

# The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God,  
in the midst of thy temple.

According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise  
unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is  
full of righteousness.

Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of  
Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.

Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell  
the towers thereof.

Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces;  
that ye may tell it to the generation follow-  
ing.

For this God is our God for ever and ever: he  
will be our guide even unto death.

—Psalm 48:9-14

## MEDITATION

# The Beginning of Sorrows

Rev. C. Hanko

*And there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in diverse places. All these are the beginning of sorrow.*

Matthew 24:7b, 8.

Signs of the times.

Signs of the coming of the Lord cause the church to lift up her head in eager anticipation and prayerful waiting.

Many signs have already appeared on the stage of history, many are evident around us every day, and there are still more to come.

There have always been signs in the church. False teachers have arisen. These are the hirelings that Jesus warned us would come, who stealthily work their way into the sheepfold as thieves and robbers to kill the sheep. They are the wolves that Paul said would come, arising from within the church, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. False teachers are more prevalent than ever, privily bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord Who atoned for our sins upon the cross. Many people follow their pernicious ways and are the cause that the church is evil spoken of. Be not deceived! The sheep of Jesus Christ have a spiritual sensitivity to distinguish the voice of the Shepherd from that of false prophets who are bringing swift destruction upon themselves and upon their blind followers.

There have been signs in the world. This earth has every semblance of a bloody battle field. Rarely is there a generation that does not experience the horrors of war. As the end approaches, one wave of warfare follows in the wake of another, so that a warweary, bleeding humanity cries out: "Will wars never cease, will peace never come?" Wars and rumors of war, so that one king sets his throne upon the ashes of his predecessor's. Internal unrest rocks and disturbs the nations of the earth. Dissensions, riots, revolutions have become commonplace for a greedy, jealous, proud race of sinners. Let the church of Jesus Christ rest assured that these things must come to pass before the counsel of the Most High is fully carried out. Let them be patient, for the end is not yet.

Signs appear in creation, for Jesus speaks of famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. The church must witness and experience those also. Still she must tell herself: "The end is not yet."

Famine is a frightening word, even though most of us do not fully realize all its horrors. We know about crop failures, food shortages, recessions in the economy, even depression. But a famine dwarfs all these into unimportance. We complain of spiraling food prices, especially when wages fail to meet the high cost of living, or work and jobs become scarce. We talk of tightening the belt, limiting our spending, cutting down on luxuries; and yet no one feels the keen edge of famine that can cut so deeply into our family life. We say we are hungry at times, yet none of us has gone without a sound meal or experienced the gnawing pangs of starvation, the excruciating agony that screams into the soul with bitter anxiety. It is painful to see a field infested with grasshoppers or seared brown with the heat of the sun, to hear bleating sheep crying for food. Worse spectacles are the bloated animals that gave up the search, empty larders, children crying pathetically with the cry that cannot be pacified, or worse, crying not at all, exasperated mothers wiping away a weary tear, and fathers too bone-weary even to weep.

Egypt knew about that during the time when God's hand lay heavily upon them, issuing blow after blow until the ten was full. Israel in the days of Elijah felt the visitations of God in a dry and thirsty land, even until the time, and times, and half a time had been made full upon a people who had forsaken God to worship Baal, the "god of fruitfulness, rain and of sunshine."

In this country we may not know what it is like to drive the hungry wolf from the door, yet we need not go far beyond our homes to find people who know little else than a bare existence. Not far from our shores are people who eat whatever the land produces, but scarcely know what a well-balanced diet means. There are children with the distended abdomens of starvation, adults with emaciated bodies and stunted minds, dwarfed by hunger. The world-wide recession should warn us that it can happen to us.

Jesus speaks of pestilences, or plagues.

Immediately we are reminded of the ever-reassuring ninety-first Psalm: "He that sitteth in



the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge and my Fortress: my God; in Him will I trust. Surely He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. . . . Thou shall not be afraid of the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked." Is not that a beautiful way to assure the believer that even though he should die in famine, his death is a passage into glory?

Throughout history there have been times when the pestilence swept away its thousands, like a grim reaper mowing down his harvest. There was such a plague in David's time. There was the black plague of the Middle Ages. There was the dreadful outbreak of influenza during the first world war both in Europe and America. Taken in a broader scope, pestilence can also refer to contagious diseases that have taken their toll throughout the centuries. Modern medicine boasts of having overcome most of these diseases, like polio, small-pox, and others; yet new forms of virus, new diseases continue to make their appearance. This is to say nothing of the social diseases that have reached epidemic proportions right here in our own country as a direct visitation of God upon the immoral lives of young and old.

Finally, Jesus mentions earthquakes in divers places.

Earthquakes were not uncommon in Palestine even in the old dispensation. The Psalmist speaks of the mountains trembling and shaking, dancing like a calf and skipping like a young unicorn. We read of mountains melting before the power of the Almighty. There is reference in the prophecies to the great earthquake in the days of Uzziah, which is immediately associated by the prophet Zechariah with the return of Christ with all His saints. No one should overlook the fact that there was a great earthquake at the moment when Jesus gave up the ghost on the cross. The veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom, rocks were rent and shattered, while the graves of saints were opened when Jesus died. Again on the morning of the resurrection, when the angel descended from heaven to visit the tomb of Joseph, the earth quaked, the stone that barred the entrance to Jesus' grave rolled away, and the guards fell to the ground as if they had been slain in battle.

Earthquakes have a language all their own. They strike with full force, often without any warning. One can see a storm approaching, but to date earthquakes

have defied all attempts at predicting their coming. The earth totters, rolls, and trembles. There is absolutely nothing that is stable, nothing to cling to. There are constant reports today of tremors and severer earthquakes. These upheavals destroy countless lives and millions of dollars in property almost yearly, to say nothing of the enormous fear they engender.

Famines, pestilence, earthquake. All these signs have something to say to us.

The first two, famine and pestilence, are often the painful aftermath of war. After the slaughter and destruction of the battlefield, symbolized by the red horse, we see the dreaded march of the black and the pale green horses, whose victims are legion. These in turn are followed by such visitations as tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, and the like, all represented in the text by earthquakes. There is a climactic order here that should fill the soul with holy fear, for these are awesome judgments; hunger, loathsome diseases, devastating upheavals of the earth. No wonder that the final judgment is described in the book of Revelation as accompanied by "voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great."

Yet we tend to become accustomed even to these thunderings of the Almighty. Not so long ago these catastrophes were referred to as acts of God. In our scientific age these same events are explained from natural causes, freaks of nature, which take place entirely outside of the providence of God. God is not in all their thoughts! We are reminded of that ever recurring testimony against the hardened sinners of our age: "And they repented not!" That is a certain sign that there will be no further delay in the coming of the Lord.

What is most significant in this passage of Scripture is the fact that Jesus speaks of all these things as "sorrows", that is, labor pains, or birth pangs. It plainly refers to the pains of a woman who is in labor to give birth to a child. This is a familiar figure used throughout Scripture, with its own striking significance. Labor pains include both excruciating agony and intense effort. Solomon speaks of the misery of life as the travail of the sons of men. Isaiah refers to the sufferings of Christ as the travail of His soul. Since pain is the result of sin, Christ had to bear willingly that part of our curse also. Birth pangs are different from other sufferings in this sense, that they are perfectly natural. They are the necessary strain and effort to bring forth the child. One does not become unduly alarmed about them, as if some strange threatening had befallen the expectant mother. She herself is prepared for this bitter experience. There is even eager anticipation in this



agony. These pains are borne in hope. When the pain is over it is also soon forgotten in the joy that a child has been brought into this world. Only the mother who has held and seen her child for the first time knows what a thrill it is to have undergone the experience.

Jesus uses the figure of sorrows to describe the signs He had just mentioned, signs in nature, famines, pestilence, earthquakes. We are reminded of what Paul writes in Romans eight: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." He reminds us that this had not been the case in the beginning. In paradise all creation rejoiced, telling the praises of its Maker. The king of the earthly creation joined in this chorus with his whole being. But the king rebelled against his sovereign Friend, became an enemy of God and brought God's wrath upon himself. When the king fell his entire kingdom fell with him. The curse spread over the entire earth. Have you never heard that groaning of the creature on a stormy night when the wind howled through the trees? Have you never seen the animal cringe in terror under the shattering crash of lightning and thunder? Have you not heard the earth moan in the heat of summer; or heard the rustling of the dry sand of the desert? Have you not felt the shuddering earth during an earthquake, or heard its rumblings. All creation groans under the curse of the Almighty.

As believers we hear a sigh of hope in all these groanings. The Holy Spirit tells us that this groaning is the travail of all creation, as it eagerly anticipates sharing in the adoption of sons, the salvation of the church. When Christ died He redeemed His people as His friend-servants, as kings of the earthly creation. "For God so loved the world (the whole creation as it belongs to Christ and His elect) that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him

should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) "For the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God." (Rom. 8:21).

This suffering in hope is especially evident in the sign of the earthquake. Obviously, an earthquake speaks, first of all, of devastation, death. Anyone who has experienced an earthquake knows that the very foundations of the earth are shaken, there is just nothing that is stable. Towering mountains roll, rocks crumble, houses collapse in a moment. Puny man realizes how helpless he really is.

An earthquake also speaks of hope. The people of God hear Christ say: "Behold, I make all things new." Already centuries ago, Haggai prophesied: "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, (and now notice) and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." An earthquake told of Jesus' death and resurrection; how entirely proper that it should announce His second coming!

One thing must not escape us, and that is that famines, pestilences and earthquakes are but the *beginning* of sorrows. These are but the early birth pangs, forebodings of far worse bearing down pains that are still to come. A mother in the early stages of labor knows that worse agony must follow before she is delivered. Yet the very fact that the pains are begun give hope that the end is near.

Let the church of Jesus Christ take note of the signs of the times. May they spur her on to pray in greater intensity: "Father, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." With a watchful eye and an attentive ear, let us redeem the time, for the days are evil. May we ever plead in longing: "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, quickly."

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## EDITORIALS

### Editor's Notes

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

*Anniversary.* In our next issue special attention will be given to a very special occasion, that of the Golden Anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. While our *Standard Bearer* is a free paper, not a church paper, and while our *Standard Bearer* is actually *older* than the Protestant Reformed

Churches, yet the two have always been intimately connected. And we shall not let this special occasion pass unnoticed. Why the issue of March 1? Because that comes closest to the date when the Protestant Reformed Churches organized provisionally under the Act of Agreement.



