

# The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

I am convinced that the one great need of God's people regarding marriage is a better knowledge of the Word of God. Consequently, this book was born out of the needs of the congregation and out of the wrestlings of the pastorate. The sermons were preached with the practical purpose that the married and youth alike might know and honor God's institution of marriage. The book is published with the same desire. May God use it to glorify Himself through a people faithful in marriage.

—D. Engelsma, *Marriage: The Mystery of Christ and the Church* (Preface)

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## Running In The Race

Rev. M. Schipper

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Hebrews 12:1, 2.

No one reading this text in its context can escape the conclusion that there is a very close connection to what the writer to the Hebrews had written in the preceding chapter. This is indicated,

first of all, by the very first word in the text. The word "wherefore," or as we prefer to translate it, "consequently then," signifies a conclusion, that which is drawn from something that precedes. It



affirms, establishes the preceding, and deduces from it a conclusion. In the preceding chapter the various heroes of faith and their acts are described. From their descriptions the writer to the Hebrews now deduces what our calling and walk must be. In the second place, this close relationship is indicated in the expression, "seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." This cloud of witnesses can be none other than the heroes of faith described in the preceding chapter. Here the attempt is made to line up the Hebrew Christians, the church of Christ in the world, alongside all the glorious believers of the past — our faith, our strength, our conflict, and our crown, all being the same with them.

All this, along with the rest of our text, is written with a view to quickening the believing church, you and me, believing children of God, for the spiritual contest in the arena of life.

Scripture often chooses to describe the Christian life in the figure of a contest and contestants. Paul, for example, tells us that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Eph. 6:12). In his own case, he informs us that he had fought a good fight, and finished his course; he had kept the faith, and therefore awaited the crown. (1 Tim. 4:7).

So also in our text is suggested the figure of an arena in which contests are held, in which contestants vie with one another to obtain a victor's crown.

Whoever the writer to the Hebrews was, he must certainly have been acquainted with the Grecian games, with a large arena or stadium in the center of which were the athletes, whether they were wrestlers, pugilists, runners, or any others who were trained for athletic feats. Around the arena, on all sides, row upon row, sat the spectators, looking down from all sides upon the athletes, ready to cheer or boo, all depending on whether the athletes performed well or badly. But there was also the judge, seated in such a place where he could fairly determine whether the contest was performed according to the rules, and where he would place the wreath of victory on the head of the winner.

Notice how these various elements which describe any athletic contest are enumerated in the text. It speaks of the athlete. Apparently he is a runner in a race. Such a runner will first undergo intensive training. One does not run in a race who has not first of all fully prepared himself, getting off all excessive fat by proper diet and strenuous exercise. Each day, and perhaps several times in a day, he exercises proper breathing, taking long sprints. And when he is ready to run he stretches every muscle, striving with great endurance, suffering no impediments that can retard his progress. Also the text speaks of witnesses.

This is not to be understood as mere spectators in the stadium, but in the most literal sense witnesses who, by their testimony, encourage the athlete. As you will see, these witnesses are themselves former athletes who have run, wrestled, fought in the arena and were declared victors. And last, but not least, the text also speaks of the judge, who is enthroned higher than all, who by his position is an incentive, and gives power to the athlete, and finally also presents the awards to those who performed victoriously.

As was said, all this presents figuratively the reality of the Christian life.

The Christian is precisely such a wrestler, pugilist, or runner in a race. He wrestles not with flesh and blood, to be sure, but against the spiritual powers and principalities in high places. When he fights, he keeps his body in subjection, and learns not to beat the air, but to strike the opponent with blows that will beat him to the canvas. When he runs in the race, he stretches every spiritual muscle to attain to the prize. The race, according to the text, may be conceived of as an obstacle race, where various objects are set in the path of the runner, with which he must cope, which he must hurdle, which he must overcome to be successful in the race. The Christian race is not set on an even course. Rather there are obstacles that must be overcome. The text speaks of every weight which must be laid aside, and explains these weights as being sins which easily beset us. There is much, therefore, that stands in his way, much that will make running most difficult. And in the arena of life the Christian may hear the testimony of the great cloud of witnesses to encourage him in his running. O, to be sure, these witnesses are not the spectators one will find in the common arena. They do not literally sit along the runway to observe our running. They are all in heaven, far removed from the present scene. But they still speak. Of the heroism of their faith they still testify. Listen to them! There is the witness of Abel, who by faith brought a better sacrifice than Cain. There is the witness of Enoch, who by faith witnessed against a wicked generation, and was not, for the Lord took him. There was Noah, who by faith overcame the world, and perished not in the deluge, but was saved by the waters of the flood. There was Abraham, who by faith offered his only son, believing that God was able to raise him from the dead. There was Jacob, who all his life long struggled with his own sinful nature, and finally struggled by faith with weeping and supplication to victory with God. There was Joseph, who endured by faith much affliction, and in his death gave commandments concerning his bones. There was Moses, who by faith refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, because he had his eye on the reward.



O, the list goes on, and includes a multitude of witnesses, a list so great that the writer to the Hebrews ceases to mention them all by name, and informs us that in the host are included those who quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens . . . they were stoned, they were sawn asunder were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. All these obtained a good report through faith . . . and their witness still speaks.

Indeed, a host of faithful witnesses!

Of witnesses who still testify of their faith!

These by their witness still surround the arena of life in which the Christian runs by faith, and we hear their testimony which must quicken our pace, and encourage our spirits.

Of course, as in any athletic contest, so in the arena of life, the race course is not of the runner's choosing. It is laid out for him, and he is expected to run not anywhere or everywhere, but on the course laid out for him. In the arena of life the Christian does not determine where and how he shall run, but the Lord Himself determines this. It is He Who lays out the course, and predestines the outcome of the race. This is implied in the text when it speaks of the race set before us. And it is He Who exhorts us to run. The matter of running or not running is not left up to us. It is He Who determines the course, and it is He Who calls us to run.

As to the manner of running, the text suggests both negative and positive aspects. We are to lay aside every weight. As we said, the text tells us what is signified by these weights. They are the sins which so easily beset us. We may suffer no encumbrances to impede our running, least of all, our besetting sins. In the race to heaven you cannot carry along the burden of your sin. The sin burden must be seriously and properly dealt with. We shall see in a moment how this is to be done. And positively we are to run through patience. Literally the text says: "through patience let us strive hard to perform the contest lying before us." Patience is that virtue, that grace, that spiritual power and ability to bear up under the most extenuating circumstances, and to remain standing. In the Christian race you cannot elude the obstacles, but you are required to bear up under the most oppressing circumstances, while you persistently keep on running.

The way to victory in the race is sure when your eyes are fixed on Jesus, Who is the author and finisher of our faith. Literally the text says: "Looking away," i.e., turning your eyes away from other things

and fixing them on the author and finisher of our faith, Jesus.

On Jesus, Who is Jehovah, the God of our salvation, manifested!

Who is the author and finisher of our faith!

Our faith has its beginning and end, its origin and fulfillment in Jesus, the God of our salvation. We do not have it of ourselves, nor do we realize it to its perfection of ourselves. Faith is of God. It is His gift of grace. It is He also Who causes faith to work to its end.

The idea of the text is not, as we see it, that Jesus is our example Whom we are to emulate, our predecessor in the race Whom we are to follow. But the text urges us to keep our eye on Jesus from Whom our faith comes, and Who also is the one Who realizes faith in and through us, until it attains to the things hoped for. As we are told earlier in the Epistle (11:1), faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Until we see the things not seen, therefore, we must keep our eye on Jesus Who will see to it that we shall have that which eye is not now able to see.

And why is it so important that we keep our eye on Him? Because as Jehovah, the God of our salvation manifested in the flesh, He is set down on the right hand of the throne of God. He there receives the power to apply unto us His saving grace, to implant saving faith in our hearts, to build up and strengthen that faith that it may endure to the end and be crowned with the victor's crown. And how did Jesus receive that power? For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is therefore as a reward of merit set down at the right hand of the throne of God, where all power in heaven and on earth is given unto Him as the Savior of His people to save them unto the uttermost. That is the answer.

Look away from yourself, dear runner, and put your eye on Him; and there is no possibility that you shall fail in the race.

Look not to an arm of flesh, nor to your own strength which will always fail. Look not even to the heroes of faith, whose witness you ought to hear, but whose power cannot give you the victory.

Look only to Jesus!

He is not only the author and finisher of your faith, but He is also the author and finisher of your victory.

Look away from yourselves unto Him, you cannot fail in the race!



## EDITORIALS

# A Gem!

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksma*

At long last the Rev. D. Engelsma's book, *Marriage: The Mystery of Christ and the Church*, has come from the press and is available. We are sorry about the long delay, especially after it was announced that the book would be ready in June. But the book was certainly worth waiting for.

There seems to be a glut of books, both religious and secular, about marriage, sex, sex education, etc., on today's market.

But this book is a gem!

And the underlying reason why it is a gem is that it is thoroughly Scriptural in its presentation.

The book is not large. It is by no means tedious in its exposition. It is well written and interestingly

written. And it is loaded with instruction concerning the Biblical principles of marriage, but also with instruction that is "practical" in the right sense of that term.

Who should read this book?

Certainly, married couples may benefit from it.

But especially do I urge that *young* married couples read it. And more especially still, I urge young people who are looking forward to marriage to read it and discuss it with one another.

