arose even in this period concerning the condition of the souls before the resurrection. The answer which the Apostolic Fathers gave to this question was rather vague. About the place of the souls between death and resurrection they speak very little. Justin Martyr speaks of a better place for believers and a worse place for the ungodly. As to their condition, they do not teach definitely that the souls of believers immediately after death go to heaven. They do have indeed a certain presentiment of their eternal destination and wait for the



resurrection of the body. Only the martyrs are received up into Paradise immediately after death, but even this Paradise must be distinguished from heaven. This was the conception of Irenaeus, and Tertullian approximately agrees with him. The place of the dead he conceives as being in the heart of the earth. It was divided into two apartments, separated from each other by a deep ravine. On the one side of this ravine was the place for the believing souls. On the other side was the fire which cannot be quenched. Far above both these two parts of the Sheol is Paradise. Thither went Christ after His death. There are Enoch and Elijah, and there also the martyrs find their place until the resurrection.

Gnostics taught that the souls of the perfect elite who are even now risen with Christ and attained to the perfect knowledge (gnosis), after death enter immediately into the fulness of glory. Others who did not reach that height of perfection in this life must pass through various stages after death until they reach that same fulness of glory. This might seem to be the beginning of the Romish doctrine of Purgatory. In fact Clement of Alexandria and Origen do speak of a certain purifying fire through which the souls of believers enter into glory. However it would be an error to find with them the beginning of the doctrine of Purgatory. It is evident from their writings that, by this purifying fire they mean something quite different, a mystical process whereby the souls are cleansed from the defilement of sin. Origen even refers to this fire in connection with the final destruction of the world. Of the doctrine of Purgatory, however, there is no trace in this period.

According to Hagenbach, there were premillenarian tendencies in this early period of the church of God in the New Dispensation. The book of Revelation (which many ascribed to the apostle John, while others denied this, and even contested its canonicity), in its twentieth chapter, gave currency to the idea of a millennial kingdom, together with that of a second resurrection, also found in the same book; and the imagination of those who dwelt fondly upon sensuous impressions, delineated these millennial hopes in the most glowing terms.

This was the case with the Judaizing Ebionites, and now we again quote from Hagenbach's *History of Doctrines*, Vol. I, page 214:

Jerome, in his Comment on Isaiah 66:20 (which reads as follows, quoted by the undersigned: And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel, bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord.), observes that the Ebionites understand the passage, "And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts," in its literal sense, and apply it to chariots drawn by four horses and conveyances of every

description. They believe that at the last day, when Christ shall reign at Jerusalem, and the temple be rebuilt, the Israelites will be gathered together from all the ends of the earth. They will have no wings to fly, but they will come in wagons of Gaul; in covered chariots of war, and on horses of Spain and Capadocia; their wives will be carried in litters, and ride upon mules of Numidia instead of horses. Those who hold offices, dignitaries, and princes, will come in coaches from Britain, Spain, Gaul, and the regions where the river Rhine is divided into two arms; the subdued nations will hasten to meet them. But the Clementine Homilies and the Gnostic Ebionites, far from adopting such gross notions, even oppose them.

But this was also true of several orthodox Fathers, such as Papias of Hierapolis, Justin, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. Eusebius accuses Papias of having spread millennialism because of a misunderstanding of the apostles. Justin, however, writing at the time of Papias, says that it was the general faith of all orthodox Christians, and that only the Gnostics did not share in it.

According to Gieseler, *Text Book of Church History*:

In all the works of this period (the first two centuries) millenarianism is so prominent, that we can not hesitate to consider it as universal in an age, when such sensuous motives were certainly not unnecessary to animate men to suffer for Christianity.

However, comparing the writings of Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Tatian, Athenagoras and Theophilus of Antioch, we find that in none of them millenarian notions are propounded.

Let us now examine some of the writings of the Apostolic Fathers. These leaders in the church lived immediately after the time of the apostles, and were called Apostolic Fathers because they are said to have been taught personally by the apostles. They lived in the first half of the second century. Hagenbach names, first of all, Papias of Hierapolis.

Papias has the credit of association with Polycarp, in the friendship of St. John himself, and of "others who had seen the Lord." He is said to have been bishop of Hierapolis, in Phrygia, and to have died about the same time that Polycarp suffered; but even this is questioned. So little do we know of one whose lost books, could they be recovered, might reverse the received judgment, and establish his claim to the disputed tribute which makes him, like Apollos, "an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures." He was a hearer of the Apostle John, and was on terms of intimate intercourse with many who had known the Lord and His apostles. Eusebius speaks of Papias as a man most learned in all things, and well acquainted with the Scriptures. But in another passage he describes him as of small capacity. The fragments of Papias are translated from the text given in Routh's *Reliquiae Sacrae*, vol. 1.