*Publication News.* There will be a very special book coming from the press in the near future, too. In fact, it is a once-in-a-lifetime book. I refer to *God's Covenant Faithfulness*, a beautiful volume commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. We are still hoping to get the book on the market during March; maybe that is optimistic, but at any rate it will be soon! This is going to be a volume which all of you will want to buy. But this will also be a book for posterity, so that you will probably want to buy copies for your children to keep in time to come. And remember, this is the kind of book which will not be reprinted in the future, should our supply run out. We have had to up the price a bit over our original estimate, due to inflation. But even at that, \$5.95 for this book which will be replete with pictures and art-work, as well as information, history, and explanation, will be a bargain!

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*More Publication News.* By the time you read this, our supply of four previous publications should be replenished: *In The Beginning God, Believers And Their Seed, Behold He Cometh*, and *Therefore Have I*

*Spoken* will all be in plentiful supply again. And a brand new book by Rev. David Engelsma, *Marriage: The Mystery of Christ And The Church*, should be available by late spring. The tentative price on this volume is \$3.50. Another book has just gone to press, but you can begin to look forward to it. Prof. Herman Hanko has written a large volume on our Lord's parables under the title, *The Mysteries Of The Kingdom*. We don't even have a tentative price on this one yet; but it will be worth every cent!

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*Australasian Tour.* Our synodical Committee for Contact With Other Churches is making arrangements for a trip to New Zealand and Australia by two representatives of our churches. Any of our Australasian friends who would like to make contact with us during the latter part of June and the first part of July, the Lord willing, is welcome to write to me or to Mr. W. van Rij. You will find both addresses in the masthead on the back page.

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Sorry, but Question Box will have to be postponed to the next issue.

## A Significant Overture On Student Aid

There is pending before Classis East of our denomination an overture from the Council of Hope Church which proposes a radical change with respect to the dispensing of student aid to those who are preparing for the ministry in our churches. This overture is intended, of course, for Synod of 1975; and I assume that since it is addressed to Synod, it will also appear on the Agenda of Synod — either with or without the adherence of Classis East. Since this overture is for various reasons rather important, a few editorial remarks about it are not deemed out of place.

### Summary

The overture itself is rather lengthy; so I will try briefly to summarize it.

1. The document opens with a statement of motivation, to the effect that the Deacons of Hope have long been concerned with the problem of the proper exercise of their office, and that the Council of Hope believes that in some instances work which properly belongs to the deacons is being performed by synodically appointed committees. "It is to this latter that we address ourselves in this present overture."

2. Next follows the overture proper: "We, the Council of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, overture Synod to discharge the present Student Aid Committee, discontinue the present practice of

supporting students from Synodical funds and inform the Churches that this work belongs properly to the labors of the local diaconate."

At this point in the document, instead of presenting specific grounds for this three-fold overture, the Council of Hope Church presents a rather lengthy argumentation which constitutes the bulk of their document of three closely typewritten pages.

3. The first part of Hope's argumentation presents a "brief history." Reference is made especially to an article by the Rev. G. M. Ophoff about Article 19 of our Church Order in Volume 11, page 46, of the *Standard Bearer*, in which the history of Student Aid is traced. After summarizing this history, the Council of Hope draws this conclusion: "Therefore, the method we now use to fulfill art. 19 of the Church Order in this respect is to be traced directly back to a time in which a very close relationship existed between the Church and State. Since that time the records available show that the question of supporting students in ways other than through the Student Aid Committee has never been brought before an ecclesiastical body. It is our purpose to ask for such consideration."

I have three brief remarks in connection with this summary: a) Anyone who wishes to study this subject would do well to read the entire article by the



Rev. Ophoff: for he deals with the *principle* of Student Aid as well as with the history. b) Lest there be any misunderstanding, due to the misplacement of a reference in Hope's overture, it should be understood that the following statement is not a quotation from Ophoff: "Thus, in the usual trauma of the establishment of an independent denomination, the responsibility of the support of seminary students apparently was simply handed over to the broader ecclesiastical assemblies, without any questions asked." This statement is not presented in quotation marks, but it is followed by "(ibid.)" and might be misunderstood, therefore. It is a statement by the Hope Council, not by Ophoff. c) It should be pointed out that Hope's overture is more specific than is stated at the conclusion of this history. They are not merely asking for consideration of "ways other than through the Student Aid Committee." But they are asking specifically for a synodical decision "that this work belongs properly to the labors of the local diaconate."

4. In the second main section of argumentation, the Council of Hope presents and answers "some arguments usually given in favor of the present method." The source of these arguments is not indicated, so that it is very difficult to evaluate their worth. Nor, in my opinion, are the arguments the most important ones; nor are they exhaustive. For the same reason, as I hope to point out, the reply of the Hope Council is somewhat beside the point.

5. The third main section of argumentation is devoted to the "principal arguments in favor of the idea that the responsibility for the support of our seminary and pre-seminary students lies with the individual diaconates." Point A is the claim that the deacons have "the unique calling of dispensing the mercies of Christ. This includes monetary aid given to students." Point B argues that the duty of this support lies with the local congregation.

The overture concludes as follows: "It is our opinion, then, that the argumentation provided above supports the conclusion that the institution of the Student Aid Committee has caused the office of deacon to suffer. And, to that extent the Church of Christ has also suffered. The purpose of this overture is to restore to the office of deacon its proper function in this area. With that motive, we humbly submit this overture."

### General Evaluation

In the title of this editorial I termed this a "significant" overture. It is this, I believe, for more than one reason.

In the first place, I believe it is commendable that there is concern expressed about the office of deacon and that there is study made and attention paid to

the work of the deacons. This can only be for the good of our churches; properly accomplished, such study will also lead to good results. At the same time — and I make this remark in general in connection with the general concern about the lack of work for our deacons — it should be kept in mind that the degree of activity of the deacons varies somewhat with the times, and we should not be *overly* concerned if there are times when the deacons are less active. Nor, by all means, should we allow our zeal to find work for our deacons lead us in a wrong direction.

In the second place, I believe this overture to be significant because it proposes a *radical* change. Understand, I do not use the term *radical* in a pejorative sense. And I certainly do not think of my brethren in the Hope Council as being a group of "radicals"; we know one another better than that. But this overture proposes a basic, or root, change; in this sense I use the term *radical* (from *radix* = root). And the radical change does not consist in the change from a denominational to a local level; this does not involve any principle. The radical change consists in the proposal specifically to assign student aid to the province of the *deacons*, that is, to the care of the poor and to the work of benevolence, or mercy.

In the third place, therefore, our churches should proceed very cautiously in making changes with respect to student support. There are practical reasons for this; but there is also a principle at stake with respect to the *nature* of student aid. The delegates to Synod and Synod itself should take care to do their homework if they are called upon to pass judgment on Hope's overture. I intensely dislike study committees, for the simple reason that they result in postponement of decisions and in resultant unsettled conditions. But if the coming synod should feel they are not ripe for a decision, it would be better to appoint a study committee than to make a premature decision.

It is because of the significance of this overture that I wish to make a few observations.

### As To The History

First of all, I do not read and evaluate the history of student aid in the same way as the Hope Council does. And this history is indeed rather instructive. Any communion of churches does well to go contrary to history and to precedent very reluctantly. Why? Because usually you will find a principle lurking behind past practices in the Reformed churches. Nor do I believe that we rather blindly followed with respect to student aid the practices in vogue in the Christian Reformed Church prior to 1924. Not only were our various assemblies confronted by these questions when they established our own student aid



procedures, but various studies have been made of these matters in our seminary Church Polity courses, as well as in commentaries in our *Standard Bearer*. The Rev. Ophoff, for example, touches on the principle of this article in the very commentary to which the Hope Council refers, *Standard Bearer*, Vol. XI, p. 46. And also in his mimeographed Church Polity notes he touches on this subject; and in our class discussion on this subject we also touched on the issue.

But there is more.

It is not accurate to say, as the overture claims, that our practice of student support at the denominational level is rooted in the peculiar situation in the National Church of the Netherlands, according to which students were supported out of public funds derived from confiscation of Roman Catholic properties. It is true that the practice of the Dutch churches was *corrupted* at an early state in this way; and it is true that the old name, "E.B.P. Fund" (long ago discarded) was traditionally kept for many years as a result of that corruption in the National Church.

The record of history will show that the Dutch churches were concerned about the support of students and about a common fund for this purpose *before* there was any government money available. According to the commentary of Joh. Jansen in Article 19 of the Church Order, pp. 84, 85, (I translate), "Marnix of St. Aldegonde in a circular letter, March 21, 1570 called the attention of the refugee-churches in England to the fact that 'a general fund' should be established for students needing help. When the land would be cleansed from enemies, there would be a crying need for students. This writing of Marnix was undoubtedly the occasion that the synod of Emden, 1571, already decided that the churches, as soon as they should be gathered out of the dispersion and would have a degree of rest and prosperity, should support 'a number of students,' but on condition that these students should bind themselves to those congregations after completing their studies. . . ." The fact of the matter is that student aid did not begin to become a matter of public funds until the Synod of Dordrecht in 1578 and that student support did not become completely a matter of these public funds until 1586.

Now what is the principle even in this early history? It is this: that it is the duty of the churches (whether the churches in common or the churches individually) to make provision for the ministry of the Word, even to the extent of providing students for the ministry and, if need be, seeing to the financial support of such students. Incidentally, this was put into practice when students had to go to such

places as Geneva, Heidelberg, Basel, and Zurich to study for the ministry.

To this principle the Reformed churches adhered, even when there was a degree of compromise in the period of government support. For it must be remembered that even though the funds came "*ex bonis publicis*" it was the churches who provided the students and who recommended the students for support — in obedience to the principle that the churches must make provision for the ministry of the Word. And while it is correct to recognize the evil of this practice of government support, we should bear in mind, too, that such support also extended to payment of ministers' salaries and to support of retired ministers during this same period of the National Church. Yet neither the support of active ministers nor the support of ministers emeriti is today considered the work of the deacons, that is, of mercy. Why, then, from this same historical point of view argue that the support of students for the ministry belongs in the province of the work of mercy and the office of deacon?