The price is only \$3.50. You may obtain the book from: Reformed Free Publishing Association, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

## Our Australasian Tour (2)

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

For a proper understanding of our activities in New Zealand, a little background information concerning the ecclesiastical situation in that country is necessary. Our contacts in New Zealand were, for the most part, with people and churches of two denominations. The first is the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. With these, however, we had no official contact; we did have contact with a considerable number of people from these churches. This is a small denomination of Dutch Reformed background which was established in New Zealand after the post-World War II immigration into New Zealand from the Netherlands. In this denomination, according to the latest statistics which were available to me, there are 15 congregations. Five of them are in the Auckland Presbytery (classis); six are in the Wellington Presbytery; and four are in the Christchurch Presbytery. According to their 1974 statistics, the total membership was 2,333. While they have included the Westminster

Confession among their creeds, their membership is for the most part of Dutch background; and these churches have never succeeded in attracting many members from the conservative element in the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. Over the years there have been fairly close ties between this denomination and their sister denomination in Australia, as well as the churches in America and in the Netherlands which are members of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod. Our readers who have followed the accounts of our contacts in Australasia in the *Standard Bearer* in recent years will recall that this denomination is one of the supporting churches of the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, Australia. Several of the ministers in these churches are graduates of the RTC in Geelong. If we were to compare the various denominations in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, we would certainly rate the New Zealand Reformed Churches as one of the more con-



servative, as is also evident from the fact that they have been rather outspoken in their criticism of developments in the Gereformeerde Kerken of the Netherlands. However, many of our readers will recall that this denomination, when confronted by the concrete instance of the errors of Prof. K. Runia, who was at that time teaching in the theological college which they supported, failed miserably to uphold the protests of several faithful members of the denomination. And later, when Prof. Runia left for the Netherlands, these churches bade him farewell with the testimony that he was a champion of the Reformed faith; moreover, they did not warn the churches in the Netherlands concerning his errors at the time. This crisis led to the separation from that denomination of several members, especially in the Christchurch and the Wellington area. Probably because of their close contact with sister churches in the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, these churches are afflicted by many of the weaknesses which are also to be found in varying degrees in other Reformed denominations today. In our judgment, this denomination can hardly be said to maintain a strongly Reformed stance; and we were confirmed in this opinion by a good many people of these churches with whom we came into contact. Especially in the Auckland area we met a goodly number of people from this denomination who not only gave us a hearing, but showed considerable interest in our distinctively Reformed testimony, as well as expressing dissatisfaction with the situation in their own churches and a desire to grow in the Reformed faith. We may also note that the Christian school movement is not strong in New Zealand. This may be due in part to the smallness of this denomination; nevertheless it was not until this year that the very first Christian school was opened by parents from the Reformed Churches. What I have written above is not to be taken as a blanket characterization of all the churches and ministers. It is rather a characterization of the denomination as a whole.

The second group of churches, and that with which we had considerable contact and from whom we received a very warm reception, is the young denomination known as the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches in New Zealand. Lest there be any confusion on this score, we mention from the outset that they have no ties with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in America. The subordinate standards of these churches are the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Shorter and Larger Westminster catechisms. For the most part, the membership of these churches has come from the large and liberal Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, one of the mainline churches in that country which is at present involved in a huge merger movement with other liberal denominations. It was especially this merger movement which precipitated separation on the part of several

conservative ministers and parts of their congregations, beginning in 1969. There are five congregations or preaching stations in this group of churches. There is a congregation in Manurewa (a suburb of Auckland), where the Rev. George McKenzie is pastor. Other locations on the North Island are Whakatane (in the Rotorua area) where the Rev. J.A. Mitchell labors, and Napier-Hastings (in the Hawke Bay area) where the Rev. G.A. Adams is minister. At this stage I may mention also that there is an unorganized little group in Wellington, consisting of men who separated from the Reformed Church, who have recently also been in contact with the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches. More about this later. On the South Island there is a congregation in Christchurch. This is a young congregation, very recently established, with the brethren W. van Rij and A. Young as elders. They are without a pastor. There is also a congregation in Stoke (Nelson) at the north end of the South Island. This congregation separated from the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand a little more than a year ago, under the leadership of their pastor, the Rev. Ivo G. Bishop. We may add that this little denomination has not as yet assumed its final ecclesiastical structure. As yet they have not formed a Presbytery. But they do meet quarterly in a Council, which is expected eventually to evolve into a Presbytery. Recently these churches have also begun publication of their own quarterly magazine, the *Gospel Witness*, a commendable and respectable effort, which compares favorably with many other religious magazines published by Reformed or Presbyterian people. Incidentally, we may mention that they have already requested and received permission to take over in their magazine materials from our *Standard Bearer*. We believe that this magazine will also serve as a means of acquainting others with this young denomination. In our contacts among these churches, we met with a very warm and friendly reception, found the people ready to receive instruction and, on the whole, very receptive to the Reformed truth.

We may also mention that when we came to the people and ministers of these denominations in New Zealand, we certainly were not entirely unknown. We have become known to a good many people through our literature, both our *Standard Bearer* and our books and pamphlets, chiefly through the distribution efforts of our good friend and brother, Bill van Rij. Moreover, without boasting, I believe that I may truthfully say that among many of these people we are respected for our distinctively Reformed position.

A word or two about the general ecclesiastical situation in New Zealand may conclude this description. We have already made mention of the mainline Presbyterian Church there. And in general, the situation in that church and other large denominations in



the country is very much like that in our own country. In a word, they are liberal. In fact, they have been liberal and heterodox for a long time already. But as is also true in our own country, there remained in some of these churches pockets of conservatives. And it seems as though especially the merger movement of recent years has been a sort of catalyst, serving to awaken some people and to precipitate separations. We expect that a degree of such separation will continue for a time, but it is not to be expected that the separatist movement will be large. Nevertheless, there appears to be a definite possibility of growth for the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches. And they are to be encouraged and helped as much as possible. Moreover, they must by all means understand that their only expectation of sound and healthy growth is in maintaining a distinctively Reformed stand on the basis of their Presbyterian Confessions. And it is our hope and prayer that the Lord our God will give them the spiritual strength and courage to maintain such a distinctive position. Certainly, as far as the Presbyterian faith is concerned, the mainline denomination is far down the road. Perhaps some of our readers will recall that several years ago our *Standard Bearer* reported concerning a controversy in that denomination involving Prof. Geering, who denied the resurrection and the life hereafter. He was an instructor at the Knox Theological College of the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand. I had opportunity to inquire of a student at that school concerning the

present situation there. It has deteriorated today to the point that, according to this student, there is no one of the faculty who even believes the truth of vicarious atonement; and there was only one faculty member who would as much as concede that the doctrine of vicarious atonement was an option. That will give you an idea of the sad situation in those churches and of the sore need of reformation through separation.

With characteristic efficiency and organizational ability, brother van Rij had planned a busy tour for us in New Zealand. He saw to it that there were no wasted moves and not many leisure moments. And all our meetings were well planned and well advertised. Moreover, we had been briefed as much as possible before we left our home shores as to what to expect, what kind of questions were uppermost in people's minds, what kind of subjects should be discussed, and what would be good subjects for lectures. Without friend van Rij's help in organizing and planning our tour, we certainly would not have been able to cover the ground we did nor would we have accomplished as much as we did. Our sincere thanks to him and to all who assisted him!

With this we must conclude our report for this issue. Next time, the Lord willing, we will relate some of the details of our various visits in beautiful New Zealand.

## ALL AROUND US

### Reprobation Ignored

*Rev. H. Veldman*

We noted last time that it was stated at the recent Christian Reformed synod that all should appreciate the concern of Dr. Boer who had requested the synod to furnish scriptural proof for the doctrine of Reprobation as set forth in our Canons of Dordt. One may well ask: Dr. Boer's concern about what? Are not the Canons full of scriptural proof for the doctrine of double predestination, election and reprobation? What is his concern? Is he concerned about this doctrine because it is his desire that this doctrine be emphasized, preached and taught? This question is surely pertinent.

However, the *News Bulletin of the Association of Christian Reformed Laymen*, July, 1975, page 7, also quotes the Rev. J. Postman, Classis Toronto, who spoke at that synod, and we quote:

I want to support this Motion (this refers to a new motion to "accede" to the Boer request — H.V.). We are a confessing church not a church of confessions. And I submit, Mr. Chairman, that presently we are not confessing reprobation. It's not a living matter amongst us. It does not flow issue from our pulpits in a dynamic Word-directed way. We all circumvent it, we all avoid it, yet we somehow hold on to our confessions as a relic . . .



So, there you have it. I do not know whether anyone at the synod objected to this remark of Rev. Postman. Anyone with any love for the truth of the Word of God certainly could not permit this remark to go unchallenged. But, the truth of Reprobation is a relic, is not a living matter in that church, is circumvented and avoided by all. This means, of course, that the doctrine of Election is also circumvented and

avoided by all. I refer, we understand, to the doctrine of Election as set forth by the Canons, the truth of divine and sovereign election. The truths of election and reprobation either stand or fall together. One cannot maintain the one without maintaining the other. What a sad state of affairs in the Christian Reformed Church today!

## National Manifesto Against Abortion In The Hague

In the *Kerk Bode* of June 14, 1975 the following article appeared (we translate):

The Netherlands Youth-group for Life (NJAL) organizes on next Saturday, June 21, (in cooperation with the Netherlands Committee SAVE THE UNBORN CHILD), at the "Malieveld" in The Hague a great national demonstration against "abortus provocatus" (abortion induced).

The gathering begins in the morning at 10 o'clock with three addresses: of Prof. Dr. W.H. Velema, Prof. Dr. Jac. van Essen and father Leopold Verhagen. In the afternoon at 1 o'clock a quiet march will be held to the "Binnenhof," where a petition will be presented to M. van Agt, minister of Justice. In this petition it will be urged to maintain and execute the existing abortion law and the actual defence of the defenceless unborn from the moment of conception with effective help and honest guidance to the expectant mother with the saving of the life of the child.

The Netherlands Committee SAVE THE UNBORN CHILD is a resort in which nine anti-abortion organizations are cooperating. This committee is carrying on a great established signature

action against the intended legalizing of the abortus provocatus. Until now the action has delivered the great number of more than a half million signatures, and many will follow. Are the people awakening?

We consider this a very interesting news item. According to this article there is a movement on foot to prevent the legalizing of this terrible sin. In our country this terrible sin has already been legalized. We consider it striking that this action purposes to defend the defenceless unborn child from the moment of conception. This assumes that the child exists already at the moment of conception. With this I agree. I am sure that we are aware also of activities in our country to counteract this sin of abortion. However, we do well to understand that, fighting this crime of abortion, we should do so upon sound and scriptural grounds. Today we hear much of the movement to save the unborn child upon the ground that such a child has the right to live. This ground we must reject. The "right to live" is certainly not a scriptural principle. The sinner has a right to nothing. It is surely better to oppose abortion because it is a transgression of the law of God, and specifically of the sixth commandment: Thou shalt not kill.