*FROM HOLY WRIT*

# Exposition Of Hebrews 11:30

*Rev. G. Lubbers**HEBREWS 11:30*

The time between Hebrews 11:29, which speaks of the passing of Israel over the Red sea, and the event of Hebrews 11:30 is forty years. Much had transpired, between these two points, of the wonder-work of God in delivering Israel from Pharaoh and His bringing them into the promised land. The writer to the Hebrews selects the events very carefully to show the power and greatness of the faith of the fathers.

What Jehovah did at the Red Sea signalled the complete deliverance of Israel from Egypt. In our present passage from Hebrews 11 Israel stands before the land of Canaan proper. Now the Lord will, in a very wondrous and miraculous way of grace, give all the land to Israel. And what He does at Jericho is of fundamental and typical importance. It was the final fulfilment of the promise of God to Abraham. For this is a people which is now sanctified unto the service of the Lord. Joshua will bring them into the promised Rest. It will be a coming into the land as the fulfilment of the year of Jubilee.

Was Israel not sanctified? Had Joshua not at the hill of the foreskins, Gilgal, circumcised all the male members of the church? Israel has been restored into the covenant relationship with the LORD once more. They had subsequent to the circumcision also eaten of the Passover of the Lord. They might fellowship with the Lord and enter into the joy of the Lord's salvation. And the reproach of Egypt was removed from them. They are no more the congregation which is wandering in the wilderness, aimlessly, endlessly, hopelessly as those who died in the wilderness because of their unbelief.

And the sin of the Amorite is full. The word of the LORD spoken by Noah in the testament upon his sons is being fulfilled, "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren," (Gen. 9:25, 26). It is now the fourth generation and the children of Israel shall come again into the land according to God's sure promise to Abraham. Israel may walk in the thick darkness for a while; however, the LORD will pass through the darkness and walk between the "pieces" of the sacrificial covenant all alone, (Gen. 15:17). That will happen here at Jericho as it did at the Red Sea and at Jordan. And great was the glory of the Lord of Hosts!

*THE LORD OF HOSTS (Joshua 5:13-15)*

Can you picture the scene? Jericho is straitly shut up! None went out and none went in. The city is besieged by the hosts of Israel. And the Captain of Israel is the great Jehovah God Himself as he manifests Himself in the Old Testament Christ, the Angel, Messenger of the LORD. He is the Personal God Himself as he comes in the person of the Son, as the Head of His people.

The "hosts" here evidently can refer either to the angelic Hosts in the heavens, the myriads of the ministering spirits of God sent out for the benefit of those who will inherit the promises. The term can also refer to the hosts of Israel, the camp of the Lord of hosts in their tents about the tabernacle, as they are the picture of the city foursquare, the heavenly Jerusalem. It would seem that although the former need not be excluded here the emphasis falls upon the multitudes of the thousands of Israel. The LORD here is the Captain of Israel; He is the chief captain of their salvation. He is the better JOSHUA who will lead the people into the final rest through His death and resurrection, and his ascension and final return to glory when he shall come with all his holy angels to redeem his saints, from the East and the West, and to bring them into the promised land of the heavenly Jerusalem!

Small wonder that Joshua is commanded to put off the shoes from his feet. Surely the place where he stood was holy ground. Joshua worshipped this Captain of the hosts of Israel and it was not idolatry. It was a believing acknowledgment that the LORD would be with him as He promised: "Nay; but as the captain (prince) of the host of the LORD am I now come." Here is the LORD Himself with His glittering sword over Jericho. The city cannot be redeemed with a sacrifice; it is a devoted thing. Now we shall see that it is terrible to fall into the hands of the living God, who shall slay the wicked with the sword of His mouth.

And Joshua bows and believes in holy adoration.

*THE WALLS OF JERICO FALL (Hebrews 11:30; Joshua 6:20)*

Jericho is the city of palm trees. It is also the accursed city whose walls and gates may never be built again with impunity. Of this city it is said, "Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho; he shall lay the



foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates thereof." (Joshua 6:26; I Kings 16:34).

Jericho stands in a very strategic position in the land of Canaan. It is a large city, with strong walls, which blocks the way into the land. It is a mighty fortress of the Canaanites. The walls of Jericho are the last bastion which Israel must conquer; it is the enemies' stronghold. But they shall fall down before the face of Israel at whose head the Captain of the Lord's host marches to victory. Nothing shall allay His onslaught on this mighty city. The Lord of Hosts is on Israel's side. The victory is sure.

