

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

God has not only saved us from our sins in Christ so that we have the right to enter heaven, but He saved us in Christ that eternally we might express our gratitude to Him for that salvation. Make no mistake about it — where no gratitude is, there is also no experience of the saving grace of God. Being rooted and built up in Christ, must produce this fruit in our lives.

In thanksgiving abounding!

And that means that we are so full of gratitude that it runs over, it cannot be suppressed.

See “Walking In Christ” — page 458

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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

Department Editors: Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. David J. Engelsma, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert C. Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. M. Hoeksema, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Meindert Joostens, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman, Mr. Kenneth G. Vink.

Editorial Office: Prof. H.C. Hoeksema
4975 Ivanrest Ave. S.W.
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Church News Editor: Mr. Kenneth G. Vink
1422 Linwood, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

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Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.
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Australian Business Office: Reformed Literature Centre,
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Queensland, Australia

New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer,
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MEDITATION

Walking In Christ

Rev. M. Schipper

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” Colossians 2:6, 7.

Here is an exhortation directed to the Church of Colosse, which along with the Church in Laodicea were churches in Asia Minor. Neither of them had been established through the mission activity of the Apostle Paul, but most likely through the labors of

Epaphras and Archippus, fellow-servants of the apostle.

Through these fellowservants Paul had learned of the peculiar circumstances prevailing in these churches, which became the occasion for him to write

the letter to Colosse, which must also be read in Laodicea.

First of all, the apostle had learned of their faith in the Lord Jesus and love which they had to all the saints. But, secondly, he had also learned how these churches had been threatened by the Jews who always were seeking to destroy the church by leading the church back into Judaism. Also he had learned of the doctrine of angels, introduced into the church along with their worship of them: their claim being that angels were present at and assisted in the work of creation, and therefore should be worshipped by the church.

Paul's great concern for the churches is expressed in the first part of our chapter. He would have them established more perfectly in the knowledge of the mystery of God, which is the whole plan of salvation as it is realized in and through Christ. He would have them come to the full assurance of understanding. He is aware of the destructive attitudes of unbelief and doubt. If the full assurance of understanding is missing, the church will also miss her real comfort, joy in the God of her salvation, power to fulfill their calling in the world, and there will be no hope and no thanksgiving. The church must come to the full assurance of understanding to taste personally the love of God in Christ. Moreover, the apostle is also concerned that the bond of mutual love be strengthened and exercised. In the measure the church comes to the knowledge of the mystery and full assurance of understanding, also the bond of mutual love will be strengthened. When the church, as was the case here, is threatened with false doctrine, there is the tendency to pull the church apart. She must be therefore molded together and strengthened in the bond of mutual love.

In the light of this situation are we to understand the exhortation in our text.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.

They had received Christ Jesus the Lord. They received Him precisely as He had been presented to them through the preaching of the gospel. They came into contact with Him through the preaching. As they were taught (vs. 7), so they embraced the Christ of the Scriptures. As Christ was preached and they were taught, so they had received Him. The emphasis falls not so much on their activity of faith, but on the wonder and power of revelation and teaching. Christ was so presented that they actually saw Him and knew Him. So carefully were they taught that they understood Him, and accepted Him for Who and What He is.

Noteworthy here is the fulness of names whereby the Saviour is described.

He is Christ, the anointed of God. Anointed was He in a two-fold sense: officially He was appointed to be their Saviour, but this official appointment also includes the fact that He was qualified in every sense of the word to be their Saviour. As the Christ, the anointed of God, He was able to represent them with the Father, first of all, as their Prophet, to instruct them in the things of God, and to make known to them the whole counsel of God concerning their salvation. As the Christ, the anointed of God, He was able to represent them with the Father as their Priest, to bring for them the perfect sacrifice of atonement that could satisfy the just demands of God's justice, and intercede for them with the Father as their Paraclete, and to give them the promise of the Holy Spirit. As Christ, the anointed of God, He was able to represent them before the Father as their King. He is appointed and qualified to rule over them, and to defend and deliver them from all their enemies.

He is Jesus, which means He is Jehovah-salvation. He is that precisely as Christ. He is ordained to be their Saviour from sin and death, and to give them all the blessings of salvation, eternal life, righteousness, holiness, love, grace, mercy, and peace.

He is Lord. As their Lord they had been taught to know Him through the gospel. As such also they had received Him, knowing consciously that He had made them His possession, and therefore they are His servants with body and soul, in life and in death. So it is their delight to hear and to keep His Word, and to do His will.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord,

So walk ye in Him!