## Christian Reformed Synod Approves

In the *Banner* of June 27, 1975, appear, on page 27, items approved by the synod.

Synod approves:

—Reformation Sunday, 1975, as day for pulpit exchange or joint worship with Reformed Church of America, subject to local option and arrangements.

This exchange of pulpits between the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church of America is subject to local option and arrangement. Churches, therefore, can also refuse to go along in this. This, we understand, has already been going on between these churches. But now the synod has approved.

We assume that this means that whenever these pulpit exchanges occur, the various ministers place themselves under the consistories of the churches

they are serving during that service. This is serious. This does not merely mean that these ministers recognize these consistories (we, too, recognize the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church of America as churches), but it means that one submits himself to the jurisdiction of that particular consistory. If the undersigned were to lead a Christian Reformed worship service, this would imply that he would lead that service as it is conducted by the Christian Reformed Church and according to the doctrines of that church.

We know that there has been talk of a merger between the Christian Reformed and Reformed Church of America. If one consider the grounds for their separation in 1857 (I believe this was the year), and judging these churches in the light of today, one wonders why this separation should continue.



## A House Divided Against Itself

In *Waarheid en Eenheid* (Truth and Unity), a paper in the Netherlands of the "Verontrusten" (the disturbed or ill-at-ease because of conditions in the Reformed Church in the Netherlands), appears the following article, May 17, 1975, page 1, and we quote it in part (we translate):

Who would not consider it a strange matter that the synod of Maastricht has also invited or permitted Prof. Kuitert as advisor? Strange, inasmuch as also the church surely asks an advisor because he shall serve the Reformed churches in wisdom, with a sense of responsibility and with inner oneness of spirit. And is it not exactly Prof. Kuitert who, because of his denial of the historicity of the fall into sin, continues to stand under the judicial declaration of the synod of Sneek, namely that what the confession declares in Lord's Days 3 and 4 concerning the origin of sin and the results of the fall are of essential importance for the proclamation of the Gospel and that it should be maintained as authoritative?

Prof. Kuitert does not confess this and does not maintain this. And now becomes a pre-advisor regardless? In the world about us it happens that they play with the truth and with reality, but . . . . in the church of Christ?

Yes, this does happen in the church of Christ. Of course, this is a "house divided against itself." A professor teaches things that have been condemned synodically and then is asked by a synod to serve it as its advisor? Well may these people of *Waarheid en Eenheid* be alarmed! But, what is to be done about it? It is indeed true that these things occur within the church of Christ. And when they happen within the church of Christ, then it is far worse than when it happens in the midst of the world. To play with the truth and with reality in the world is bad. Of course! But it is far worse when it happens in the midst of the church of God and of Christ. And this is true because, when it happens in the midst of the church, the truth is wilfully and consciously despised and rejected.

## Satan

In a small magazine, published in the Netherlands, and called *IN DE RECHTE STRAAT*, which, translated, would mean, "In The Straight Street," appeared a very short article, in its June number and on page 23. We quote (we translate):

In this time, when Satan is increasingly revealing his power, it is for every Christian of the greatest importance, that he or she becomes conscious of what the Holy Scriptures teach us concerning this figure. For he is not fiction, but a hard, absolute reality.

The original majesty and sinless state of satan	Ezekiel 28:12-15
His dramatic rebellion against God	Isaiah 14:12-14
His present kingdom	Ephesians 6:12
His part in the fall of the first people	Genesis 3:1-7
His present restless and dark activity	I Peter 5:8

The final lot of those who follow him	Matthew 25:41
The final lot of satan	Revelation 20:10
A menacing admonition to all believers	2 Corinthians 11:14, 15
Yet, for the believers there is "No fear" because	Matthew 28:18

J.W.H.M. Brunklaus

I believe that we can take this short article to heart. It is well for us to be aware of the presence and power of the devil. He is very real. It is well for us to take to heart the admonition of the apostle as recorded in Eph. 6:11, 12: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please note the following change of address. Mr. Richard H. Teitsma, serving as Secretary of The Protestant Reformed Theological School Committee and who also is the Treasurer of The Protestant Reformed Seminary Building Fund has changed his mailing address. After October 10, 1975, please address all correspondence regarding these matters to: Mr. Richard H. Teitsma, 3681 Mohave Dr., SW, Grandville, MI 49428.



## FROM HOLY WRIT

# Exposition of Hebrews (13: 8)

Rev. G. Lubbers

### THE UNIQUE ALTAR THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH HAS (Hebrews 13:10, 11)

We must not be carried away with divers and strange doctrines and teachings of heretical men. We must draw straight lines of the Bible which insist that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever; it is our duty to see the total implications and consequences of such a changeless Christ. Then we shall see type and fulfilment in their proper relationship; it will then be clear what it means that God hath spoken in these last days in His Son. (Heb. 1:1-2)

Perhaps it was the contention of the Jewish teachers that if we left the Old Testament tabernacle ministry then we would not have an altar which sanctifies the gift. (Matt. 23:19) We would lose the main part of the ministry. It is quite likely in view of this that the writer places emphatically on the foreground that we do "have" an altar. It is not that we have an altar and that in the Old Testament they did not; rather it is that we *have* an altar notwithstanding all the gainsaying of those who deny the faith in Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the promises of God. However, we have an altar of which those who still cling to the Old Testament ritual cannot eat. The force of the present participle (*hoi tee skeenee latreuontes*) should not be overlooked. These very people who deny the reality in Christ cannot eat from our altar which is Christ. Our altar is unique in that it is spiritual and it really dedicates all things to God, heaven and earth and all things, the good angels and the redeemed of all ages. (Col. 1:18-20) And we eat from our altar and its benefits, which are the reconciliation which we have in Christ's blood of atonement. We eat Christ's body, and we drink His blood. We eat the sacrifice which was brought for our sins and for the sin of the world by the Lamb of God. (John 1:29)

However, such an altar the adherents to the Old Testament shadows and types do not *have*. They do not have such an altar for the simple reason that Jehovah did not institute such an altar of atonement in the Old Testament economy of salvation. This

could not be the case from the very nature of the types and shadows. All the sacrifices and the feast-days culminated each year in the feast of the Great Day of Atonement, which was in the seventh month, the tenth day. That was a day of the affliction of the soul, a day of fasting. It was the only prescribed fast in Israel. This was one day in which there was no rejoicing. The day proclaimed that all was unclean because of sin: temple, altar, all the people, including the priests and the high priest himself. A sacrifice must be brought that would remove all the sin of all the people. The high priest must first bring a sacrifice for himself and then for all thy people. (Lev. 16:6, 15, 16, 17; Hebrews 5:3, 4) The profound implication was that all was unclean until a better sacrifice would be brought upon a better altar and in a better temple, that is, a heavenly one. And the altar which we have is not besmirched with the blood of goats, bullocks and sheep, but is an altar in which Christ brings his own blood offered in perfect obedience through the eternal Spirit. God never desired such sacrifices for sin. They could not expiate guilt and corruption. That is why they were repeated each year again. They were futile. But our altar is such that even though it is an altar on the great day of atonement for sin — we can eat of the sacrifice; yea, we are enjoined by Christ to eat from that altar which is the New Testament in His blood. (Matt. 26:26, 27)

Such is our unique altar. Unbelief in Christ cannot eat from this altar which sanctifies all things, yea, which is such that the Old Testament veil in the temple must be rent from top to bottom. This altar still stands in our midst in the form of a table in which we eat and drink Christ and all his benefits by faith. However, let it be underscored that those who continue to minister in the Old Testament temple, as if the veil had not been rent by God Himself, cannot eat from our altar. They have no *right* to eat from it. As many as received Him to them gave He this right to be called the sons of God, who are born not of flesh, nor of blood, nor by the will of man, but who are born of God. (John 1:11, 12) That we have such an altar which is limited to those who believe in Christ crucified is our great privilege and right!



## JESUS SUFFERED OUTSIDE OF THE GATE (Hebrews 13:11-14)

There is a tremendous type and symbolism in the fact that the beasts which were slain in the Old Testament day of atonement were not eaten by the priests. All other sacrifices which were brought were in part for the ministering priests. They represented the people in eating from the altar. And this eating from the altar by the priests prefigured our eating from the altar of God on which Christ was slain. But, as was said, there was one sacrifice designated which was of such a nature that no priest might eat of this sacrificial animal. This refers to the bullocks that were slain for the sins of the priest (Lev. 16:6) and to the one goat (the other was the scape-goat sent into the wilderness) which was slain for the sins of the people and whose blood was shed as a typical removal of all the sins and uncleanness of the temple, the altar and all the people. This sacrifice pointed pre-eminently to Christ Jesus, our Lord. Hence, in this sacrifice we have the twofold element, the twofold typical element of two goats. These two goats were ideally one; yet, they represent the twofold aspect of the sacrifice of Christ that He not only atones for our sins, but *carries them away*. He is the sin-bearer, who carries them without the camp! It is for this reason also that even the skin and the dung of the sacrificed animals had to be burned without the camp.

It was the divine intent that this was a picture of the future reality that the Cross of Christ would be set up in the place of a skull outside of the city of Jerusalem, called Calvary. (Luke 23:33) After the soldiers had mocked Jesus, and Pilate had condemned Him to the death of the Cross, then He was led forth outside of the gate bearing his Cross. And then we see the scape-goat which is called Asahel, who is not a picture of Satan as do the Seventh Day Adventists teach, but who is the very type and symbol of the Christ of God Who carries away the sins of His people on the Cross. He carries away the sins of all His people whether they be in the Old Testament or in the New Testament. He does not carry away the sins of either Jews or Gentiles as such. He reconciles to God all whom the Father has given Him. All His sheep He delivers, and He brings them under the one shepherd, who thrones between the Cherubim in the Most Holy place. Wherefore, the Cross is set not within the narrow confines of the city of Jerusalem, nor within the enclosure of the law of ordinances and separation, but in the wide plain of the world, "without the gate"!