Nor can I agree with the statement in this "brief history" concerning the support of students after 1834 and 1892 when the churches became independent of the state. Ophoff maintains, rightly, that the responsibility for support of students rests on the Church, not on the State. And he points out that after the churches became independent of the State they automatically found themselves under the necessity of caring for their own needy students. Now it is true that in some cases this was done by means of a fund at the level of the particular synod. It is also true, according to Joh. Jansen, that in some instances this was done at the local level; and he even cites an individual example. Then he goes on to say that this support can also be provided together — whether at classical, provincial, or general level. But there is no evidence to support this statement: "Thus, in the usual trauma of the establishment of an independent denomination, the responsibility of the support of seminary students apparently was simply handed over to the broader ecclesiastical assemblies, without any questions asked." What evidence is there that this was done thoughtlessly and under the influence of some trauma? None whatsoever. I could put a more plausible construction on this history, as follows: "In obedience to their calling to provide for the ministry of the Word and therefore to make provision for students for the ministry, and recognizing the fact that of necessity they would have to provide their own financial support of students, the churches decided to share this financial burden and to establish a common fund for this purpose. For reasons of efficiency, they decided that this fund should be established at the level of the particular synods,



rather than at the classical level or the level of the general synod.”

Finally, let me point out that at no point in history did the Reformed churches consider the support of students to be in the province of the deacons. On this score, the history speaks loudly.

But history alone does not speak conclusively. Nevertheless, if our churches are to go contrary to the testimony of history in this matter, there must be adduced good and cogent reasons.

To this question of the principle of this overture I shall address myself next time, the Lord willing.

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## THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

# The Dignity And Authority Of Holy Scripture

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

“We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts, that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves. For the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling.”

Article V, The Belgic Confession

The main thought of this article is crystal clear. We, the Reformed believers, receive all these books, those books which belong to the Canon of Holy Scripture as set forth in the previous article, for “the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith.” This means that our faith and life are regulated or governed by the Holy Scriptures. The Bible is the standard of what we believe, so that our faith may be tested by the Word of the Scriptures and the Bible is the standard according to which we live. We regulate our lives by the Scriptures. This in turn means that our faith is founded upon the Word of God. The truth of the Holy Scriptures is the solid rock upon which our faith is built. (cf. Ephesians 2:20-22) Finally we receive the Word of God revealed in the Scriptures for the confirmation of our faith. Nothing else confirms our faith, not the word of men, not the experiences of men, not even the declarations of the Church. Only the Scriptures provide the sure ground and foundation of our faith.

This faith also — and we might add, most emphatically — determines our attitude toward the Bible. We do not approach the Bible with a doubtful or questioning mind. We do not study the Scriptures to determine *whether or not* the things contained in them are true. Rather, rejecting without any reservation the assumptions of the higher critic we approach the Scriptures out of faith. We study the inexhaustible riches of God’s Word only to grow in our understanding and appreciation of the truth contained in them. This remains the one, glorious task of the Church, viz., to study prayerfully the Word of God in order to preach and teach that Word

in all its power and beauty unto the salvation of the people of God, the destruction of the “wisdom of this world,” and the glory of God’s name! Our starting point with respect to the Holy Scriptures is that we believe “without any doubt, all things contained in them.” Any theologian (and there are many in our times!) and any denomination of churches which do not begin and end with this faith have no right to claim allegiance to the Belgic Confession.

The Creed goes on to express the ground upon which this faith of the church rests. We receive these books and these only, “not so much because the church receives and approves them as such.” This is evidently included as a statement against the Roman Catholic Church. Rome teaches that the church logically and historically precedes the Bible and thus can exist independently of the written Word. The results of this teaching are devastating. While Rome will often appeal to the authority of the Bible in defense of its teaching, the position of Rome differs radically from that of the Reformed faith. Rome has accorded (and Rome has not changed one iota from this position) tradition a place of equal honor with the Bible. Often, too, Rome appeals to tradition as the “last court of appeal.” Rome’s position is exactly the opposite of that stated in Article V. According to Rome the Biblical writings have authority only because the church receives them as holy and divine. Dr. P. Y. De Jong’s statement of nearly fifteen years ago remains true today: “The Romanists insisted that the Bible was dependent upon the church; the reformers claimed that the church was dependent



upon the Bible. Here the paths parted radically and, judging by what we know today, seemingly irrevocably. Until Rome revises her conviction on this score (and a host of others, R.D.D.), all attempts at closer fellowship will suffer shipwreck." (*The Church's Witness To The World*, v. 1, p. 131)

By this statement, however, the Confession does not mean to deny either the fact or the significance of the fact that the church receives and approves of these books as Holy Scripture. In this connection we do well to face the question as to how the Canon was determined by the church. The Bible itself contains no information concerning the formation of the Canon or the fixing of it by the Church. Scripture simply asserts in clear language its divine origin and authority. We know that the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament Canon were recognized and accepted by the time of the ministry of Jesus. Christ and His disciples recognized the Canon of the Old Testament by referring to it as, "the law and the prophets." Both Christ and the Apostles frequently quoted from the Old Testament with the words, "It is written. . ."; and they considered those Scriptures the final authority. Thus, sometime prior to the coming of our Lord the Old Testament Canon was fixed, but not by any formal declaration of the Church. The law and the prophets were simply received spontaneously out of faith by God's people. The late Dr. Edward J. Young, an excellent Bible-believing scholar and former Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary, put it well when he said; "How the books were gathered we are not told. Apparently, no religious council in ancient Israel ever drew up a list of divine books. Rather, in the singular providence of God, His people recognized His Word and honored it from the time of its first appearance. Thus was formed the collection of inspired writings which are known as the canonical books of the Old Testament." (*An Introduction To The Old Testament*, Eerdmans, pp. 39, 40) The twenty-seven books of the New Testament Canon were formally received by the early Church at its Synod of Carthage in A.D. 397. Little is known of the historical process which led to this declaration of Carthage. It is probable that the original manuscripts were kept by the churches and individuals to whom they were addressed and that from these copies were made and distributed throughout the churches. We know too that the heretic, Marcion, played a role in all this. In support of his errant views this man rejected Matthew, Mark, John, the Acts of the Apostles, the pastoral and general epistles, and Revelation. He retained only Luke's Gospel account and ten Pauline epistles and even these he revised. This forced the early fathers of the church to define more explicitly the canon of the New Testament. Eusebius faced the question which books the believer must recognize as holy and divine.

His list of sacred writings is similar to our New Testament with the exception that he left open the question whether James, Jude, II Peter, and Revelation ought to be included. The great, orthodox father, Athanasius recognized the twenty-seven books as we have them today. Thus it was that the Church formally fixed the New Testament Canon at Carthage. We believe the Church did this as directed by the Holy Spirit which Christ promised would lead the Church into all the truth. (cf. John 14:26; 16:13) The point, however, is that the Church did not and does not determine the Canon. The dignity and authority of the Holy Scriptures is not derived from the councils of the Church. The Church merely recognized and confessed formally and publicly the faith in God's Word which lived in the hearts of His saints. The comment of Dr. Young concerning some modern views of the Bible expresses well what we are trying to say; "Historic Christianity, inasmuch as it is founded upon the Bible, teaches that the Bible is itself the authoritative Word of God. The Bible is authoritative, therefore, whether there is any Divine-human encounter or not. The Bible is authoritative whether or not its message is borne home to me in compelling power. It is authoritative whether I believe it or not; whether I believe in Jesus Christ or not. The Bible, according to the Christian position, is authoritative in itself; its authority resides in the fact that it is the Word of God." (*Thy Word Is Truth*, Eerdmans, p. 241)

This is the emphasis of Article V when it states that we receive these books; "... not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts, that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves." The ground upon which we receive these books as the very Word of God is twofold: the Holy Spirit's witness and the evidence which the Bible itself contains. The fact that the Church has recognized the Canon and publicly declared itself on this score only serves to strengthen the child of God in his conviction. But the deepest reason for his acceptance of the Scriptures as holy and divine, from God Himself, is the evidence contained in the Bible as that is applied in his heart by the Holy Spirit.

The evidence in the Bible itself is simply overwhelming. Anyone even vaguely familiar with the Scripture knows that the Word of God clearly witnesses to its divine origin, its dignity and authority. God spoke the ten Words of His Law and inscribed them with His finger on two tables of stone. The prophets spoke the Word of the Lord which came unto them and called the people to repentance and faith because, "thus saith the Lord." Both Jesus and the Apostles, as we noted above, quoted the Old



Testament Scriptures as the final authority. The apostles too were deeply conscious of the fact that their writings were the very Word of God. Peter, for example, ascribed divine authority to the epistles of Paul. (II Peter 3:16) Paul expresses his thanks to God concerning the Thessalonians; "... because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." (I Thess. 2:13) The same apostle confesses his and the church's dependence upon the Holy Spirit: "And my speech, and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.... Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the

spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God. Which things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth..." (I Cor. 2:4, 5, 12, 13)

Still more, the creed asserts that the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in the Scriptures are fulfilling. How true that is. Before our very eyes in these last days we see the signs which herald our Lord's return; the very events and phenomena which He and the other Scriptures foretold are happening. So it also was with the prophecies of old.

This is why Reformed believers "receive all these books ... believing without any doubt all things contained in them."

## ALL AROUND US

# The Bible As Literature

*Prof. H. Hanko*

When the Supreme Court of the United States struck down Bible reading and prayers in the public schools of the land, it did not disapprove of teaching courses in the public schools in which the Bible was studied as literature. The argument apparently was that to study the Bible as literature only does not mean that a particular religion is being taught in the public schools — something upon which the Supreme Court specifically frowned. The Bible could then be studied as literature just as any writing, ancient or modern, could be studied for its literary value. If, incidentally, the thoughts of the particular writer entered into the teaching, this would not necessarily be bad because the thoughts of the writers of the Scriptures would be considered roughly on a par with the poetry of the Greek poet Homer, the essays of Seneca, the novels of Dickens, etc.

Many evangelicals, a large number of whom send their children to the public schools, see in this approach a kind of salvation from the threat of atheism which hung over the public schools when Bible reading and prayers were banned. Increasingly therefore, evangelicals have been putting forth organized efforts to get courses taught in the public schools which would teach the Bible from a literary viewpoint. Such an approach to Bible teaching would include a careful investigation of the literary forms which are used in the Bible — the poetry of the Psalms, the narrative form of the historical books, the

epistolary forms of the epistles of Paul, Peter, John, etc. It would also concentrate on the various literary devices which are used in different kinds of literary forms such as figures of speech, parables, parallelisms, etc. And, so evangelicals hope, a study of this kind which can be legal in the public schools would lead to facing the Bible as the Word of God. One gets the impression that it is an attempt to introduce into the public schools in a surreptitious way that which the Supreme Court emphatically banned as illegal.