What a strange battle-strategy. It is the strategy of God and of His faithful covenant dealings. Israel will not break down these walls by the power of the sword, nor shall she storm the ramparts. Israel must walk the walk of faith and childlike confidence. Seven times she must surround the city. It is a priestly battle. The Ark of the Testimony must go in the lead, carried by the priests. Seven priests must walk before the LORD blowing the trump of God. They blow the typical trumpet, inaugurating the Day of the LORD! Did the inhabitants of Jericho tremble with terror and fear at the testimony of Israel's crossing the Red Sea on dry ground, and did they melt in fear at the report of what Israel did under God to Og, the King of Bashan, Sihon, the king of the Amorites beyond Jordan? Much more are the hearts of these godless Amorites, whose iniquity is full, filled with anguish and fear at the noise of the trumpet of God proclaiming that His Day had come. God will come to his sevenfold rest, to His Eternal Sabbath, to tabernacle amongst His people in the land! Seven times Israel marches, and on the seventh day is the grand finale of Israel's faith.

And on the seventh day after the seventh time about the city Israel must shout! And after Israel has shouted with a mighty shout of triumph the walls come tumbling down. God will shake the earth to bring in an unmoveable inheritance. One day he will not only shake the earth but also the heavens. Here is the mighty voice of the LORD! God is, as it were, shouting in His people. They shout by the working of the power of His might.

#### THE WALLS OF JERICHO FALL BY FAITH (*Hebrews 11:30*)

Yes, these walls fall by faith. They fall by the means of the *faith* of Israel. This is the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. That is the teaching of Hebrews 11:30, where we read, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down."

This was a faith in the word of God and in His sure promise. It was not mere idle faith, some superstitious speculation. It was not trusting in the arm of flesh, either. It was believing that God is and that he is a rewarder of those

seeking Him. It was clinging as to the Rock of ages; the Rock of Israel, His faithfulness and power, and might was the only expectation in this mighty battle at Jericho.

In faith Israel conformed to the battle-strategy of the LORD. They marched ever so silently, waiting upon the LORD and His salvation. God will drive out the heathen with his outstretched hand. He will plant Israel, the vine of His choosing, in the land. Yea, he will afflict not only Jericho, but all the people of the land. He will cast them out! And now Jericho is the very stronghold which typifies the strength of the enemy which shall be broken. When Jericho falls, the back-bone of wicked Canaan is broken.

Yes, faith is in action about the walls of Jericho! Faith looked to the LORD and sang, "Through thee will we push down our enemies." Glory and joy is in the soul of Israel while Jericho is subdued under Israel, (Psalm 44:5).

By faith Israel sings, "God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet," (Psalm 47).

Such was the faith of Israel of old. And this is the faith which the saints, to whom the writer to the Hebrews writes, need. They must have a faith which presses forward to salvation and which does not fall back into perdition.

#### THE TYPICAL ENTRANCE INTO THE LAND

Yes, here we have typology. It is a real entering into the land of Canaan, and the manner is also typical of the entrance of the church into final glory. Did not Abraham dwell as a stranger in this land of promise looking for a better country, a heavenly country? Was that not the clear testimony of the faith of the patriarchs? (Hebrews 11:16) God was not ashamed to be called their God. They looked beyond Jericho and its tumbling walls. They looked for the city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

Thus here, too, we see that Israel is entering into the rest. Yet, the rest is more than some spoils of a city. O, Achan, had you but seen what the holy patriarchs saw and sought after! Achan receives but a heap of stones for himself and for his children. But the believing people of God enter into the Rest.

We see this in the number seven. Was it not seven priests carrying seven trumpets? And did they not need to walk about the city seven times on seven different days? And was not the last day the Sabbath day on which they walked about the city seven times? And was this not a living exhibition of laboring to enter into the rest?

They entered by faith! This was real Sabbath-keeping, was it not? It was the typical rest which they achieved. Yet, there remained a better rest. There remaineth a rest for the people of God! If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, all the walls and obstacles will be removed and cast into the sea!



## News From Our Churches

### CLASSIS REPORT September 15, 1973

For church news in a nutshell, we've lifted the following paragraph from the September 9 bulletin of First Church:

"Candidate M. Joostens has accepted the call extended to him from Jenison. Candidate M. Hoeksema has asked for an extension of time in the consideration of his call to Forbes. Rev. J. Kortering has received the call to South Holland. Rev. H. Veldman leaves this week in order to labor for three Sundays in New Jersey. Rev. D. Engelsma expects to be in Houston, Texas, for three Sundays beginning probably on Sept. 16. Plans have also been made to organize a Protestant Reformed Church at Prospect Park, New Jersey, this coming Tuesday (Sept. 11). Rev. C. Hanko and Rev. H. Veldman plan to be present."