Here Jesus *suffered* for the sins of the people. It was the suffering of bearing the wrath of God against the sins of the whole human race. Jesus did not suffer for his principles, or as a good example. He bore the wrath of God against the sins of His people. And He

did this till He said "It is finished". There was no more sin to be carried away. There never will be again. And He changes the altar of the Cross on which He sacrifices Himself through the eternal Spirit to a table from which the believers may eat. But that means that we will need to go outside of the gate of the Old Testament limitation, even though this means that in so doing we shall be bearing the reproach of Christ. We then shall be doing what Moses did when he left the riches of Egypt, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt!

There is something very impelling in this "Let us go forth therefore." It means that this must be done by the entire church in the New Testament. Principally this was done by the church at Pentecost, which was fully come. They entered into the completed work of Christ — never to return to the types and shadows. And that is what the Hebrews must do without doubt and fear; resolutely they must go outside to Christ, to the fulfilment of the Scriptures. We must do this, too, and never return and eat from our altar from which the Old Testament saints could eat in hope of a better priesthood.

## THE CITY WHICH WE SEEK (Hebrews 13:14)

The believers in this world are but pilgrims and strangers due to election of grace and through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. (I Peter 1:2, 3) Such was Abraham when he lived in a tent with Isaac and Jacob his sons. They confessed that they were such pilgrims and strangers in the earth. That is why they did not return to that country of Haran or of Ur of the Chaldees. They could have returned as far as the time and distance were concerned. However, they refused to return to that country: for they were seeking a better country, that is, an heavenly. They looked away from that which was so dear to the flesh and so earthly. They had a better treasure in heaven. And the Hebrews, too, have a better city, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, where the church of the firstborn is now with Jesus the Mediator, Whose blood speaketh better things than Abel. (Heb. 11:15, 16) For that city which abides and is eternal is already "prepared" for them. It is such a beautiful city that God is not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Now if the Hebrews must leave the earthly city and "go outside to Christ," it should not be too sorrowing. Fact is, that it should give great joy! Moses accounted the sufferings of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. We are to account the glory of the new Jerusalem so far to pass the glory of the earthly city of David, that a little reproach for Christ is not worthy to be compared. This city of David is not a continuing city. That is its very nature,



as became evident in the Babylonian captivity, the destruction of the temple, and the breaking down of the palaces and bulwarks of that city. Yes, it was rebuilt under Zerubbabel, and so was its temple under Ezra, only because God had an immovable kingdom in store for Israel. (Hebrews 12:25-29)

That earthly city did not continue. When that city ceased to be the place where God would place His Name and call His people to worship Him, the temple can be and is destroyed by the hordes of the Roman armies. Then the city can pass from the scene never

to return in that capacity. It has become a desolation for which only those who have no eye for the heavenly city can vie, as do the Jews and the Arabians. But we have *here* no continuing city. The time shall come when men shall neither worship in the hill of Samaria, nor in the temple at Jerusalem, says Jesus to the Samaritan woman. God is a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth! Let us therefore go without the city bearing Jesus' reproach, being evilly spoken of and reviled for His sake.

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## SEMINARY CONVOCATION:

# Convocation Address, 1975

*Prof. H. Hanko*

Beloved people of God. As our chairman mentioned in his prayer at the beginning of this meeting, we celebrate this year not only the 50th anniversary of our Protestant Reformed Churches, but also on this convocation night, the 50th anniversary of our Protestant Reformed Theological School. That in itself is an extremely significant thing. It is significant, I think, for especially two reasons. It is significant, in the first place, because of the fact that those men whom God used at the very beginning of our history to form the Protestant Reformed Churches, were obviously so convinced of the rightness of their cause and of the blessing of the Lord in the future upon their fledgling denomination that they immediately established a seminary for the instruction of men for the ministry of the Word. In the second place, it is significant that we celebrate tonight the 50th anniversary of our seminary because of the fact that the affairs of the seminary have always been intimately entwined with the affairs of the church to which we belong.

And in so far as we commemorate God's covenant faithfulness to us as churches, we commemorate God's covenant faithfulness to us also as a seminary. Never has our seminary occupied a position separate from our churches. Always the affairs of the seminary were very closely connected with the history of our congregations and with the history of our denomination. The seminary was born out of the same conflict which brought about the existence of our own Protestant Reformed Churches. The seminary stood in the vanguard during the troubles and doctrinal

controversies through which our churches have passed. Never was the seminary some kind of ivory tower far removed from the battlefield; but always the seminary took a leading role in all these controversies and difficulties. It participated actively in the expansion of our churches, especially in the years immediately following upon 1924. It provided the church with all her ministers from the beginning until today. And, especially during the years of Revs. Hoeksema and Ophoff it played a major role in the development of the positive truth of sovereign grace. All of these things show that the seminary has never been separated from the life of the church.

But what is particularly significant and particularly true is that the seminary has always stood in the forefront of the life of the church from the point of view of doctrine. And in connection with that fact, I want to call your attention tonight for a few moments to some thoughts in connection with the prophecy of Hosea 4, the first part of vs. 6, where the prophet Hosea, as the mouthpiece of Jehovah and by the Spirit of Christ, gives this diagnosis of the sad state of affairs in the Northern Kingdom. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Admittedly that is a negative text; nevertheless, it implies, in the first place, a very important positive truth; and it implies, in the second place, a very urgent and serious warning.

From a political, economic and social point of view, for the nation of Israel the day during which Hosea prophesied were days of unparalleled prosperity.



The power of Syria had declined. Syria had been, up to a short time before this point, Israel's arch-enemy. The power of Assyria had not yet reached its zenith. And in that lull the Northern Kingdom of the 10 tribes flourished, especially under the rule of Jeroboam II. The nation was prosperous; the nation was wealthy; the nation was engaged in active trade; there was affluence and luxury such as it had never known. There was peace and quietness within the borders; no foreign invaders threatened.

But although all this was true from a political and an economic point of view, nevertheless, from a spiritual point of view, the nation of Israel had fallen on bad times. We need only read very briefly in the prophecy of Hosea to realize how bad the spiritual condition in the nation had become. The sin of image worship and idolatry which had been begun by Jeroboam I and which had received strong impetus under the rule of Ahab had continued to develop to the spiritual detriment of the nation. And along with the sin of idolatry went all the abominations of the heathen, so that there was not one sin which had been committed at any time among all the heathen nations which surrounded Israel which was not also to be found in the Northern Kingdom. The people had become immune, it seemed, to rebuke. The people loved their luxuries; and a spirit of worldly-mindedness, of carnal pleasure, of enjoyment in the good things of life, to the exclusion of spiritual values, prevailed throughout the entire nation.

It was, therefore, if I may say so, a time in the Northern Kingdom which compares rather closely to our own; especially in this country. Certainly there is no one who would dispute the fact that the church, in this country, lives and shares in a time of unparalleled prosperity. The church has wealth, and affluence; the church is materially strong, financially in possession of huge assets, both of property and money. But while this may be true from a material point of view; there are few, too, who would dispute the fact that the church has fallen on bad times. The materialism and affluence and prosperity which characterize the church have constituted a fertile seed bed in which the seeds of worldliness, godlessness, and carnal-mindedness have grown and flourished and brought forth a dreadful fruit. If the diagnosis which God offered through Hosea the prophet, therefore, fitted the nation of Israel, that same diagnosis of the ailments which plague the church fits also the church of today.

The first question to be answered is: What does the prophet mean when he speaks of God's people; and what does God Himself mean when He addresses this nation as "My people?" I can say only a few words about that.

The idea is, first of all, that God addresses the nation of Israel, the Northern Kingdom organically. That means especially three things. It means, in the first place, that the nation of Israel was God's people from the viewpoint of her historical origin, and from the viewpoint of the history which she experienced throughout all the ages of her existence. That nation was part of God's people which claimed Abraham as its ancestor. That nation was part of a people whom God had separated from all the nations of the earth, and led them out of the house of bondage, through the wilderness, and into the land of promise. That nation was a nation which had been given special privileges. It had received what Paul called the oracles of God; it had received the revelation of God in all His mighty works and wonders which He had performed. And as such, because that nation was specially preferred throughout all her history, separated as a special people, that nation goes under the name of "God's people."

In the second place, that nation is called "God's people" because of the fact that there was present in the nation throughout all her history, two seeds: the seed of the elect kernel, of the 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and whom God preserved even in the days of Hosea the prophet; and the reprobate and carnal seed. And in so far as the elect kernel (the remnant according to the election of grace), was still preserved there, that people still went under the name of "God's people."

In the third place, the nation as a whole manifested itself as wicked. The diagnosis which God makes of the nation is a diagnosis which applies to the nation in her organic unity. God's people were present – of that there can be no doubt. But the nation manifested herself in her national life, through her kings, through her priests, and through her prophets. As that nation came to manifestation, therefore, before the eyes of her sister Judah, and before the eyes of the whole world, the diagnosis of the ailments of that nation is this, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." That was *the* trouble. That was *the* problem in the nation.

If we ask the question, to what does the prophet refer when he speaks of knowledge, the answer to that question is this: the prophet refers especially to the knowledge of the mighty works and deeds of Jehovah God. That is mentioned many times in the Old Testament Scriptures. You have, for example, in the book of Judges the statement at the very beginning of the book: "A generation arose which knew not the Lord, neither *the mighty works* which He had performed for Israel." That statement at the very beginning of the book of Judges is intended to be the explanation for the many calamities which befell the nation during the period in which the



Judges ruled. You have the same expression used in Psalm 78 in a slightly different context. In Psalm 78, godly Israel, through the mouth of the poet, promises to teach her children the wonderful works of the Lord. And when the prophet, therefore, talks about the fact that the problem in the Northern Kingdom is lack of knowledge, the prophet means by that: lack of the knowledge of God's mighty works which He had performed for the nation.