The walk here, as so often in Scripture, embraces their entire active life in the world. It includes the life of the body as it is realized externally when they come into contact with the world; but it includes that life also as it is motivated and activated internally through the life of the soul, and that too in their thinking, willing, and desiring.

Accordingly, too, that walk is their life as they live it in all the relationships of life, in the home, the church, the state. It includes their religious life, their social life, their life as they live it in relation to economics, industry, business, education, etc. In one word, their walk includes all the departments of life, nothing excluded.

In all these relationships of life the church is exhorted to walk in the sphere of Christ. That is, their inmost life must be motivated by Christ as they had received Him by His Spirit; while their outward life must be governed by His Word of truth as it had been set forth in the preaching. Christ they had received; and as they had been taught, so they are to live in the

midst of the world. Christ must be seen in them as they enter into the world in all its departments. That is the meaning of the exhortation itself.

Shall the church be able to walk in Christ's sphere, it is absolutely indispensable that the believing church be rooted and built up in Him.

Here the apostle speaks in figurative terms. Being rooted in Christ reminds us of a tree that is firmly planted in the soil out of which it draws to itself all the life-giving energy which the soil possesses. So believers are rooted in and can never be separated from Christ. The grammar used here suggests this idea. They are not exhorted to be rooted in Christ, but the text speaks the fact that they *are* rooted in Him. However, before their deepest consciousness they must also sense this if they are to walk as believers in the world. The having been rooted in Christ also denotes that the source of all their life is Christ. As the tree draws its life-sap from the soil, so believers by a living faith draw all their spiritual life and blessings out of Christ. Without Him they are nothing, and can do nothing.

To this the apostle adds, being built up in Him. Believers in Scripture are often set forth as a building, established on the foundation which is Christ, or the doctrine concerning Christ. Also here the apostle uses figurative language. The figure changes from that of a tree into that of a building. Not only must the church be rooted in Christ, but also built up in Him. The foundation as laid by the preaching is Christ alone, the truths set forth in the preaching of Epaphras and Archippus. The apostle Peter speaks of the believers as living stones which make up the edifice of the house of God. Here the apostle Paul does not view them so much as the material of which the house of God is built, but he stresses the point that the believers as they are rooted in Christ must also develop and be built up in the knowledge of the truth as set forth in the preaching. They grow and are built up as they increase in the knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ.

And to this the apostle adds, "and established by the faith."

Not *in* the faith, as the translation has it, but *by* the faith. As the translation would have it, the faith is the sphere in which the believers are established. But the apostle already indicated that Christ is that sphere, not faith. Faith, rather, is the instrument by which they are established. They must be established, lest they be driven to and fro by all kinds of winds of doctrine and false philosophy. They had been taught that they are rooted and built up and established by the faith of Christ. Shall they be established, it is most important therefore to give heed to what they are taught.

These three, rooted, built up, and established by faith in Christ, are indispensable requisites for walking in the sphere of Christ. Again, we emphasize, the apostle does not exhort the church to be rooted, built up in Christ, and to be established by faith; but he informs the church that this is what has happened to her. So also she had received the knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ. On this grounds must she also understand her calling to walk in Christ's sphere.

The last part of the text describes the manifestation of their walk.

Abounding in thanksgiving!

From the principle of gratitude in their hearts they must conduct their whole life in the world.

This is not only the fruit of their salvation in Christ, but also the end purpose. God has not only saved us from our sins in Christ so that we have the right to enter heaven, but He saved us in Christ that eternally we might express our gratitude to Him for that salvation. Make no mistake about it — where no gratitude is, there is also no experience of the saving grace of God. Being rooted and built up in Christ must produce this fruit in our lives.

In thanksgiving abounding!

And that means that we are so full of gratitude that it runs over, it cannot be suppressed.

The Heidelberg Catechism sensed the importance of this when it asks the question: What is necessary for us to know that we may enjoy the only comfort in life and in death? The answer is: Three things: that I may know how great my sins and miseries are, that I may know how I am delivered from all my sins and miseries, that I may know how I shall show my gratitude for such deliverance.

So also here the apostle stresses the point. If you have received Christ Jesus the Lord as you have been taught through the preaching of the gospel, that is, you have received Him as your Lord and Saviour Who was appointed and qualified to redeem you; if you are rooted and built up in Him and established by your faith; then it must follow that you walk in His sphere, and your whole life in the world will be one great expression of thanksgiving to God.