In the current discussion which is going on, there are some who support this position by saying that the only real approach to understanding the Bible is the literary approach. One cannot really penetrate to the true meaning of the Scriptures unless one first of all has a firm grasp of the literary aspects of Scripture. For example, Leland Ryken writes in a recent issue of *Christianity Today*:

Why is a literary approach to the Bible necessary, especially since we seem to have gotten along without it for so long? I have already said that it is needed as an aid to understanding what the Bible says. Any piece of writing must be read in terms of what it is. A reader of Scripture is opening the door to misunderstanding whenever he ignores the literary principles of various literary forms. When he fails to ask literary questions he will go astray, interpreting figurative expressions as if they were intended literally, looking for theological propositions in a



lyric poem that contains mainly an outpouring of human emotion or in a story that is mainly a record of events, allegorizing the Song of Solomon because he does not know how to respond to love poetry, turning Jonah into a model prophet because he fails to understand how satire works, regarding Ecclesiastes as wholly pessimistic because he overlooks its dialectical pattern and its quest structure, and so forth. Belief in the authority of the Bible will not by itself be sufficient for understanding if the reader ignores the literary principles that underlie the Bible and determine much of its meaning.

In keeping with the above, the author even recommends that courses in Bible literature be introduced in private and church schools as an aid in understanding the meaning of Scripture.

What must we say about all this? It is not our intent to get involved in the question of the rightness or wrongness of the decision of the Supreme Court. Nor is it our intention to analyze how all this applies to the public schools. Our readers know of my disapproval of public schools and of the emphasis which this magazine has placed on Christian covenantal instruction throughout the fifty years of its existence. But we are interested in this particular approach to the Bible. Is it a legitimate approach? Is it possible and permissible to read the Bible as literature? Is it necessary to understand the literature of the Bible in order to get at its deeper theological meaning? Would it be advisable to add a course to the curriculum of our Christian Schools which would be devoted exclusively to teaching the Bible as literature?

First of all, no one, I think, will deny that the Bible is a great and marvelous piece of literature. This is true not only of the Bible as it was originally inspired in the Hebrew and Greek; it is also true of our incomparable King James Version. The poetry of the Bible is some of the most beautiful poetry which has ever been written. The soaring passages of some of the prophecies stand out in all literature as some of the greatest masterpieces which have ever been written. The narratives are so enthralling that they can keep little children of preschool age on the edge of their seats for long periods of time; and these same narrative passages never lose their attraction no matter how old a person may become. The Bible is great literature indeed.

Furthermore, we may also grant that some understanding of the type of literature which is used in different places in the Bible is necessary to understand its meaning. In Seminary we go into considerable detail on this matter of various literary forms and devices when we learn the principles of the interpretation of Scripture. It must be remembered, however, that this is not absolutely essential. God's

people, young and old alike, have the ability to understand the Word of God. They do not need a formal course in Hermeneutics to understand that Word. And without being able to identify various literary forms and devices, they have an instinctive sense of the meaning of poetry also in distinction from the epistles.

Nevertheless, this is not the whole story. Nor is the literary approach to Scripture the correct one. If one approaches Scripture from this point of view, even though his ultimate aim may be to come to an understanding of Scripture's theological meaning, one will not be able to explain the Scriptures correctly. That is evident already in the quote we gave above. By means of this literary approach, the author of the article finds the essence of Scripture's poetry to be "an outpouring of human emotion." He rejects any symbolic meaning in the Song of Solomon and reduces it to a love poem. He denies the historicity of Jonah and makes the book a satire. This is the end of a literary approach because it is basically the same as what has become known as historical-literary criticism of Scripture.

Furthermore, this is not the correct approach to Scripture. The only way to approach Scripture is by means of humble faith in the Scriptures as the infallible record of God's revelation. God has revealed Himself. And He has revealed Himself in Christ as Jehovah, the God Who saves His people for His own glory. The Scriptures are, in their entirety, the infallible record of that revelation. They are no less than that. And this is true of the whole of Scripture. Every book, every chapter of every book, every verse of every chapter, contains a part of that record of revelation. Everywhere God is speaking of Himself as the God Who saves His people.

But to receive this truth, to approach Scripture in this way, to penetrate into its meaning so as to see this record of revelation, — all this requires faith. Without faith it is impossible to understand the Scriptures in their true meaning and receive the Scriptures in their true character.

This is why any child of God can understand the Scriptures. The most fundamental requirement is faith. Without faith, no true understanding is possible. With faith, understanding is always possible. Then it makes no difference who is hearing or reading the Scriptures. A little child may hear the stories of Joseph and his brethren on his mother's knee; but he will come to true understanding of that Word by the power of faith. A little girl may read stumblingly and haltingly the 23rd Psalm, but she will understand the Word of God in those precious words: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." An aged saint may only scarcely be able to read, much less explain the literary genres of Scripture; but he will testify that



those same Scriptures have been his lamp and guide throughout all his life, strengthening him in weakness, correcting him in sin, bringing joy in sorrow, courage in the battle of faith, and hope and victory at the moment of death.

This is not to say that an understanding of the literary aspect of the Scriptures is not helpful. It is. But it is not essential. And the child of God who approaches Scripture in faith and who is captured by its sublime truths will also have a deep appreciation for the "literature" of Scripture though he may be hard pressed to discuss this literary aspect with a professor of literature in the college across the street. He will be moved deeply by its poetry, stirred by its lofty prophecies, absorbed by its close doctrinal argumentation, quickened by its stirring stories. But all this will be even deeper than the man who has only a literary appreciation for what is written; because the man of faith will hear through it all the voice of his God.

And so finally, it is not possible to read the Scriptures *only* as literature. The Scriptures are not that kind of book. The Bible will not permit itself to be read in this way. The Bible is unlike any other

book. It is the very record of the voice of God. One who comes to Scripture must always face this reality. He cannot escape it. The Bible will not let him do this. If he comes in faith, he cannot and will not be satisfied with a mere literary viewpoint. He will hear His God. But no less is this true if a man comes in unbelief. He may want to come to make a literary study of Scripture; but he will be unable to maintain this position. He may determine to limit himself to Scripture's literary aspects. But Scripture itself will not permit this to happen. He will be confronted with Scripture's demands. And the result will be that he will harden himself against what Scripture says, his unbelief will grow, and he will, whether that was his intent or not, come to hate that Word of God more and more. In fact, in the subtlety of the sinful heart, he will even use the literary approach to steel himself against what Scripture demands and to drive from his mind and heart the truth which Scripture reveals. That very Scripture will seal his condemnation.

May we study the Bible as literature? We may, but only when the literary aspect of Scripture is subordinate to its truth. And when we understand and receive its truth, we will have all the greater appreciation for its sublime literary character.

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## FROM OUR THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

# Seminary Building Fund Report

It was with considerable trepidation, in 1971, that the Theological School Committee began carrying out its Synodical mandate to initiate drives for funds for our new seminary building. None, I think, expected the tremendous support in prayer and through gifts that we received. At best we hoped for sufficient funds to begin building — with the total cost of the building to be paid for over a period of ten or more years. Now, after less than four years, we can report not only that our seminary building is completed — but also that within a year of its completion it is fully paid for (that is, when we take into account the unpaid pledges). It is simply remarkable; unbelievable. After our most recent \$10-\$50 drive, and with the great assistance of several unexpected and very sizable gifts, our goal has been met — and more than met. We certainly thank our covenant God for this provision for our needs beyond our thought or expectation. And we thank each of you, also some of you outside of our Protestant Reformed Churches, for your very generous support. We covet your continued prayers — and also your continued financial support.

### The cost of the building

The estimated cost of building was \$153,000.00. I think that few expected the committee to attain to that figure — usually completed cost is at least 10% higher than estimated cost. But the final and total cost of the building was considerably under the estimate. Besides, the final cost of building included various items (as furnishings, gas pipeline, etc.) not in the original estimate. Our treasurer reports the following:

Architect fees .....	\$ 8,851.78
Engineering fees .....	338.00
Grading .....	1,066.00
Building costs .....	107,186.10
Carpeting .....	3,383.27
Land .....	10,802.50
Land improvements .....	11,675.38
Landscaping .....	2,774.00
Furnishings .....	3,868.09
Total cost .....	\$149,945.12



### Generous gifts

The gifts over the past four years, to the end of 1974, were as follows:

Paid on pledges . . . . .	\$ 22,749.77
Gifts . . . . .	92,126.69
Churches . . . . .	10,026.54
Societies . . . . .	1,941.84
Interest . . . . .	2,805.45
Two \$10-\$50 Drives . . . . .	10,831.12

Total contributions . . . . . \$140,481.41

In addition to the above, there remains \$18,772.50 in unpaid pledges. Quick addition will show that this brings the total to \$159,253.91. A little subtraction will show that this means that we will have \$9,308.79 over the total cost of the building! You see why the theological school committee and the building committee are simply overwhelmed by your response!

This does not mean, however, that we have *too much* money. First of all, we have had to borrow funds which are being now repaid, plus interest. There will be a few thousand dollars of interest which must also then be paid. A second consideration, though we hesitate to report it, is that not all pledges were made in good faith. A few will default on their pledges. We do, however, expect to have a modest surplus after the final pledge is paid.

### Additional financial support

If there are additional funds beyond what is needed to pay for building plus interest, the

Theological School Committee has discussed the possibility of using these both for our library and for added improvements to our present building plant. The library has the majority of its shelves unused as yet. Thousands of dollars could be spent on books. Water and sewer will likely be coming past our property soon at considerable expense. Grounds equipment can be purchased. Added landscaping could, conceivably, be done. Additional equipment could be purchased for more efficient work in the seminary itself. This is reported so that we may know that we do not have *too much* money for our seminary.

We would like to encourage each of you to consider giving regular and generous financial support to our seminary in the future. We will find many projects where your gifts can most profitably be used. Above all, remember our seminary in your prayers, that this institution may serve its purpose: to prepare young men for the ministry of the gospel in harmony with the requirements of the Word of God.

Finally, we give again our thanks to the generous efforts of our "Blue Ribbon" building committee and to Mr. T. Newhof, Sr. for their labors in overseeing the erection of our seminary building. And we thank Mr. R. Teitsma who has performed outstanding work in serving as treasurer for this project.

Stop by and see our seminary building sometime.

Theological School Committee  
—Rev. G. Van Baren

## CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies this fall in either the pre-seminary or seminary department of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches are requested to appear before the Theological School Committee at its meeting to be held on Thursday, March 20, 1975, at 7:30 P.M. in the Theological School Building, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418.

### Pre-seminary Department:

Permission to pursue the pre-seminary course of study shall be granted by the Theological School Committee. A transcript of grades from High School and College (if any), a letter of testimony from a student's pastor or consistory, and a certificate of health from a reputable physician shall be submitted.