We need not enumerate all those mighty works; you know them. They are the mighty works whereby God led Israel out of Egypt, preserved them for 40 years in the wilderness, and gave them the land of Canaan for their inheritance. In that land He had blessed them with milk and honey, had set upon the throne of the kingdom David and Solomon, and had always spoken to Israel of the fact that their existence as a nation was exclusively and solely dependent upon the mighty works of Jehovah.

But it is well to remind ourselves of the fact that these mighty works of Jehovah which became a part of the history of the nation of Israel, were mighty works which constituted, for Israel, *sacred* history. The history of the nation, because it was filled with all these mighty works, was the history of revelation. And because these mighty works of Jehovah constituted sacred history, the history of revelation, the contents of all that history were always the promises of God. In all of these mighty works which God performed He was speaking His promises. And those promises are Christ. The knowledge of God's mighty works, therefore, was the knowledge of God's wonders as He revealed Himself as the God Who promised to save His church through the seed of the woman.

Now I want to stress the fact, for a moment, that that was *knowledge*; hard knowledge; knowledge which is the content of Israel's mind, and knowledge which can only be the fruit of study and of learning. It is the product of hard learning, hard work, intellectual endeavor. It is not acquired by lying flat on one's back in bed and daydreaming; it is not acquired automatically, so that it seeps in by some strange process of osmosis. It is not innate in man, so that he is born with it and need not acquire it. It is hard, theological *doctrine*. That kind of knowledge it is which can only be acquired in the way of work.

And yet, at the same time, though it is that kind of knowledge, it is not *only* knowledge of the head. It never was for believing Israel. A man does not stake his life on knowledge of the head. A Noah does not build an ark on knowledge of the head. An Abraham does not sojourn as a stranger in a strange land on the basis of mere head knowledge. The knowledge of God is always, and was for believing Israel, the knowledge

of the *heart*, as well as of the head. It is the knowledge of faith; the knowledge which is spiritual in character; the knowledge which, when it becomes the confession of a man, is breathed out in the whole of his life; the knowledge, in short, of which Jesus speaks in His High-priestly prayer when He says, "This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." There was a lack of that knowledge in Israel.

There were apparently two reasons for that. In the first place, that knowledge was no longer being taught. Parents were not teaching their children the knowledge of God's mighty works which He had performed for Israel. Nor were those in the nation who were entrusted with the responsibility of instruction in the broader sense, the priests and the prophets, teaching the people the knowledge which they should have had.

But while the blame for this lack of knowledge, no doubt, must be laid at the feet of parents and prophets and priests, Hosea is very explicit about it that the people themselves share in that blame. In this same verse he says, "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee." The meaning is that although that knowledge was not being taught, the people did not want it. They did not want to hear of it. I suppose, fundamentally and basically, that was because of the fact that they hated that knowledge. Hatred of the truth is always characteristic of the unbeliever. But in a certain sense of the word, the sin of the people was even worse than that; at least in so far as it was manifested. It was not so much an active *hatred* of the knowledge of God, as it was sheer, cold indifference. They didn't have the time for it. They didn't have any interest in it. They couldn't be bothered with it. They were too busy in their pursuit of carnal pleasure to engage in the hard work of acquiring the knowledge of God's wonderful works which He had performed. They didn't want to be bothered. The effort was too great. That was why there was no knowledge. That kind of an attitude towards knowledge is born in an unregenerate heart.

And that is characteristic of the church of today. Who can deny it? There is no knowledge — that is the trouble; no knowledge of God's wonderful works, in the first place, and principally as those works are recorded for us on the pages of Holy Writ and as they constitute for us the infallible record of the revelation of God in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ. But no knowledge either of God's wonderful works which He performed on behalf of His church from the day of Pentecost to today. No knowledge of how God gathered His church from all the nations of the earth; how He preserved His church against the gates of hell; how He kept His church in dark and difficult hours, when heresies threatened her very existence; when



enemies stormed her citadels; how He always preserved His own remnant according to the election of grace, even when that preservation required reformation, separation, the re-establishment of the church. And how God preserved that church when fierce persecutions arose, so that the truth which our fathers confessed was the truth written with their own blood. *Those* mighty works the church today does not know. And it does not know them because no one teaches them. Instead of hard knowledge, something one can get his teeth into, there is proclaimed from a thousand pulpits a diet of drivel and bland, tasteless pap.

But the fault does not only lie with those upon whom rests the responsibility for teaching. There is not love for the truth, no love for knowledge, no interest in sound doctrine, no time for it, no concern about it among the people. "We can't be bothered. Don't trouble us about these things." We live in this age of tolerance where everybody, no matter what road he travels, is after all, on the road to heaven. We are reminded repeatedly and admonished a thousand times that we must not be critical; we must not be picky; we must not be so narrow-minded as to consider the fact that there is only one knowledge, and one truth which is salvation.

And so God's people perish because there is no knowledge. Israel did. This does not refer only to the captivity — to that, too, of course. It would only be a few years when Assyria would have reached that point in the development of her might where she would swoop down upon the Northern Kingdom and lead the people away captive. But the destruction of which God speaks here is a different kind of a destruction. In a way, it is more terrible, although the captivity stands connected with it. Israel would presently cease to be the church, the manifestation of the body of Christ. And so it is with any church, any church which despises knowledge; her place is taken out of the candlestick; she ceases to be church, the church of Christ, the manifestation of Christ's body. She becomes a tomb, a sepulchre in which are found rotting corpses and dead men's bones. And the end is hell.

And that is not just because of the fact that to despise knowledge is one kind of sin which stands out above many others. To despise knowledge, to turn one's back on knowledge, is to turn one's back on God and Christ, Who alone is the Fountain of all life. That is God's diagnosis.

That implies, of course, very important and fundamental truths. That truth is the cornerstone of the church, the guarantee of her survival as church; and the promise of all of her future rests in her knowledge, her knowledge of doctrine, her knowledge of

sound doctrine, of the wonderful works of God; her knowledge of them so that she *understands* them, understands them thoroughly, understands them so thoroughly that she can articulately speak of them. And yet it is the kind of knowledge which is spiritual; profoundly, deeply spiritual. And for that reason it is always the personal knowledge that is the living, pulsing confession of the child of God. That kind of knowledge is the critical ingredient necessary for the welfare of the church of Christ.

And so, we are ready to begin another year in the seminary. God's mighty works which He has performed include also the history of our own Protestant Reformed Churches. But they include not only the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches as some interesting and significant historical data; but they include the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches as God has kept us as churches and seminary, faithful to the truth of the Scriptures. That, I tell you, is a wonderful work of God.

And so we can do no better on this occasion of our 50th anniversary than to rededicate ourselves to that knowledge of God which is so dear and precious to us. And that means in particular, first of all, that you students who are studying in the seminary must pursue that knowledge with excitement, with a spirit of adventure, with eagerness, with dedication, with zeal, with devotion. That is critical for your preparation for the ministry of the gospel. And that means, in particular, in the second place, beloved colleagues, that you and I have the awesome responsibility in the seminary to receive in humble gratitude the heritage which is ours; to receive that in the acknowledgment of the fact that that constitutes one of God's mighty works which he has done for Israel; to give faithful instruction, faithful to that heritage, and to pursue unrelentingly the knowledge of the truth. And that means, thirdly, and specifically, that this is an endeavor which occupies the church of Christ as a whole. The seminary cannot exist without the churches. I do not mean financially, although that, too. I do not mean as a reason for her existence, although that, too. But I mean that the quest of the knowledge of God, of the infinite riches of the Most High as He revealed them in Christ is a quest that can never occupy the attention of a couple of men, stuck off in some classrooms or in the ivory towers of their own studies, surrounded by their libraries and books. It does not work that way. It never has, and it never will. Only when God's people pursue that knowledge of the truth constantly and faithfully, will that continue to be the case also in the seminary. From our pulpits that truth must sound *doctrinally*. And from our people there must arise anew the prayer, "Lord teach us to know Thee, Whom to know is life eternal." Then we have a glorious future. May God grant it.



*SPECIAL REPORT*

## Third General Assembly, PCA

*Pastor E.C. Case*

First Church, Woodville, Mississippi

Those who read the report of the Second Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, published in this paper last October, will remember that the spirit of that report was very critical. At that time, there were strong doubts whether the PCA would amount to anything even remotely resembling a Reformed and Presbyterian Church. Happily, there is cause for guarded optimism in the wake of this year's Assembly. Certainly, it is not yet time to be at ease in Zion, but the outlook is generally brighter than some of us would have dared to predict a year ago.

The atmosphere of this Assembly was much more relaxed than at the last. There were a couple of reasons for this. One was the fact that we were not confronted with another name change, an issue which took much time and generated much heat which spilled over into other areas. The other calming factor was the leadership of the Moderator, Leon F. Hendrick, Judge of the Hinds County, Mississippi Circuit Court, and an elder at First Church, Jackson, Mississippi. His gentlemanly manner, in the finest Southern tradition, easy humor, and ability aided greatly in expediting matters.

A major part of the time of the Assembly was taken with issues pertaining to our constitutional documents. There were a number of minor changes in the Form of Government and Rules of Discipline. The only change which caused much debate was the addition to the section governing Assembly operations which limits the tenure of members on Permanent Assembly Committees to one full term or two years of a partial term. This was done to prevent any one man, or group of men, from establishing a private power base. Anyone who has served the allotted time will have to step down for at least a year before he is eligible to serve on the same committee again. These committees, the major ones dealing with Administration, Christian Education, Home Missions, and World Missions, are charged with implementing the programs of the Assembly. They have only delegated, not discretionary powers.

Work was also completed on the Directory for Worship, though there are still some issues to be

cleared up with regard to the relation of our secondary standards to our primary standards and how binding each of these are upon the conscience of those who must take ordination vows.