And how shall this thanksgiving be expressed?

Merely with a volume of words? O, to be sure, the mouth cannot refrain from speaking of that which fills the heart.

But there is more. Thanksgiving is not merely a matter of the movement of our lips; it is evidenced in the entire walk which is rendered in service to and praise of the God of our salvation.

As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, always abounding in thanksgiving!

EDITORIALS

Who Were the Marrowmen?

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

In the previous installment on this subject we began to quote the account of the Marrow controversy furnished in the booklet *Universalism And The Reformed Churches*, published by the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. We learned: 1) That the Marrow controversy began concerning a book called "The Marrow of Modern Divinity," written in 1645-49 by an obscure English writer, Edward Fisher. 2) This work very crassly maintained (and statements were quoted to prove this) the error of universal atonement. 3) During the second decade of the 1700s, this book found its way into the Church of Scotland (which had the Westminster creeds as its standards); and it was supported and promoted especially by a group of twelve ministers, among whom some of the better known names were Thomas Boston and Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine. These men became known in church history as the "Marrowmen." 4) In 1720 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland officially condemned the book on various grounds, among them its teaching of universal atonement and pardon. And in 1722 the General Assembly solemnly rebuked the twelve men who supported the book and who had sought to have the decision of 1720 repealed. In 1722 no disciplinary action beyond admonition and rebuke was taken, however. The result was that the Marrowmen continued to hold their views and to propagate them, and eventually this was one of the factors which led to the deposition of Ebenezer Erskine and the origination of the secession of 1734. We mention this now because in the subsequent account mention is made of the "Associate Presbytery of the Seceders from the Church of Scotland."

Now we continue quoting the account of this history from *Universalism And The Reformed Churches*. We interrupted it last month at the point at which it mentioned the decisions of 1720 and 1722.

"From the day of their enactment to the present, these Acts (of 1720 and 1722, HCH) have been assailed by every shade of theological opinion, from liberal to evangelical fundamentalism, either on the ground that the Westminster Confession and Catechisms do not specifically condemn the doctrine of the book of the Marrow, or on the specious ground,

that the terms of that book do not teach a universality of redemption as to purchase. Of the many references in Free Church literature which support the Marrow, the most extensive is given in John McLeod's 'Scottish Theology' in which he oversimplifies the controversy by treating it as one involving a misunderstanding about the meaning of terms.

"The whole difference between the positions of the Church of Scotland and the Westminster Assembly in this matter, relative to the formularies of the latter, as we have already shown, was that the Westminster Assembly on the one hand, did not specifically exclude a conditional intention in the redemption purchased by Christ, whereas, the Church of Scotland on the other hand, in its application of the formularies, excluded it. Unless this difference is understood, the proper significance of the Acts of the Church of Scotland Assembly in 1720 and 1722 cannot be realized.

"It is significant that the Assembly of the Church of Scotland relied on these Acts when it deposed John Macleod Campbell in 1831 for preaching doctrines similar to the Amyraldian system. Macleod Campbell's defence was largely comprised of an attempt to prove the 1720 and 1722 Acts invalid by virtue of the fact that they had not been subjected to the Barrier Act of 1697 which requires 'that before any General Assembly of this Church shall pass any acts which are binding rules and constitutions to the Church, the same acts be first proposed as overtures to the Assembly, and being by them passed as such, be remitted to the considerations of the several Presbyteries of this Church, and their opinions and consent to be reported by their Commissioners to the next General Assembly following, who may then pass the same in Acts, if the more general opinion of the Church thus had agreed thereunto.' Since the Assembly in its Acts of 1720 and 1722 had not altered the doctrine of the Church, but had simply declared it, as it was then held, there was no case to pass down to Presbyteries, in terms of the Barrier Act. The submission of Macleod Campbell thus failed. Had he been successful in this defence, Amyraldianism could not have been excluded under the Con-

fessional Standards of the Church of Scotland by such means.

"The Westminster Confession, chapter and sections, 3:6 and 8:8, and the larger Catechism No. 59, which are relative to this controversy, are positive statements of the Scripture doctrine concerning the application of the redemption purchased by Christ. In no sense do they have a negative reference.

"Chapter 3 section 6, 'Of God's Eternal Decree' in part reads as follows: —

" 'Wherefore they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.'