### Seminary Department:

Permission to pursue the Theological course in the seminary shall be granted by the Synod, upon

recommendation of the Theological School Committee, to such an aspirant only who comes supplied with a testimonial of his consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith and upright in walk, and also a certificate from a reputable physician showing him to be in good health.

A complete high school education and the equivalent of a four year (125 hour) college education are required for entrance into the seminary department. Moreover, each entrant into this department must produce evidence that he has credit for the required college courses. Requirements are listed in the school catalog, available from the School.

In the event you cannot be present at this meeting, please notify the undersigned secretary of your intentions, prior to the meeting. Mail all correspondence to the Theological School.

Richard H. Teitsma, Secretary



## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# Exercise Unto Godliness

*Rev. J. Kortering*

Godliness!

What virtue in a world of corruption.

Are you godly, youthful reader?

True, we would have to scale the heavenly heights to comprehend so great a concept. Godliness is a reflection of God, it is a bit of heaven while we lie in the midst of a sin-cursed world. It is a wonder of grace.

Let us consider the main elements in this heavenly virtue.

To be godly means that we know God. This knowledge involves more than knowing about God; it includes this to be sure. God comes to us in the revelation of His Word; and if we are to be godly, we must know all that God tells us about Himself, who we are, and what our calling is. You understand that many have this knowledge and still are not godly. With this knowledge, we must learn to love God. Godliness is a matter of the heart; we rejoice in God as the God of our salvation. We never cease to wonder how it is that God loves us; and the more we meditate upon this, the more we conclude that it is of free grace alone. How can we not love Him Who loved us even unto death? It is our sincere desire to be drawn closer to God all our life as we anticipate our being near to Him in glory.

Godliness also includes proper response to God, viz., reverence. Many youth pride themselves in their brashness. It seems the quickest way to go on an ego trip is to act differently from others. To one it is dress, to others it is hair, to still others it is actions. The more brash the more successful. The pity is that some young people treat God this way: they think the more boldly they act toward God, the more meaningful is their relationship to Him. They use slang in their prayers; they sing songs that border on the edge of blasphemy; they defy God while they pretend piety. This is the opposite of godliness. One that truly loves God is shocked by this behavior. Rather, he stands in holy awe and reverence to think that God loves him. He knows that his response must be that of the humble subject standing before the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He is dust while His God is Creator. He is sinful, while His God is Light! He knows what he is to take his shoes off, for the place upon which he stands is holy ground.

Thirdly, godliness includes obedient service. We have a purpose in life. And that purpose is not determined by us; it is laid out for us by our God. Are you conscious of this? God is the Sovereign Lord, and He is the one that gives command. It is our duty to obey. The more godly we are the more obedient we become. We realize our purpose in life is not to live without God, or to put God on the pulpit in church and leave Him there; it is to know God's will and act accordingly. This applies to our school work, our dating, our sports and recreation, our life's work, our marriage, all our time and energy.

Paul writes Timothy in Chapter 4 of his First Epistle, "Exercise thyself rather unto godliness."

In the context he tells him, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou has attained. But refuse profane and old wives fables."

He tells Timothy to exercise himself unto godliness in two ways. First, by refusing profane and old wives fables, but instead nourishing himself unto good doctrine. The other is by exhorting him unto godly living, as he did in the preceding context.

Godliness is expressed in our faith.

Think of that a moment. What is your faith? What do you believe? In summary, it is all the truth revealed to us in the Bible. This is first and foremost. It stands to reason that godliness includes a proper attitude toward God's Word. There are those who say that God's Word is *in* the Bible, and it is up to us to "discover" it. Imagine what a proud idea this is. God doesn't know how to communicate to us, we have to uncover His Word in the Bible. How can such people call themselves godly? Or consider this idea, that proud man knows so much through his scientific discovery that he concludes that the earth has evolved in a process of billions of years. Some are so influenced by this observation that they throw away the first chapters of Genesis and deny their historicity in favor of man's knowledge concerning origins. Are such godly? Lately we are told that students have to possess a certain "Philosophy"; and unless they possess this, they cannot read the Bible properly, nor can they learn truth. We need man's philosophy in



order to understand God's revelation. Again, such are not godly! Godliness enables us to have a deep reverence for God's Word, to conclude that it is the truth, and that it is our calling to apply it to our lives.

For Reformed young people, this means that you have a deep love and respect for the truth that our forefathers handed down to us. The Bible teaches and true Reformed churches proclaim double predestination, man's total depravity, God's particular love for His people and not for the whole world, Christ's death on the cross as a payment for His elect people, sovereign grace, and the perseverance of the saints by God's loving care. This is our heritage. To be godly means that we appreciate these truths, and that we are offended when Arminianism creeps in the churches, schools, or homes. It has been and is today the arch-enemy of our faith. The older we become the more we appreciate and love the historic Reformed faith. It is the only truth faithful to our God.

Godliness also affects the way we live. You can discern whether you are godly by your attitude toward holy things, the use of God's name, the reading of His Word, your prayer life, your attitude toward worshipping God, your values in life and how you spend your time and what you do. Yes, all this indicates whether we live our life consciously before God or whether we think only of pleasure and sin. Here too, godliness is not sinlessness, but the daily struggle to do what is right. This includes the prayer for forgiveness and the desire to increase in obedience.

Such godliness comes only in the way of concerted effort. Paul tells Timothy, "Exercise thyself unto godliness."

The word he uses is the same word we have in our English language, *gymnasium*. This places Paul's counsel in the context of sports. If we may take the liberty, Paul tells Timothy, "Gymnasticize thyself unto godliness." Now we know there is no instant athlete. If you go to the gym, whether at school or in your town, you know it smells of sweat. This is true because the bodily exercise of a sportsman involves physical conditioning. Muscles must be toned, flab has to be worked off, the body must be in peak condition to function properly in sports.

It is even more so for our Christian godliness. There is no instant godly Christian. It only comes through hard work, toning of the heart to get rid of hatred and replace it with true love, enlightening the mind to understand the truth, strengthening the will to resist evil and seek the good, subjecting the body as God's temple unto the service of God and not to serve Satan. Yes, we must sweat and groan in the process of conditioning ourselves unto godliness.

Four things are worth noting in this connection.

First, a "coach" makes a great deal of difference. For those of you who have had experience in athletics, you understand this. A coach can take a mediocre team and make something of the fellows or girls. The coach has the strategy of the game, he details the disciplined training sessions, he instills the confidence and morale so badly needed.

You see how important it is for us as Christian young people to have the right coach, leading us unto godliness. Reverently speaking, He is Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. He is the One Who gives us the spiritual motivation, the direction, the guidance we need as Christian young people. He uses means, your parents, your teachers, your ministers, your counselors. What a difference it makes if these instructors are themselves godly. A godly parent, teacher, minister is the only one qualified to impart that godliness. You see, young reader, it is of eternal value to you that you have such godly instructors. Appreciate them and respect them, but above all, listen to them: for they seek after your souls.

Secondly, as Christian young people, we must also work for development. An athlete doesn't become an instant success over night. It takes the slow process of daily work-outs, after five push-ups, ten come easily, and soon twenty, and so on. The same is true spiritually. The harder we work at godliness, the more correct it seems and the easier to practice. If we deny ourselves certain television programs consistently, it soon becomes easy to control the television; but if we give in and watch anything that is on, we lose control. It takes prayerful, diligent, daily work to understand God's Word and to be able to apply it to our lives.

Thirdly, exercise unto godliness requires persistence. An athlete cannot practice basketball two weeks in December and then forget about it until he plays in a game in January. Every week, perhaps every day, he must develop skill and stick with it. Thus also as Christian young people. We must seize upon every opportunity that will enable us to give expression to our faith. Sometimes this means that we have to discipline ourselves and have a long talk with ourselves. Other times it means we have to discuss things with our close friends. As young people we have to wrestle with many problems amongst one another. Then again, it is time to talk with our parents and seek their guidance. There may be moments you have to talk to your teacher or minister. The stratagems of Satan are often baffling; and by daily striving to overcome them we develop spiritual muscles that enable us to resist the devil and see him flee from us, and we in turn draw nigh to God.

Finally, exercise takes motivation. The sports hero is motivated by the acclaim of men and the self-satisfaction of having achieved. Paul warns,



"Bodily exercise profiteth little." He isn't knocking sports, he is simply putting them in their proper place. He says: look at the athlete, he works long hours, sweats and groans, is self-disciplined, so that his game is not adversely affected by anything he does; he eats well, sleeps properly, — all for sports. How much more should we who are godly young people devote ourselves to the exercise of godliness. The advantage of such exercise is "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The fruit of godliness is that

you have a blessed and meaningful life now, and in the end you enter into all the glory of life everlasting.

It stands to reason that such spiritual power comes not from men, but from our God. The strength to exercise, as well as the spiritual durability that follows, is God's gift to His children. It is the amazing fruit of the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Are you godly?

If not, are you doing something about it?

Exercise thyself unto godliness.

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## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

### This Is Theological Development???

*Rev. G. Van Baren*

The calling of the church of Christ on this earth is to develop in its theology. The theology of the church surely is not to alter from one position into something completely other. It is rather to develop and grow. Development would not be to change an apple tree into a thistle; it would rather be that the apple tree, being properly nourished, becomes larger and produces ever more fruit. Such must be the development of theology in the church. This development within the church does not mean that the church can introduce something different than or in addition to what the Word of God declares. Always, development involves greater understanding of that which is already given to us in Scripture. A study of church history, especially in the New Testament age, shows how such development took place.

It is one of the signs of the end of time when the "church", instead of building upon what was confessed and taught throughout past ages, turns its back upon that and adopts what formerly had been rejected as plainly contrary to Scripture. Within the liberal churches of our day, there is increasingly a denial of the Trinity, of the Incarnation of Christ, of His virgin birth, etc. These churches have reverted back to the time of the early New Testament church and have adopted the very views which were then condemned. This trend to revert to the early period of the N.T. church, to adopt views condemned then, is increasingly seen within Reformed circles. That trend can only lead to the same liberal positions evident in many of the other main-line Protestant churches of our day. One recent evidence of this trend is the change to the practice of

having women officebearers: deacons, elders, and ministers. Reformed churches in the Netherlands have made this change. The Reformed Church of America has made this change. Now, the Christian Reformed Church appears about to make this same change. At best, it seems, a few voices of opposition are heard — but then it appears that most are ready to drift further along the road toward apostasy.