In connection with the debate on the Directory, there was an attempt to get official approval for the "invitation system." This was defeated. That it was brought up, however, is indicative of one of the problems in the PCA. There are those whose methodology is inconsistent with their professed theology. The invitation system is based on an erroneous interpretation of some passages of Scripture and a faulty understanding of man's depravity. Particularly distressing was the fact that one of the men who spoke in favor of it compared the office of the Minister of the Word to the job of a salesman, and our Lord Jesus Christ to the product the salesman tries to get people to buy. That approaches, if it is not indeed, blasphemy.

Another high-priority item was the report of the Ad-interim Committee on the Number of Offices in the Church. Southern Presbyterianism, in the tradition of J.H. Thornwell, has historically held the two-office (elder and deacon) view, recognizing the distinction in the two types of elders (teaching and ruling), but insisting that insofar as the courts of the church are concerned, all elders sit in parity as rulers, and that no court can legally be constituted unless there are both ruling and teaching elders present. The report of the committee was a bit more radical than this. Had their report been approved, a ruling elder who later was trained, examined, and approved as a teaching elder would not have to be re-ordained. There was also a proposal that ruling elders be allowed to administer the sacraments in extraordinary circumstances, by special dispensation of the Presbytery.

As it turned out, there was a good deal of sentiment for a three-office view. And even among those who hold the two-office position, there was feeling that this report did not so much elevate the office of ruling elder as it demeaned the status of those elders who both teach and rule. There were also



conflicts in the report with the Confession and Catechisms. Thus, the whole issue was re-committed to a new committee for further study, general feeling being that this was far too important an issue to be decided in haste.

The World Mission report, a center of lively, and at times bitter debate last year was also of extreme importance. The passage, by the Second Assembly, of a program of cooperation with interdenominational independent mission boards led many commissioners to that Assembly to register their negative votes.

During the past year, a manual for world missions has been compiled, which, though not perfect, is much closer to the historic Thornwellian position which many of us hold. This manual has now been sent to the churches for study and comment before final approval. Meanwhile, the Committee on Missions to the World is to follow the guidelines established in it. The Assembly adopted a program directing that emphasis be placed on church-planting ministries (which, of course, is the only function of missions, Biblically) while allowing for cooperation with independent boards in areas of service or support, such as building schools, providing medical care, etc. (which are not properly the domain of the church as institute anyway). Obviously, this is not all it could be. But most of us felt we could at least support this program, with some reservations, whereas we could not have supported a continuation of the flagrantly un-presbyterian policies of the last Assembly. We cannot rest with this, however. The goal is a church which unashamedly confronts the task committed to her by our Lord: to preach the gospel to all those to whom He sends us. In doing this, we must maintain a program consistent with THE Biblical form of church government which is Presbyterianism. As Thornwell put it: "These officers and these courts are treated in our constitution as abundantly adequate to meet all exigencies of the Church, and to do all that God requires her to do in her ecclesiastical capacity. We profess to trace this system to the Scriptures . . . we cannot question its sufficiency without bringing a serious and blasphemous reproach upon the Spirit of inspiration." (Collected Writings, Vol. 4, p. 149)

In other matters before the Assembly, approval was given to the concept of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC). However, the Assembly also served notice that it was in no mood for moving too close to other bodies, by resoundingly defeating a proposal that the 1977 Assembly meet at a place outside of the South and in conjunction with other churches (somewhat along the lines of the OPC-RPCES-RPCNA meetings this year). Approval was also given to the joint venture with

Great Commission Press for the development of a comprehensive Sunday School Curriculum, this over the objections of some who would prefer the continued use of non-denominational, largely Arminian literature from several religious publishing houses. The concept of extension seminaries, approved last year, was rejected due to cost and the fact that there is no pressing need for more ministers. Those of strongly Reformed convictions were glad to see the defeat of this because such schools, it was feared, would be low in quality and not sufficiently Reformed. Mission to the United States reported several new churches being started and the formation of two new Presbyteries: Louisiana and Ascension (the latter being in the Pennsylvania-Ohio area). An overall budget of \$2.5 million was adopted for the church, nearly three-quarters of a million more than the present year, a budget which has yet to be fully subscribed.

Certainly, the PCA has not reached perfection. The optimism among Reformed men is guarded. Protestant Reformed readers will no doubt find some of the things mentioned less than thrilling (i.e. NAPARC and the joint venture in Christian Education). Being of similar views, this writer is not completely happy. There are a couple of things that should be kept in mind, however. Some of us who were not sure after the Second Assembly whether we could long remain in the PCA now feel we can stay. The advances the Reformed party made at this Assembly were as significant as that. Pray God that we may continue this trend. Also, remember that those of us who hold views similar to your own are allowed to propagate those views unmolested. The situation is not the same as 1924. Maybe this optimism will be dashed in future months and years. For now, the task is to build upon what we have, by God's grace, been able to attain and trust Him to preserve His glorious truth.





*IN HIS FEAR*

# Anxiety and Worry

*Rev. M. Joostens*

We, as children of God, are called upon to live in the midst of an age and world that is permeated with the sin of anxiety. That such is the state of the world is clearly manifest in the unrest which the world exhibits at every level of society. In the midst of wars and rumors thereof, peace efforts are headline news. In the midst of crime and evident lack of justice we hear the cry for law and order so as to have safety in the streets. In the midst of the breakdown of the family unit, teenage rebellion against authority and all its logical repercussions, parents throw up their hands in despair. And regarding all these the world is full of worry and anxiety.

In the midst of such a world the people of God must not be swept along by the current of this sin. Yes, we do not hesitate to call anxiety a sin. And for God's children it is a very devastating sin that undermines a very essential characteristic of our lives. Anxiety and worry are to the detriment of faith! This will become eminently clear to us when we let the Scripture shine its light of instruction upon this sin.

We find this instructive light in the very words of the Savior Himself. First of all, He strongly admonishes against the sin of anxiety. This admonition is found in the sixth chapter of Matthew. As Jesus instructs the multitude in His Sermon on the Mount, we find the recurring phrase, "... take no thought for..." Now, the old English of the King James Version somewhat obscures the meaning here. But let it be known that when the Authorized Version went to press in 1611, the words "... take no thought for..." designated undue anxiety or worry. This is illustrated very clearly in I. Sam. 9:5. You recall that Saul was providentially brought into contact with the prophet Samuel while searching for his father's asses. And in this connection, when the asses were not found, we read these words of Saul to his servant, "Come and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses and take thought for us." That is, lest he worry about us. So the admonition of Christ is, do not worry or be not anxious, because that constitutes a littleness of faith.

Let us further attend to the Savior's explanation. We turn to the visit of Jesus to the home of Martha. Mary, the sister of Martha, sat at Jesus' feet and attentively listened to the words of His mouth but Martha was cumbered about much serving. In fact, Martha was so engrossed in the problem of serving the guests that she said to Jesus, "... dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" And what does Christ answer? "Martha, Martha thou art careful (anxious) and troubled about many things; But one thing is needful and Mary hath chosen that..." Or again as Christ instructs His disciples in Luke 12. "And when they bring you (the disciples) unto the synagogues, and unto the magistrates, and powers, take no thought (be not anxious) what ye shall answer... For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say."

But what is Jesus trying to say? This becomes quite plain when we understand what constitutes anxiety. Properly to be anxious means to be drawn in different directions or to be divided. That was exactly the case with Martha. She was drawn away or distracted from the one thing which was needful. Martha's concern about the unimportant thing of setting the table kept her from the necessity of listening to the words of Christ. This is also the lesson in the instruction of Christ to His disciples. They were not to be distracted or divided from a complete trust by worrying about the speech to be made before the magistrates.

Has it become clear to us why Christ equates anxiety and worry with littleness of faith? Perhaps an example will aid us. Let us call to mind the occasion of Peter's walking upon the water after Jesus bade him to come. It was when that disciple saw the boisterous wind and was afraid that he began to sink, beckoning the Savior for His help. And after Jesus had stretched forth his hand to grasp him He said, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Peter was of a divided mind, he was torn in two directions. As long as he kept his eyes upon the Savior in faith, he was able to walk with Him. But



when he was distracted by the boisterous wind his feet sank beneath the surface of the water. It was the distraction that caused his faith to falter. Worry and anxiety denote a littleness of faith, while their absence points to a strong faith.

It is no wonder that the world is earmarked by anxiety, for they have no God nor do they desire His Christ. But the sad truth is that all too frequently these earmarks of the world also become those of the child of God. All too often the words of Christ, "O ye of little faith," are apropos for the Christian. On the one hand we speak in boldness while standing on the mountaintops of faith, saying that we are completely confident in our God, trusting absolutely in His all-wise, providential care. We confess to have the comfort that we commit our entire life to Him. Yet on the other hand, we are often so carnally minded. We are distracted by the mundane carnalities of this earthly life. We are burdened and weighed down with unnecessary anxiety and worry. Sometimes this is true to such an extent that we attempt to run ahead of God by planning things in such a manner so as to have carnal security apart from trust in Him.

Oh, we may become very concrete. We worry about our life. And when the Lord brings sickness we become anxious about our health, about how long we will live, whether we will have to suffer through the agonies of a prolonged illness, or whether the Lord will take us home suddenly. And, who will take care of my family in my absence? We even become anxious regarding the things with which God has blessed us. The trouble is that we often consider all these things apart from God and His providing care! All this ought not to be!

Let us listen once again to the simple and clear, yet profound words of our Savior. We turn again to His Sermon on the Mount. Here Christ brings forth a line of argumentation against anxiety by pointing us to the realm of nature. "Behold the fowls of the air."

Christ beckons us to consider carefully the birds that glide through the sky and to take them as exemplary. He points out to us, "... they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns." They are creatures of instinct and have not the capacity to worry. Yet, our Heavenly Father feedeth them. God providentially holds even the fowls of the air in His hands and cares for them. If He so provides for these insignificant creatures, how much more will He take care of us, who are His children for Christ's sake!

Or again, "Consider the lilies of the field." And the Savior points out to us that they do not toil neither do they spin fine yarns. Yet, God clothes the flowers of the field majestically, so that their beauty is unsurpassed. Even Solomon and all His glory was not arrayed like one of these. When Solomon sat arrayed in his royal garb amid all the riches with which God had blessed him, he could not compare to the splendor of the flower of the field. If God so arrays the flowers of the field which today stand in all their glory and tomorrow are used to fire the ovens to bake bread, will He not much more give us, who have eternal life, all things in Christ?