"These statements from the Westminster formularies are exclusive, if taken 'a priori' in the absolute sense that redemption has no other reference than to the elect. William Cunningham in his 'Historical Theology' (Vol. 2 pages 326/7 Banner of Truth) takes this position, and we agree. However, unless the courts of the Church declare that position, there is no authority which is particularistic apart from private opinion. (Note: It seems to me that this is true only in the sense that the Westminster Confession does not have a Rejection of Errors, as do our Canons of Dordrecht. Certainly, the last sentence in the quotation from Chapter 3, section 6 is just as exclusive as is Canons II, 8: redemption is of the elect, and of them only. HCH)

"In view of the debate in the Assembly, the manner in which the formularies were applied in England, the argument of the Schools of Davenant and Amyraut, and the ambiguous system of modified Calvinists since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the question of the application of the Westminster formularies in respect to the doctrine of universal redemption as to purchase, and the terms of the Marrow, can only be decided by a Declaratory Act of the Church. Herein lies the proper application of the Acts of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1720 and 1722.

"The Marrowmen, like their modern counterparts, attempted to hold to the particularism of Calvinism and at the same time preach the gospel in the universalistic terms of the Marrow. They therefore reinterpreted the terms of the book from that of its original context within the School of Davenant, and declared against the obvious, that it did not have reference to universal redemption. Boston took upon himself such an exercise, when under an assumed name, to hide his identity, he issued an edited version in 1726.

"The doctrinal manifesto of the Associate Presbytery of the Seceders from the Church of Scotland in 1742 stated the following impossible contradictions: —

1. 'No such doctrine as universal redemption as to purchase is taught in the Marrow.' (Note: Turn back to the statements quoted from the Marrow in the August 1 issue. HCH)

2. 'That God the Father — His making a deed of gift and grant unto all mankind . . . does not infer a universal redemption as to purchase.' The Marrow theology is thus committed to the following ambiguities: —

1. 'Christ has taken upon Him the sins of all men' and being a 'deed of gift and grant unto all mankind' is not a universal purchase of the death of Christ, therefore it logically follows that —

2. The said deed of gift and grant of Christ to all mankind is effective only to the elect, i.e., an infallible redemption gifted to all secures only a portion of its objects.

3. 'A deed of gift and grant to all is only an offer'. In other words Christ is gifted to all, without that He died for them.

4. Since the gift of Christ to all is not a benefit purchased by the atonement, the substance of the free offer to the gospel, does not consist of Christ as redeemer, but only as a friend.

"Thus it was the Marrowmen in the first half of the eighteenth century who first injected into the stream of Scottish theology the ambiguous and contradictory system which has been the subtle vehicle or Trojan horse which for two hundred and fifty years has worked to the downfall of the Calvinism of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches throughout the world.

"Modern modified Calvinism (What is meant is the kind of Calvinism which holds to a general, well-meant offer of salvation. HCH) is but a refinement of the same system. Like the Marrowmen, as demonstrated hereafter, it presents the gospel in universalistic terms by the introduction of a system of interpretation of Scripture which brings in a doctrine of divine precepts and decrees, which not only perpetuates the errors of the Marrow, but extends the ambiguities and contradictions of that system."

We agree.

And in conclusion, we wish to point out:

1. That to appeal to the Marrowmen for support is to appeal to heretics.

2. That the Marrowmen were faced by the dilemma of embracing the doctrine of the Marrow, i.e., universal redemption as to purchase (universal

atonement, in other words) or of being left without an objective basis for the general, well-meant offer which they wanted to teach. In other words, they confronted the problem which every offer-adherent faces: how can God offer to all sinners what He does not have, namely, salvation for all?

3. That the Marrowmen's doctrine that the only warrant or ground which sinners have to come to Christ is the universal, well-meant offer of the gospel is not Reformed. It must be remembered that to come to Christ and to repent and believe – all this is itself a gift of salvation. But all the gifts of salvation were merited for us by Christ in His atoning death. The only warrant, or right, for a sinner to come to Christ, therefore, lies in the atonement of Christ. But

that atonement is particular, not general. Hence, there cannot possibly be a warrant or right for *all* sinners to come to Christ.

4. That a universal call of the gospel is not the same as a universal offer. The former includes the *command* to repent and believe. This command certainly implies a *must*; but it does not imply a *may*, or a right or warrant. This command, along with the particular promise that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall be saved, is what Canons II, 5 speaks about.