The drive for change in the church's stand regarding who may occupy offices within the church arises from at least two fundamental errors: the error of "world-conformity", and the error of adopting, at least in part, the *Sitz-im-Leben* method of interpreting Scripture. (Scripture must be understood in light of the time and situation in which it was written. Scriptural authors had their prejudices, misconceptions, etc. when they wrote Scripture.)

Striking it is that for almost 2000 years there was basic agreement concerning the question of women serving in office in the church. For almost 2000 years the leaders within the church were opposed to it. Now, only in recent times, after a "women's lib" movement developed, many in the church felt compelled to get on the band wagon and advocate the position that women can serve in office in the church. Now, suddenly after almost 2000 years, we are given to understand that what Scripture condemned in this regard only applied to that age long past when women were considered inferior to men. Now we need no longer obey that portion of Scripture. Times have changed; hence, the command no longer applies.

But is this true? Follow, with me, some of the development of this question through the ages.



First is the passage of Scripture in I Cor. 14:34, 35, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." Worthy of note is that Paul definitely does not base the command upon the traditions of his age, but on the law itself — referring clearly to the ten commandments and specifically the fifth command.

The second often-quoted passage is from I Tim. 2:11-15, part of which states, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve." Again, strikingly, Paul does not base the command upon the traditions of his own age, but on the creation ordinance itself. He points out further in this passage that woman's transgression first also has a bearing upon the question. But the point is that God created woman in the position which Paul insists involves the question of "authority".

John Calvin had no problem with the above passages. He considered them to teach clearly that women can not serve in offices in the church. He said so. In his commentary on I Timothy 2:11, he writes:

*Let a woman learn in quietness.* After having spoken of dress, he now adds with what modesty women ought to conduct themselves in the holy assembly. And first he bids them learn quietly; for *quietness* means silence, that they may not take upon them to speak in public. This he immediately explains more clearly, by forbidding them to teach.

... He assigns two reasons why women ought to be subject to men; because not only did God enact this law at the beginning, but he also inflicted it as a punishment on the woman. (Gen. 3:16).

And until very recently, there was simply no question in the Christian Reformed Church (and other Reformed churches as well) about the meaning of the Scriptural passages. Monsma and VanDellen write in their 1949 edition of "The Church Order Commentary" briefly but clearly:

The question whether or not women should take part in congregational elections we would answer negatively. Voetius, the great expert in Reformed Church government, excludes women from Church elections inasmuch as congregational elections are Church governmental in character. And women, according to Holy Writ, are not to teach in the Churches nor to help govern the same. (I Cor. 14:34). Bouwman judges likewise. So does Jansen.

L. J. Schaver, in his "The Polity of the Churches", Vol. 1, page 184, writes concerning the position of the Christian Reformed Church:

The teaching of the apostle Paul, about women wearing a veil when they prophesy (I Cor. 11), is based upon the fact that a veil was then the symbol of their inferiority to man. The wearing of a veil by women, which was a custom at the time, was honored by Paul because it symbolized a Scripture truth relative to the inferiority of the woman. That women, apart from prophesying, may not speak in the church in public gatherings is the plain teaching of God's Word (cf. I Cor. 14:34, 35; I Tim. 2:11,12). This prohibition is plain, positive, pointed, universal, and without ambiguity. The given passages even forbid them to ask questions in public gathering. Not as to her salvation but as to her position in the church, the keynote of Paul's teaching is that she is subordinate. This subordinate position he bases upon the primal law of creation "thy husband . . . shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16), which is universal and for all time. Added reasons for this subordination he sees also in the fact that "Adam was first formed," and that Eve was made "of the man," and also "for the man" (I Tim. 2:13; I Cor. 11:8, 9). Still another important reason for the subordination of women Paul ascribes to the fact that it was Eve who was deceived, not Adam (I Tim. 2:14; cf. Gen. 3:17). She who was later upon the scene was the first to sin, and also the one to sin more grievously. Because her fall was greater, the sex she represented also fell deeper; and according to the inspired apostle she now occupies in the Church of Christ a subordinate position with respect to matters of authority. Paul says, "I suffer not a woman . . . to usurp authority over the man" (I Tim. 2:12).

The question whether women should be given the privilege of the vote at congregational meetings hinges upon the question whether the exercise of that privilege is an exercise of authority. If the vote of the congregation be considered as only advisory, as some believe it is, then there can be no objection to women voting at congregational meetings. That this vote is not authoritative in Reformed and Presbyterian Churches, in the same sense as is the vote of the Consistory or Session, may be granted. But also it must be conceded that common opinion regards the vote of the congregational meeting as decisive. When the members of the congregation, together with the Consistory or Session, vote for a pastor or for members of the council, that vote stands. If the election within a Consistory or Session is an act of church government, then the participation in an election by the members of the congregation is an act of cooperating in church government. And that condemns the practice of women voting in congregational meetings.

But after almost 2000 years, winds of change began to blow. Evidences of this can be found in various decisions of the Synods of the C.R.C. In 1950 it was the question of woman suffrage at congregational meetings. At that time, the church was a bit leary about allowing such. The *Acts* state:



In view of the situation as indicated, we believe it would be unwise for the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church to make a pronouncement on this important question at this time. The basic issues involved have not come to sufficient clarity in the midst of our churches, and the desired measure of agreement can hardly be expected at this time. And inasmuch as this question not only confronts us, but also our sister churches in the Netherlands, and inasmuch as we are now holding Ecumenical Synods from time to time, your committee advises Synod: First, to urge all our leaders, consistories and classes, to study the questions basic to this issue, giving particular heed to the Scriptural passages cited in this report. Secondly, to request the next Reformed Ecumenical Synod for advice regarding the matter of woman suffrage at congregational meetings. This request for advice as we see it, should embrace a study of the nature and authority of congregational meetings in our Reformed system of church government, and likewise an exegetical study of all Scripture passages which have bearing on this question.

Soon in the C.R.C. the "sufficient clarity" and "desired measure of agreement" arrived. Woman suffrage was permitted within the churches. However, it was emphatically maintained that this was *not* placing women in positions of leadership, for, it was said, such was *plainly* forbidden by Scripture. The *Acts* of 1957 present the following:

On the basis of a careful study of the relevant Biblical passages, as regards the participation of the church in such matters as election of office-bearers, and as regards the position of women in the church and of church polity, your committee comes to the following conclusions:

1. The Word of God teaches the spiritual equality of man and woman as image-bearers of God and as heirs of the grace of life and as participants in the office of believers.
2. The Word of God teaches that there is a difference between man and woman, involving the headship of man, *which is rooted in creation and which is not abrogated by redemption.* (italics mine)
3. In accordance with this principle rooted in creation, and brought to bear on the life of the church by the apostle Paul, women should not be accorded a position of leadership in the church. They should hold no ruling or teaching office in the church.
4. In the congregational meeting the government of the church rests with the consistory. Participation in such meetings by the membership of the church is by virtue of the office of believers.
5. The participation of women in voting at congregational meetings as an exercise of the office of believers is not a matter of assuming leadership over men.

6. Church politically speaking there is no essential difference between the right of approbation, which women do already exercise, and participation in congregational meetings with the right to vote.

Now, evidently, the C.R.C. has arrived at the point where it is looking for "sufficient clarity" and "desired measure of agreement" before making a decision to admit women into ecclesiastical offices including the ministry. The Synod of 1974 mandated its committee on "Women in Ecclesiastical Office" as follows:

That synod charge its study committee on Women in Ecclesiastical Office to give specific consideration to the distinction between licensure and ordination, and exhorting and preaching, as this distinction may bear on the place of women in the seminary's field education.

Now, I believe, it is simply a matter of preparing the C.R.C. for the inevitable. Probably the time is not ripe to approve this sort of change of permitting women to hold office in the church. It takes a while to get people adjusted to the idea that the church was, after all, wrong for the past 2000 years. It takes a while to convince people that what the church thought Paul (writing infallibly) was teaching, he did not really mean for today at all. One method of softening the church at large is to publicize the possibility and emphasize the inevitability of change. Through such publicity, one is hardly in a position to protest — for there is no *decision* to protest, yet he is compelled to believe the inevitability of the decision approving of women in church offices. At such time as the decision is made, the church will be "ready" for it, and few will believe it useful to protest.

Publicity to possible change within the C.R.C. concerning women in office was presented in the *Grand Rapids Press* on Saturday, November 16, 1974. The article points out that there are four women presently in Calvin Seminary seeking degrees. Several of these desire to enter the pastoral ministry. One applied for her "license to exhort", but "her application was deferred, pending Synod action next summer. Instead, she worked at other pastoral duties and accepted several invitations to conduct public worship services at local Presbyterian churches."

How a member in good standing in the C.R.C. can openly violate the clear stand of the C.R.C. against women teaching or preaching in the church (any church), is a question I can not answer. Each, I suppose, can do what is right in his own eyes.

The *Press* continues its report by stating, "Whether the Synod will open any of the church's offices to women next summer is considered unlikely. Opposition to the ordination of women is rooted in the letters of Paul to Timothy and the Corinthians,



passages that clearly state a woman's role is a silent one, subject to man's."

But some who teach in Calvin Seminary, in positions of influence and leadership in the church, openly advocate the acceptance of women in office. At the same time, there is seen (if the *Press* report is accurate) a terrible and flagrant disregard to the Scriptures as infallible and inspired. Prof. Fred H. Klooster carefully stated, "Until the last decade, there was, within the Reformed world, general unanimity on the meanings of those passages. The stand of the church is considered Biblically demanded." Well, none ought to be offended at that. It should please the conservative, yet allow his own position to remain in question.

But another of the professors is more bold. According to the *Press*, "'It's not what Scripture says, but how the church uses the scripture,' says Allen D. Verhey, a professor at the seminary. 'We must take into account the culture that formed the biases.'" Now that is about as un-Reformed and anti-Scriptural as can be — something one would hardly expect to emanate from a Reformed Seminary. Yet few seem startled or perturbed anymore.

The same *Press* report states:

Verhey believes the Synod probably won't vote to allow women in church offices next summer, but "it will be approved at some point, maybe in 10 years. It's past time that the institutions recognize that in Christ there is no male and female."

So that is what happens. After 2000 years the church finally has "developed" to the very position condemned, admittedly, by the apostle Paul. The would-be woman pastor at the seminary is quoted as saying, "There are Biblical verses to support both sides of the issue." That, of course, would involve contradiction in Scripture itself. What makes the church so wise today that now, after such a long time, it suddenly sees as truth what Scripture and church leaders during a 2000 year period condemned as lie?

All this is not, surely, true development. It smacks rather of that sort of thing condemned by the apostle Peter in II Pet. 2:22.