All too often, we are too much conformed to the mind of the world as they are preoccupied with all manner of carnal worries and anxieties. And they are so preoccupied because they have no God in Whom to trust and no Savior in Whom to find comfort. But it is quite different with us because we do have a God Who is a strong tower, our refuge and strength. And we do have a Savior Who is the object of our faith.

Then, why do we worry? Why are we so often anxious? It is a lack of faith. It is sin, because we have a Father in Heaven Who knows and supplies all our needs. We do well to consider the birds and the lilies of the field. If God so wonderfully takes care of them, His hand will certainly never wax short unto us who are His children!

Shall we put worry and anxiety behind us and walk in the strength of faith? That is walking in His fear!

## *SIGNS OF THE TIMES*

# Crime-Again

*Rev. G. Van Baren*

One would have to be blind and deaf not to be aware of deep concern within this country about crime. The concern grows with the increasing incidents of crime. Daily news reports speak of crime almost matter-of-factly.

It is of interest, therefore, to observe how often the very signs of the end of this age, as mentioned in Scripture, are of concern also to the men of this age. *Time* magazine, in recent months, has featured cover stories on "Earthquakes" and on another occasion,



on "The Crime Wave". Obviously, the signs mentioned in Scripture are clearly apparent. Man refuses to recognize the significance of these signs, but he is well aware of their existence.

The feature story in *Time* concerning the crime wave contains several interesting presentations and observations. It points out the obvious — but also draws conclusions. The article begins with a quotation from President Ford and comments on that:

"America has been far from successful in dealing with the sort of crime that obsesses Americans day and night — I mean street crime, crime that invades our neighborhoods and our homes — murders, robberies, rapes, muggings, holdups, breakins — the kind of brutal violence that makes us fearful of strangers and afraid to go out at night."

... Ford's characterization of anticrime efforts as being "far from successful" is a major understatement. After all the past rhetoric and all the past campaigns against crime, conditions only got worse.

... By any measurement, crime has become an ominous national problem. Since 1961 the rate for all serious crimes has more than doubled. From 1973 to 1974 it jumped 17% — the largest increase in the 44 years that national statistics have been collected.

Violent crime has had an even sharper increase. In the past 14 years, the rate of robberies has increased 255%, forcible rape 143%, aggravated assault 153% and murder 106%. Preliminary reports to the FBI this year show that the rate for violent crimes as well as property crimes like burglary is still sharply on the rise. Says a Chicago cop: "You just can't paint the picture too bad."

Attempts are made to analyze the problems. Many believe that they can detect reasons for crime — reasons which might also suggest possible solutions. First of all, the suggestion is made that crime is a matter of cycles. Inevitably there should be a turn for the better. It is pointed out that immigration and the Civil War of the 19th century "produced several crime waves." The implication is that we are going through one more of these cycles of crime.

But the theories concerning the reasons for crime are interesting. Several points are made — some with a degree of validity.

Wolfgang believes that "subcultures of violence" are sometimes created by groups with values at odds with those of the larger society.

... Many theorists believe that rapid economic development breeds crime . . . .

... Contemporary sociologists blame America's excessive stress on material gains which are, however, often denied people or the bitterness of being a failure in a society that is supposed to offer equal chances to all . . . .

... The rise of crime rates since the early '60s has paralleled the rise in teenage, and particularly black teen-age unemployment . . . .

... America's post-World War II baby boom has swollen the traditional crime-prone age bracket (14-24) as never before — and possibly never again . . . .

... Many psychologists and psychiatrists point an accusing finger at faulty parent-child relationships, particularly early in a child's life. Studies show that overly lax, overly strict or erratic child rearing contributes to delinquency, while a generally "firm but kind" approach inhibits it . . . .

... Children are more likely to turn to crime if parents battle frequently, or if one parent is missing through death, divorce or abandonment . . . .

... The mayhem on TV probably has something to do with teen-age violence as well. One study claims that the average American youth can be expected to watch 11,000 TV murders by the time he is 14. . . .

But most striking is the fact that the world also recognizes that a more fundamental cause of crime is the lack of any standard of morality. The wicked are not concerned with morality except in-so-far-as this will decrease crime and preserve order among the society of men. *Time* writes:

"Adults are confused and at a loss," says Psychiatrist Bernard Yudowitz. "They don't know what standards to set for their children or themselves. The bells that used to ring in your head to say no aren't ringing any more."

Urbanologist Edward Banfield and others see a slippery morality emerging from the 1960s: the idea that disadvantaged groups "have a kind of quasi right to have their offenses against the law extenuated, or even to have them regarded as political acts reflecting a morality 'higher' than obedience to the law."

It seems that every group has caught the knack of rationalizing away violations of the law, from Watergate conspirators to antiwar bombers and young black criminals who define assaults as "political acts." Says Frederick Hacker, a University of Southern California professor of psychiatry and law: "There have been an increasing criminalization of politics and a politicalization of criminals. It's reached the point where there are no criminals in San Quentin any more. They're all freedom fighters."



It seems clear that some of the old values and restraints have been battered by recent upheavals — war, riots, assassinations, racial strife, situational ethics, the youth rebellion. As disillusionment sets in, fewer and fewer Americans look to the churches, schools or Washington for moral leadership. Stern observers to today's widespread ethical torpor tend to agree with the 19th century French criminologist Jean Lacassagne: "A society gets the criminals it deserves."

The article continues by elaborating on certain things which, it is believed, will help reduce crime. Even among the intellectuals of this earth there is basic disagreement concerning solutions. "Liberals emphasize the unjust social conditions that are its breeding ground: slums, unemployment, poor education, racism, poverty amid affluence . . . . Conservatives are more apt to believe that deliberation, not desperation, is the root of crime . . . . To conservatives, man has always been flawed by original sin — or simply human weakness — but is in control of his own fate. To help him control it, the good society is obliged to emphasize a strong moral order, a respect for law and a confidence in punishment as a deterrent to crime."

Some suggestions for cures are: fewer and better laws; improvement of the police forces; more efficient courts; opportunity of "plea bargain"; a specific and certain sentence; or proper rehabilitation.

Striking, it is, that mention is made of the moral problem of our age. Interesting also is the suggestion that entertainment with its emphasis upon violence seems to have an effect upon society at large and specifically upon the youth.

But after all is said, the world has ignored the heart or root of the trouble. Nor does it see the significance of these things which take place about us.

First, the child of God recognizes in the spread of crime a clear fulfillment of the prophecy of the Word of God which speaks of the "lawlessness" of the last age and of that "Lawless One" who shall come in the end. Though it is doubtlessly true that there have been cycles of crime, what is evident today is both a world-wide problem and part of the many other signs which also point to the end of time. One must recognize, then, that what takes place today more clearly than ever before points to the end of all things. Remember that — lest we, too, become discouraged by all of these things about us. Our Lord comes back soon.

Secondly, there is the question of that which must be done to improve the situation in the world. Basically, I am convinced, there will be no change. Yet the child of God can point to the proper answers to those who would want to know what our solution would be. Surely, the morality of the Word of God and the consequences of disobedience, as presented in Scripture, must be observed. The "new" morality or "situation ethics" in which one does what is right in his own eyes, surely does destroy the very fabric of society. None who deliberately ignore the laws of God, none who refuse to punish the criminal according to God's Word can expect a society of peace and tranquility. Man suffers the consequences of his own walk of disobedience. Or, as one of their own have said, "A society gets the criminals it deserves."

But there is something more essential, more basic. Outward obedience might improve outward appearance of society. But the root problem has not been touched. The problem is man's sin. It is not a question of being "flawed" by original sin, nor is it a matter of "human weakness". Man has rebelled against God. He increases in his sin through the ages. Continually he develops in his sinfulness. He is dead in trespasses and sins. All the attempts of man to "contain" crime and "improve" society represent only cosmetic changes. The physically dead are not changed by the cosmetics which make them "look nice" in the funeral home. So the spiritually dead are not changed by better education, racial harmony, etc. One ends up with a better educated sinner, a more refined criminal, but still the heart remains unchanged.

The only hope is regeneration and conversion. Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God. Except he be born again, he will not love God from the heart nor obey God's laws to God's glory. The Word must be preached: "Repent and believe." Christ crucified must be set forth. The sinner must understand that there must be repentance and confession of sin. Only then will one's outward walk be properly affected.

But many, most, will not believe. Man turns from God's Word and rejects His law. Man remains self-serving and self-seeking. He will try to change the course of man's mad rush to destruction — but he can not. But thanks be to God, a remnant shall be saved. Of His own will, He begat us in order that we might love and serve Him now — and to all eternity. These will flee from every evil way and desire to walk in righteousness for Jesus' sake. And these, seeing this sign of lawlessness, rejoice that the coming of our Lord is at hand.



# Book Reviews

Prof. H. Hanko

*LIFE IN THE SPIRIT, In Marriage, Home & Work*, by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones; Baker Book House, 1975; 371 pp., \$8.95. [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko]

Baker has already printed one volume of Lloyd-Jones' sermons on Ephesians. It was published under the title, "God's Way of Reconciliation", and contained sermons on Chapter 2. This volume is a reprint which was first published in 1974. The fact that it is already being republished shows its popularity. And such popularity is well-deserved.

These sermons, originally preached by the author in Westminster Chapel during the morning service in 1959 and 1960, deal with the exposition of Ephesians 5:8 to 6:9. We are told in the preface that the publication of these sermons preceded the publication of sermons on Chapter 3 because of "the urgency of the problems with which they deal"; and that is the hope of the author that this volume "will eventually take its place . . . as one volume in a series on this great Epistle."

Taking his starting-point with Ephesians 5:18-21, and especially with the admonition, "Be filled with the Spirit", the author applies this to the relationships of husbands to wives, parents to children and servants to masters as the Scriptures deal with these relationships in this passage.