Rev. C. Hanko, incidentally, preached in New Jersey on September 2 and 9; Rev. H. Veldman planned to be there for that purpose on September 16, 23, and 30, and Rev. G. Van Baren on October 7 and 14.

### REPORT OF CLASSIS WEST September 10, 1973

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in Loveland, Colorado on September 5, 1973.

Rev. G. Lanting, president of the previous Classis, led the Classis in opening devotions. He read Matthew 11:16-25 and spoke to the Classis on verses 25 and 26.

Eight ministers and thirteen elders conducted the business of the Classis. Two ministers were absent, Rev. D. Kuiper because his wife presented him with a baby daughter the day of Classis and Rev. R. Decker because he had accepted the call

(continued on back page)

### Change of Address

The new address of the stated clerk of Classis West is:

Rev. David J. Engelsma  
709 E. 57th St.  
Loveland, Colorado 80537

Prof. Robert D. Decker  
2230 Cranbrook, N.E.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49505  
Phone: (616) 451-3303

### Resolution of Sympathy

The Ladies' and Men's Societies of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express their sincere sympathy to Mrs. N. Haak and her family in the recent loss of their husband, father, grandfather and brother MR. NICK HAAK.

"Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing." (II Timothy 4:8).

Mrs. John Holleman, Sec'y.  
Mr. Jack Lenting, Sec'y.

*Since thy Father's arm sustains thee,  
Peaceful be;  
When a chastening hand restrains thee,  
It is He.  
Know His love in full completeness  
Fills the measure of thy weakness;  
If He wound thy spirit sore,  
Trust Him more.*

### Wedding Anniversary

On October 8, 1973, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. PETER KNOTT will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, thank our Heavenly Father that they could give us a covenant upbringing, and we also thank Him for the years of instruction we were privileged to receive from them.

May God, who has given them these years together continue to bless them in their earthly pilgrimage.

Children: Mr. and Mrs. Andrew (Mary) Brummel, Mr. and Mrs. Donald (Jacquelyn) Offringa, Mr. Robert Knott. Grandchildren: Rachelle Brummel, Kristi Brummel, Dennis Offringa.



to the Seminary. Rev. R. Van Overloop from Classis East was present as a visitor and was given advisory vote. Rev. R. Miersma presided over the meeting.

In executive session, Classis advised a consistory to proceed with the erasure of a baptized member.

In response to South Holland's request for a moderator during their vacancy, Classis appointed Rev. W. Bekkering.

The following schedule of classical appointments was adopted. *Loveland*: Sept. 30, Oct. 7 — Miersma. *Forbes*: Sept. 16, 23 — Lanting; Oct. 14, 21 — Kuiper; Nov. 11, 18 — Moore; Dec. 9, 16 — Kortering; Jan. 13, 20 — Miersma; Feb. 10, 17 — Bekkering; March 3 — Woudenberg; March 10 — Kamps. *South Holland*: Oct. 7 — Bekkering; Nov. 4 — Kortering; Dec. 2 — Lanting; Jan. 6 — Moore; Feb. 3 — Kuiper; March 3 — Engelsma. Classis East was asked to help supply South Holland.

Classis read a letter of farewell from Rev. R. Decker and instructed the Stated Clerk to respond, expressing the Classis' gratitude to God for giving him to our Theological School and Classis' remembrance of him in their prayers.

Classis will meet next in Doon, Iowa on the First Wednesday of March, 1974, the Lord willing.

Rev. David Engelsma,  
Stated Clerk  
Classis West

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Although this meeting of Classis was very brief, the delegates enjoyed two other activities at the time of Classis. On the Tuesday evening before Classis, Rev. W. Bekkering lectured on "Neo-Pentecostalism" in the auditorium of the Loveland Church for the benefit of both the delegates and the Loveland congregation. On Wednesday afternoon, after Classis, the delegates held a conference for several hours. A paper was given on the subject. "Our Protestant Reformed Position regarding 'the Free Offer of the Gospel,'" and a lively discussion followed. Several visitors also attended the conference, present and former officebearers from the Loveland congregation and other Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as ministers in other denominations. Through these activities also, the delegates were built up in the faith and enriched in the fellowship of the saints.

D. E.

# THE STANDARD BEARER

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**Editor-in-Chief:** Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

**Department Editors:** Rev. Robert D. Decker, Mr. Donald Doezeema, Rev. David J. Engelsma, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert C. Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. Dale H. Kuiper, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman, Rev. Bernard Woudenberg

**Editorial Office:** Prof. H. C. Hoeksema  
1842 Plymouth Terrace, S.E.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

**Church News Editor:** Mr. Donald Doezeema  
1904 Plymouth Terrace, S.E.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

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**Business Office:** The Standard Bearer  
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.  
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