Let us also be warned. The end of the age is marked by a course where right is called wrong, and wrong is called right. It is the time of great apostasy. That apostasy begins with one step — and these steps continue ever more rapidly one after the other. He who has eyes to see, let him see.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

### Exposition of Hebrews 12: 7-11

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

#### MUCH MORE SUBJECT OURSELVES TO THE FATHER OF SPIRITS (Hebrews 12:7-9)

Elsewhere the writer had pointed out that we have to do with God. Sometimes the writer speaks of the living God as the one into whose hands it is terrible to fall as a wicked and unbelieving man, (Heb. 10:31) and that our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:19). However, here in this section of Hebrews 12 the writer is speaking of God as He is our Father for Christ's sake, and of the peculiar relationship in which He stands to us His children, His sons of adoption. He "deals with us as sons"! The heavenly Father bears *Himself* (*prospheretai*) towards, treats us as sons, and not as bastards. We are dealt with as real sons who will be brought to glory (Heb. 2:10).

The writer notices the attitude which we have to our natural fathers. We give them reverence. We gave them this reverence when they corrected us. We subjected ourselves under their correcting words and

rod (Heb. 12:9). This was our habitual attitude toward our earthly fathers. These were not fathers of the "spirit". They were not our creator and former in the lowest part of the earth. That is the exclusive prerogative of our heavenly Father. He is the author not merely of our spiritual being, but He is the author of all which have spirit: angels, devils, and men, whether good or evil. This is thus contrasted with the limited power of the earthly father. He is the infinite God, mighty in word and in deed, Who created the spirit of men in the beginning out of nothing. Thus Moses addresses God in Numbers 16:22, "... O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?" In Numbers 27:16 Moses prays that a man be placed over all the congregation after his death. Says he, "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation ... that the congregation be not as sheep which have no shepherd." Only the God of the spirits can choose



such a man, and prepare him for the exalted task to be a shepherd in Israel. To this Father of spirits we are to subject ourselves; He can mold our very soul and spirit and the intents and thoughts of our heart. (Heb. 4:12) And there is not a spirit of any creature which is not manifest in His sight.

With this Father we have to do. And to him we are to subject ourselves. We are to submit to the chastisement of Jehovah God, our mighty and faithful Father, who never chastises us for his pleasure. God is no sadistic God. He does it for our profit, our spiritual benefit and growth. The fruit and result of such subjection to the Father of spirits is that "we live", that is, that we consciously enjoy eternal life. Then we are blessed with inward happiness and peace in the midst of all the trials and temptations of life. That is the victorious life of hope. Such is our profit for which God sends His chastisements; it makes no difference in which form these come: persecution for Christ's sake, and being evilly spoken of by all men for Christ's sake.

It is a good rhetorical question: shall we not much more submit ourselves to the Father of spirits, and live?

Only thus will we really become "partakers of His holiness". Our spiritual growth is very necessary. This does not mean merely some cultural development, a coming to an intellectual maturity. This is dealing with the man of God, who must be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. But the essence of this is that we be holy as God is holy. (I Peter 1:16) For this being holy as God is holy is directly connected with our calling God our Father, who without respect of persons judges every man according to his works. We must become partakers of the divine nature. We must be sons who are the perfect image-bearers of our heavenly Father. (II Peter 1:3, 4) The very holy mind and will of God must become our mind and will. We must learn to say from the heart; thy will be done. Then we are partakers of His holiness. And to arrive at that state and condition of life we need the corrections of the Father of spirits that we may live.

To achieve this holiness in us His sons, the Father of spirits makes us to be "exercised" in afflictions and chastisements. God makes us run the race in His gymnasium. He makes us spiritual athletes, who must contend for the faith with all forms of opposition and difficulties. And when we have been fully exercised (*gegumnasmeno*) then we finally have the "peaceable fruit of righteousness." This righteousness is the same as the "partaking of holiness". It is *practical* righteousness, which is more abundant than the righteousness of the Pharisees and Scribes. (Matt. 5:20) It is the righteousness in which the very jot and tittle of the law is fulfilled. It is the righteous demand

of the law fulfilled in us. This righteousness, thus perfected in us, has a fruit: it is *peaceable*. Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them. (Psalm 119:165) The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. (James 3:18)

### THE CALL TO VIGOROUS ACTION IN THE CHURCH (Hebrews 12:12, 13)

Discipline is necessary, painful and salutary for the sons of the Father of spirits! It is for their very life. In view of this, there is a certain battle-cry which is uttered in the text. It is a call to action. There must be no more "feeble hands" and "weak (paralytic) knees". This is figurative language, borrowed from the Old Testament Scriptures. It is the prophet Isaiah who calls for courage and strength on the part of the church of his day. At that time it seemed that the power of Assyria would destroy Judah and that God's promises would utterly fail. But God would perform His wonders; the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for the inhabitants of it, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose. God will do great things in Christ. The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped by the wonder of God's power. And, therefore, the hands of the weak shall be strengthened, and feeble knees shall be made to stand. And that is true also of the Hebrew Christians.

Now the church must not be despondent about the hardships connected with the calling in Christ who came to fulfill these promises concerning the blossoming of the desert. They must be active; their *hands* must be strong. They must rise to the need of the hour. And their knees must not be weak. They must take a stand and endure. And they must insist that the entire congregation stand strong in the faith. "Those that be turned out of the way" must refer to those who are in danger of slipping from the faith in Christ and returning to the Old Testament types and shadows. That would not be faith which believes to the saving of the soul, but would be a falling back unto perdition. (Heb. 10:39) And such must not be the case. Therefore the hands of the congregation and its leaders must not be slack. They must have good "oversight" over each other; the leaders in the church, too, must have careful inspection of the flock and of their faith in Christ.

If there be those, who are turned out of the way, they must be "healed". This healing is really that they come under and remain under the power of the Gospel, the healing of Christ. He is the tree of life which has leaves for the healing of the nations. (Rev. 22:2) This is the healing which Christ portrayed in his miracles of healing; they proved that he had power to forgive sins. (Mark 2:5-10) The latter was the real



healing from the power of guilt and sin. And this is the healing which we need. And that is what the writer is referring to. The saints must not stumble into destruction, but must be healed and set in the right course of the Gospel in Christ.

This calls for action, for strong hands, and also for knees which are not wobbly. Then the church shall prosper and be in good health. (II John 2) For the law of commandments has no healing ordinance. The law perfected nothing, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh to God. That is healing. Such is the power of grace in Christ Jesus our Lord.

#### THE NECESSITY OF PURSUING PEACE AND SANCTIFICATION (Hebrews 12:14-17)

Shall the church really have strong hands and knees, prepared for sustained action and battle against unbelief, then she must pursue "peace". The text speaks of "peace with all". The "all" here contextually seems to refer to all the congregation, the saints in the Lord. Not one must be overlooked or neglected in the pursuit of peace. Basically, this peace which must be pursued is nothing less than the profound peace of the Cross, which Christ calls "my peace". (John 14:27-31) It is a peace which is always rooted in, and is the fruit of atonement. It refers to the new relationship of the redeemed to God, His person, His counsel, His commandments, His providential dealings. The Bible says that Christ is our peace. (Eph. 2:14; Gal. 3:28; Col. 1:20, 22) And this is the peace which Christ came to preach to those who are far and those who are near. (Eph. 2:17) When we seek peace with all, we do all which is in our power to walk in this finished work of Christ from

thankfulness of a living faith. This is no superficial and very wicked humanistic trying to get along with one's neighbor, but it is the profound reality of "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3) This means basically that we keep each other in the law of Christ, faith which works by love. (Gal. 5:6) Basically, pursuing peace with all is to have the peace together which is ours by justification by faith. The book of Hebrews does not speak of justification; however, it is implied in this peace, being basic to it. And in this profound "peace" we are to strive for the unity of the Spirit.

Besides, the church is to pursue "sanctification". This sanctification is not to be limited to the subjective putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man, but refers to the basic sanctification of which the book of Hebrews repeatedly speaks. In Hebrews 9:13 we read of a sanctifying of the flesh by the blood of an heifer, which is but a faint picture of the blood of Christ as it purges the conscience from the dead works of the outward observances to the worship of the living God. For we are sanctified by the "will" of God through the offering of Jesus Christ once and for all at the end of the ages. (Heb. 10:10) The sanctification which we are to seek is the real putting away of all sin in the power of the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ. It also means that we are more and more conformed to the image of God, from glory unto glory. Our entire life must be consecrated on the altar of Christ.

And this we must pursue as in the hunt. It is an asking, knocking, seeking in prayerful supplication for this grace. Only thus do we run the race and become partaker of God's holiness.

## Book Review

*WHEN LOVE PREVAILS: A Pastor Speaks to a Church in Crisis*; by J. Herbert Gilmore, Jr.; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971; 141 pp., \$3.95. [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko]

A number of years ago a crisis faced the First Baptist Church of Birmingham, Alabama. This crisis, reported throughout the country, was brought about when a colored woman and her twelve-year-old daughter applied for membership in the Church. There were those in the church who favored extending membership to these colored; there were those who did not. By a vote of the congregation, membership was refused. During this whole time of crisis, Rev. Gilmore preached a number of sermons addressing themselves to this issue. This book

contains these sermons. Eventually the church split. Those who favored admitting colored formed a separate congregation which then engaged in extensive evangelistic work among the blacks of Birmingham. These sermons demonstrate vividly the sentiments of one who believes strongly that the calling of the church has social overtones.

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#### STANDARD BEARER ANNOUNCEMENT

South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School will be in need of a teacher for grades 4, 5 and 6 for the 1975-1976 term. Those interested please contact G. F. Van Baren 15921 Parkside Ave., South Holland, Illinois 60473 or call 312-331-3818.