There are many worthwhile features about this book, too many, in fact, to list in this brief review. It contains an excellent emphasis on the distinct character of the Christian life when the author emphasizes that being filled with the Spirit is indispensable to godly living in all life's relationships. As he returns to this theme from time to time in the book, he inveighs against the social gospel, raises important and Scriptural objections to those who seek to introduce in a worldly society an outward Christian morality, emphasizes again and again that the Christian is a pilgrim and a stranger in the earth, and firmly roots the life of the Christian in sovereign grace. Furthermore, the book contains some very interesting and original exegesis of the pertinent passages, which, if the reader does not finally agree with, nevertheless, furnishes food for thought. The book is expository throughout, and deals very specifically and concretely with the text. Even though the homiletics is quite different from what we are accustomed to in sermons we hear, the exposition is clear, concise, Biblical and thoroughly enjoyable. It is an aid to ministers not only, but to all who study

these passages of Scripture. But what is of particular value is the fact that the book is filled from beginning to end with all kinds of sound Scriptural teaching concerning these important relationships of life in which we all are called to live. Especially in these days when these relationships are sadly corrupted, this book is an invaluable aid.

There are some weaknesses. For one thing, because these are sermons, the cross ought to be more explicit when it is often only implicit. For another thing, the chapter on child training suffers because, while it has many good points, a lack of understanding of the doctrine of the covenant weakens its force. Here especially the emphasis of the author on making the responsibility of the parents a more or less evangelical enterprise in which the parents lead their children to Christ gives an entirely wrong emphasis to covenantal instruction. Finally, rather strangely, and in flat contradiction to the text, the author supports unionism and even the strike and revolution under certain circumstances. But these objections do not detract from the considerable value of the book. We recommend it highly to all our readers.

*THE PERSON AND MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, The Traditional Calvinistic Perspective*, by Edwin H. Palmer; Baker Book House, 1974; 196 pp., \$5.95. [Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko]

There are a number of reasons why this is an interesting and important book. Apart from the fact that it deals with a subject which has been somewhat neglected in the Church until the rise of Neo-Pentecostalism, it develops, in large measure, the historic stand of the Reformed Churches concerning the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It also has some very good chapters; I found the chapters on "The Holy Spirit and Regeneration" (in which the truth of the sovereign grace of God in this work is clearly set forth) and on "The Holy Spirit and His Symbols" especially interesting. It is because of these good features that the book is of considerable value to all who wish to make this subject the object of their study.

There are, however, two very striking weaknesses in the book. I do not want to call these weaknesses to attention by way of criticism only, but rather to point out areas in which this doctrine of the Holy Spirit can be profitably developed along different lines than in Palmer's work.



The first weakness is a failure to understand the important distinction which Scripture makes between the Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. It is also in connection with this mistake that the author fails to distinguish properly between the Second Person of the Trinity and Christ in our flesh. This weakness repeatedly crops up in the book and leads to confusion not only, but leads also to statements which border on tritheism. The author forgets that all the works of God which are performed *ad extra* are works of the triune God. These works are performed through Christ and by means of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ. The problem which the author faces and fails to resolve comes out most clearly in Chapter 11, "The Holy Spirit and Divine Sonship." The author finds that the Bible uses the title *Son of God* in four different ways. In writing about the "Trinitarian Sonship", the author writes:

The Holy Spirit has nothing to do with this Sonship, except that he proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father, as we saw in chapter 1.

This is a rather obvious, but serious mistake. And it is because of this error that the author often defines the relation between Christ and the Father as well as the relation between the believer and the Father as being a relation between Christ and the First Person of the Trinity, or between the believer and the First Person of the trinity.

In the second place, the author includes a chapter on "The Holy Spirit and Common Grace." His erroneous commitment to common grace also leads him into trouble in more than one place in the book. For example, without mentioning the term common grace, the author speaks of a relation of sonship between all men and God. He writes:

For this sonship, too, the Holy Spirit is necessary. For, as we have seen, it is the Holy Spirit who is specifically responsible for the creation of man's soul. It is the third Person of the Trinity, and not the Father nor the Son, who endows all men with a

spiritual nature, so that they have life, artistic ability, aesthetic appreciation, and intellectual gifts. If man rises to the dramatic heights of a Shakespeare, the philosophical thoughts of an Aristotle, the artistic accomplishments of a Rubens, the musical genius of a Brahms, the statesmanship of a Churchill, or to the simple love of a mother for her child, the ability of a boy to study mathematics, or the skill of a girl in making a dress, then we must praise the Holy Spirit. For these are evidences of the second type of sonship and the Holy Spirit's work in establishing it. (p. 136ff.)

In this same connection he writes on p. 138:

According to the Bible the Christian is like God. We have seen that this is so in the creative sense, so that the Christian, along with the natural man, may be called a son of God because he resembles God, being spiritual, rational, moral, and emotional. This moral agency of man is called the natural image of God. It is one way in which all men, in distinction from animals, are like God.

It is even because of this general operation of the Spirit that all men can pray.

But what does it mean to pray "in the Holy Spirit" and to have the Spirit of prayer? First of all, it means that without the Spirit prayer is impossible. It is noteworthy that even the prayer of the unregenerate is prompted by the Holy Spirit. . . .

But these prayers are not pleasing in God's sight. They are nothing else than sinful expressions of the unregenerate heart. . . .

The question which, of course, immediately arises is: But how can they be anything else but pleasing in God's sight if they are wrought by the Holy Spirit? Is God displeased with His own work?

These questions are worthy of more extended and more Biblical exposition. It would have been well also if the author had included a chapter on the Holy Spirit and the covenant — the covenant life as God lives it in Himself, and the covenant of grace which He establishes with His people through Christ, and the work of the Spirit as related to the covenant.

## News From Our Churches

*Report of Classis West  
Isabel, South Dakota  
September 3-5, 1975*

The Fall, 1975 meeting of Classis West was especially significant and lengthy. Included in the agenda of Classis were a request for organization as a Protestant Reformed Church; two appeals concerning discipline; and an appeal concerning doctrine. Classis met from Wednesday morning, September 3, through Friday noon, September 5.

Rev. W. Bekkering led the Classis in opening devotions. He addressed the Classis from John 16:13a:

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." Eleven ministers and ten elders were present to do the work of the Classis. Rev. D. Engelsma served as president of the Classis.



By way of its credentials, the consistory of Lynden requested Classis to organize a group in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada as a Protestant Reformed Church. This request was the fruit of the labor of the Lynden consistory and Rev. B. Woudenberg in Edmonton for the past two years. Two families from the group were present at Classis and addressed the Classis concerning the request. Rev. Woudenberg also gave the Classis information about the group requesting organization, the work done there, and the situation in general.

A letter to Classis, signed by those in Edmonton who desire to be organized contained the following information: "We, the members of the Protestant Reformed Bible Class at Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, have been meeting for the last two years under provisions of the Lynden Prot. Ref. Church and the instruction of Rev. Woudenberg. During this time we have studied all of the basic principles of Reformed doctrine, we have listened to many sermons by tape, and we have read extensively in the *Standard Bearer*. Increasingly we have come to the conviction that the churches to which we have belonged have departed from the way of Reformed truth and that our greatest need is for a more pure form of worship and better catechism instruction for our children. Accordingly, we have met with a committee from the consistory of Lynden church (Rev. Woudenberg and elder Henry Vander Meulen), a representative of the Mission Committee (Rev. C. Hanko), and the Professor of Missions of the Prot. Ref. seminary (Prof. R. Decker), all of whom have labored with us in the past and with whom we are familiar. They have directed our attention to the Declaration of Principles of the Prot. Ref. Churches and to Article 38 of the Church Order with its amending decisions. With the former we can express our complete agreement, and it is our conviction that we are able to meet the requirements of Article 38 to be organized into a congregation within the Prot. Ref. denomination." Then followed the request for organization. Attached was a note signed by Rev. Woudenberg, Elder H. Vander Meulen, Rev. C. Hanko, and Professor R. Decker attesting that "the people in Edmonton are well informed as to the doctrines and practices of our churches and that there is sufficient availability of office bearers in accord with Article 38, note 2."

In accordance with Article 38 of the Church Order, including the provisions of the appended "decisions,"

Classis granted the request of the saints in Edmonton to be organized and appointed the consistory of Lynden and Rev. Lanting to carry out the organization, sometime during the month of September, 1975.

This was a joyful decision, not only for Lynden which, through its pastor, Rev. Woudenberg, did the work that God blessed with such fruit, but also for all the Classis which rejoiced in God's building and preserving of His Church by the gospel. The group consists of 32 souls, 5 families, and 4 individuals, and includes 18 children. Classis gave them classical appointments, beginning immediately according to the following schedule: Sept. 21 - Woudenberg; Sept. 28, Oct. 5 & 12 - Lanting; Oct. 19, 26 & Nov. 2 - Bekkering; Nov. 9, 16, 23 - Lubbers; Nov. 30, Dec. 7 & 14 - Slopsema; Jan. 11, 18, 25 - Kamps; Feb. 1, 8, 15 - Kortering; Feb. 22 (open); Feb. 29 & March 7 - Woudenberg. With regard to their need for financial help, Classis directed them to the Synodical Finance Committee, after they have organized and come to know the extent of their need.

In executive session, Classis treated two appeals of a consistorial decision regarding discipline.

Another appeal concerned the doctrine of the fourth commandment of God's law. Classis' decision was "to declare that God in the fourth commandment commands the New Testament Christian not only to enter into the rest of God all the days of his life, but also, by setting apart one day out of seven, which is in the new dispensation the first day of the week, God's Sabbath or the Lord's Day, to cease from work in order that he may totally consecrate the day to God in worship and service."

Other, less weighty actions of Classis included granting Doon permission to ask for collections in the churches for their new church building and raising the reimbursement of elder delegates to Classis from \$20 to \$30 per day, in response to Randolph's request.

The cost of Classis was \$2,343.49.

Classis will meet next in Edgerton, Minnesota, on March 3, 1976, the Lord willing.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk  
Classis West