# 1975 Directory of Protestant Reformed Churches

## Faith Church, Jenison, Mich.

Pastor: Rev. M. Joostens,  
7194 - 20th Ave.,  
Jenison, Mich. 49428  
(new address)

Clerk: Mr. F. Hanko  
2315 Chippewa Dr.,  
Jenison, Mich. 49428

Treas: David Ondersma,  
6761 Brookwood Dr., S.W.,  
Grandville, Mich. 49418

## First Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Clerk: James Heys,  
1432 Giddings, S.E.  
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49507

Treas: Mr. Gary Bylsma,  
7507 Astronaut, S.W.,  
Jenison, Mich. 49428

## First Church, Holland, Mich.

Clerk: E. Kortering  
253 E. 19th St.  
Holland, Mich. 49423

Treas: T. Elzinga,  
10335 Riley St., R. No. 2  
Zeeland, Mich. 49464

## Hope Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Clerk: John Kalsbeek,  
4132 Hall, S.W.,  
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49504

Treas: Ira Veenstra  
1932 Rosewood St.,  
Jenison, Mich. 49428

## Hudsonville, Mich.

Clerk: Hilbert Kuiper  
3506 Baldwin Dr.,  
Hudsonville, Mich. 49426

Treas: Donald Van Overloop  
5726 - 36th Ave.  
Hudsonville, Mich. 49426

## Kalamazoo, Mich.

Clerk: Maurice Klop  
7125 West Main St.  
Kalamazoo, Mich. 49009

Treas: Maurice Klop  
7125 West Main St.  
Kalamazoo, Mich. 49009

## Prospect Park, N.J.

Clerk: Mr. Tom Nelson,  
12 - 64 Burbank,  
Fairlawn, New Jersey 07412

Treas: Mr. Clarence De Groot,  
176 Prescott Ave.,  
Prospect Park, New Jersey 07508

## Southeast, Grand Rapids

Clerk: C. Lubbers,  
1404 Worcester N.E.,  
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49505

Treas: Robert Noorman,  
949 Oakdale S.E.,  
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49507

## Southwest, Grand Rapids

Clerk: Phillip J. Lotterman,  
871 Rushmore St.,  
Jenison, Mich. 49428

Treas: John Vander Woude  
7085 Sunset,  
Jenison, Mich. 49428

## Doon, Iowa

Clerk: Edwin Van Ginkel  
1922 Main St.,  
Rock Valley, Iowa 51247

Treas: Donald Aardema,  
R.R. 1, Box 4,  
Doon, Iowa 51235

## Edgerton, Minn.

Clerk: Allen Hendriks,  
RR No. 2, Box 88,  
Jasper, Minn. 56144

Treas: Allen Brummel  
RR No. 1, Box 115  
Edgerton, Minn. 56128

## Ebenezer, Forbes, North Dakota

Clerk: Lorenz Bertsch  
Forbes, N.D. 58439

Treas: Gustave Streyle  
Forbes, N.D. 58439

## Hull, Iowa

Clerk: Henry Hoekstra,  
R.R. 2,  
Hull, Iowa, 51239

Treas: Ralph Brummer  
R.R. 1,  
Hull, Iowa 51239

## Hope, Isabel, South Dakota

Clerk: Milton H. Collmann  
Box 126,  
Isabel, S.D. 57633

Treas: Art Reichert  
Rural Route  
Isabel, S.D. 57633

## Loveland, Colorado

Clerk: Lawrence E. Nelson,  
617 W. 36th St.  
Loveland, Colo. 80537

Treas: Tom De Vries,  
Route 2, Box 41,  
Loveland, Colo. 80537

## Lynden, Washington

Clerk: Hans Vander Veen,  
313 Garrison Rd.,  
Sumas, Washington 98295

Treas: Robert Vander Hoek,  
714 E. Wiser Lake Rd.,  
Lynden, Washington 98264

## Pella, Iowa

Clerk: Bernie Menninga  
608 E. Second St.  
Pella, Iowa 60219

Treas: Vernon De Vries  
R.R. No. 3  
Knoxville, Iowa 50138

## Randolph, Wisc.

Clerk: Gary Buteyn  
233 Second St.,  
Randolph, Wisc. 53956

Treas: Maurice De Vries,  
RFD 2,  
Randolph, Wisc. 53956

## Hope, Redlands, California

Clerk: Mr. E. Gritters,  
934 College Ave.,  
Redlands, California 92373

Treas: Mr. R. Gaastra,  
1220 Crown,  
Redlands, California 92373

## South Holland, Illinois

Clerk: John Flikkema  
2339 - 184th St.,  
Lansing, Ill. 60438

Treas: Gerrit Holleman  
18330 Stoney Island Ave.  
Lansing, Ill. 60438



## News From Our Churches

January 30, 1975

Rev. and Mrs. Engelsma took a week's vacation in Florida during the middle of January. On January 16 Rev. Engelsma gave a public lecture on the subject, "The Free Offer and Common Grace," under the auspices of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Bradenton, Florida. According to his South Holland bulletin, he also planned to preach there on Sunday evening, January 19.

Rev. Schipper and his wife, incidentally, were also on vacation in the Sunshine State during that and the following week. Vacationing ministers in South Holland and Southeast on the 19th, coupled with the regular need for supply in Kalamazoo, put a temporary strain on pulpit supply in the east. As a result, Hope's Pastor, Rev. Van Overloop, preached three sermons that Sunday. Two of those were at morning services, the first in his own congregation at 9:00, and the second at 11:00 in Southwest, whose Pastor, Rev. H. Veldman, was on classical appointment in Kalamazoo.

D.D.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Ladies Society "Ruth" of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church express their sympathy to one of their members, Mrs. J. Elzinga, in the loss of her father, MR. H. J. JACOBS.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:17).

Rev. R. Van Overloop, Pres.  
Mrs. P. Zandstra, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society "Ruth", of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church mourns the loss of one of its members, MRS. JOHN SCHOLTEN, whom the Lord called home suddenly on January 23, 1975.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. For the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:4).

Rev. R. Van Overloop, Pres.  
Mrs. P. Zandstra, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of SouthEast Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to the Misses Lena and Marie Koppenal in the sudden loss of their brother, LEONARD KOPPENAL.

"Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in His ways." (Psalm 128:1).

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Mr. M. Schipper, Pres.  
Mrs. Herman C. Ophoff, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Choral Society of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express its sincere sympathy to some of its members, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Boer, Mr. Norwin Brower, Mrs. Robert De Young in the loss of their father and father-in-law — MR. WILLIAM LEMS.

May the Lord comfort them in their bereavement and may they know that He who controls all things, doeth them well.

Mr. J. Kuiper, Pres.  
Mrs. K. Berens, Sec'y.

Report of Classis East

January 8, 1975

First Prot. Ref. Church

Classis East met in regular session on January 8, 1975 at the First Prot. Ref. Church in Grand Rapids. Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. M. Joostens led the classis in opening devotions and Rev. Schipper, by rotation, was the chairman of this session of Classis.

Classis began its business with the usual matters of the signing of the Formula of Subscription by first-time delegates, the reading of the previous meeting's minutes, and the reading of the reports of the Stated Clerk and Classical Committee. With respect to the latter report, it can be noted that Rev. G. Lubbers' credentials have now been transferred to Classis West.

The usual committees were appointed and reported in the latter part of the session. The Finance Committee composed of Elders D. Kooienga and C. Lubbers reported expenses totalling \$290.91. Elder C. (Neil) Pastoor was appointed to thank the ladies for

(continued on back page)

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its sincere sympathy with one of its members, Mrs. Wm. Lems and family, in the loss of their husband and father, MR. WILLIAM LEMS, who after months of patient suffering is taken to be with the Lord.

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

The Ladies Society,  
Mrs. J. B. Lubbers, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church mourns the loss of one of our faithful members, MR. WILLIAM LEMS, who entered into the Rest on January 7, 1975.

Our comfort rests in the confession, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." (Psalm 17:15.)

The Adult Bible Class  
of the Hudsonville Prot.  
Ref. Church  
Mrs. D. Van Overloop, Sec'y.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 8, 1975, our parents, MR. AND MRS. WILLIAM LENTING, hope to commemorate their 35th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are thankful to our Heavenly Father for sparing them these many years for each other and for us.

We thank God for the Christian home and instruction they have, by His grace and providence, provided us during their married life.

It is our prayer that God will continue to bless and care for them through their remaining years together.

Mr. and Mrs. Marv Davis  
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lenting  
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Lenting, Jr.  
Adrian Jerry Lenting  
and 6 grandchildren

South Holland, Ill.



their catering services. His report nearly became the highlight of the meeting. Rev. G. Van Baren and Elders P. Lotterman and M. Haveman were appointed to prepare a schedule of appointments to Kalamazoo. The schedule adopted for Kalamazoo is as follows: January 19 – Rev. H. Veldman; February 2 – Rev. C. Hanko; February 16 – Rev. M. Joostens; March 2 – Rev. G. Van Baren; March 16 – Rev. M. Schipper; March 30 – Rev. R. Van Overloop.

The January meeting of Classis always considers two items of business, viz., the submission of subsidy requests for the following year (1976) and the election of synodical delegates. Classis approved a \$4300 subsidy for the year 1976 for Kalamazoo and a \$11,015 subsidy request for the year 1976 for Prospect Park. Synodical delegates elected were as follows: MINISTERS: *Primi*: C. Hanko, M. Joostens, G. Van Baren, R. Van Overloop; *Secundi*: A. den Hartog, J.A. Heys, M. Schipper, H. Veldman. ELDERS: *Primi*: J. Kalsbeek, D. Kooienga, H. Kuiper, D. Lotterman; *Secundi*: G. De Vries, D. Dykstra, J. Flikkema, L. Looyenga.

In other voting, Rev. Van Overloop was elected to a three-year term as *primus* delegate *ad examina* and Rev. Van Baren and Rev. Veldman were elected to two-year and three-year terms respectively as *secundi* delegates *ad examina*.

The church visitors gave their final report which was an account of their visit to Prospect Park. In connection with this visit, the visitors had the privilege of lecturing to the people of this area.

In other than routine business, the Classis considered an overture from the Council of Hope Church requesting that the Student Aid Committee be discharged. This matter, according to the rules of the Classis, was placed in the hands of a study committee. The committee of Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. H. Veldman, and Elder K. Lanning is to report to the April meeting of Classis.

After the asking and answering of the questions of Article 41 of the Church Order and the closing remarks of the chairman, Classis adjourned until its next meeting which will be held on April 2, 1975 at Southeast Church. Elder K. Lanning closed the meeting with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon Huisken  
Stated Clerk

#### THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.  
Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.  
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

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

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Editorial Policy: Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

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Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Business Agent for Australasia: Mr. Wm. van Rij  
59 Kent Lodge Ave.  
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Subscription Policy: Subscription price, \$7.00 per year (\$5.00 for Australasia). Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

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#### CONTENTS:

The Beginning of Sorrows .....	218
Editor's Notes .....	220
A Significant Overture On Student Aid .....	221
The Dignity And Authority Of Holy Scripture .....	224
The Bible As Literature .....	226
Seminary Building Fund Report .....	228
Exercise Unto Godliness .....	230
This Is Theological Development??? .....	232
Exposition of Hebrews 12:7-11 .....	235
When Love Prevails .....	237
1975 Directory of Protestant Reformed Churches .....	238
News From Our Churches .....	239