5. That to deny a universal offer is not hyper-Calvinism. To deny the promiscuous proclamation of a particular promise is indeed hyper-Calvinistic.

“Our Song of Hope” – A Critique

(3)

We have already noted that this provisional confession of the Reformed Church in America is admittedly vague and ambiguous, and therefore subject to various interpretations. We have noted, too, that this provisional creed is deliberately broad and ecumenical: it is not designed to distinguish the RCA as Reformed, but purposely designed to be “catholic” and “evangelical” (p. 3), and to be such that it “will not separate the Reformed Church in America from other denominations, but on the contrary will serve to help people learn from each other's traditions and promote unity in Christ,” (pp. 1, 2). It is plain to see that in this document the RCA deliberately purposes to be all things to all men and all churches. Reading the document can only convince one that the RCA has indeed succeeded in this purpose, but thereby has lost every vestige of being distinctively Reformed, and thus has become terribly offensive to the truly Reformed believer. Moreover, refuge cannot be sought in the fact that this new creed is only an *additional* creed and that the old Three Forms of Unity remain in effect. For it is the avowed purpose of “Our Song of Hope” to displace the old creeds: it “will be used in public worship, in religious education, and in re-affirming the traditional faith in the contemporary situation.” In other words, this new creed will be the creed that is in use in the RCA, which will be the medium for the education of new members on the mission field as well as the education of the church's coming generations, while the Three Forms of Unity will become museum pieces.

However, this is not the worst! That is reserved for Appendix B, pp. 86-90. This is a section entitled “References to Creeds and Confessions.” In this section one finds an “index which will help those

who study ‘Our Song of Hope’ to locate in those older documents (the ancient Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity, HCH) the articles which bear especial relationship to the stanzas of ‘Our Song.’ ” This index, of course, will make it simple to compare the proposed new creed with the Three Forms of Unity. But in this section it is also made plain that “Our Song of Hope” deliberately diverges from the Three Forms of Unity. On page 87 we find the following:

On the other hand, “Our Song of Hope” will be seen to develop three aspects of the Reformed tradition quite differently from the Standards. One set of issues relates to Article 36 of the Belgic Confession. The changes which have occurred in church-state relationships during the last four hundred years have been such as to require us to say today whether and how we now see the activity of the Spirit of God in our world.

“Our Song of Hope” has also given much attention to the use of the words “election” and “righteousness” in the Old Testament. As a result, one can feel considerable tension between “Our Song” and the Canons of Dort in the understanding of “election” and between “Our Song” and the Heidelberg Catechism in the use of the word “righteousness.” In regard to these words, one soon is involved in complex issues and is forced to do careful exegetical study of the Scriptures. We mention these tensions here in hope that many persons will take the time to study the Scriptures carefully in order that before “Our Song of Hope” is submitted for final vote, we may be more certain of the full teaching of Scripture and of our relationships to our fathers in the faith.

Now it is not our intention at this point to enter into these differences in detail. We call attention to

these paragraphs in order to point out that it simply is not true that "Our Song" is only a re-affirmation in contemporary language of the traditional faith. Admittedly "Our Song" develops "three aspects of the Reformed tradition *quite differently from the Standards*." (italics added) Now we will leave out of consideration the rather complicated matter of Article 36 of the Belgic Confession — although the *reason* given for this divergence is a specious one for changing a confession (Notice: church-state relationships have changed in the last 400 years. A fine reason for change indeed! Does the truth change?) But take special note of the other two items: "righteousness" in the Heidelberg Catechism, a key item, and "election" in the Canons of Dordrecht. What does that "considerable tension" mentioned in quotation above mean? That is a euphemism to cover up the fact that "Our Song" pulls in one direction while the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordrecht pull in the opposite direction.

Now isn't that a fine way to bring about radical

revision in the church's creeds? No gravamen! No open overture for revision! Adopt a new creed which is alleged to be only *in addition* to the existing creeds and which is alleged to be a contemporary re-affirmation of the traditional faith. But cut the heart out of the Heidelberg Catechism by re-defining a key concept like "righteousness," and cut the heart out of the Canons of Dordrecht by re-defining the one doctrine which controls all five heads of doctrine!

It would be far more honest for the RCA to say bluntly and openly: "We no longer believe what the Three Forms of Unity teach and confess, and we no longer want them as the standards of our denomination." Then, at least, there would be no deception involved.

Next time, D.V., we will examine this matter a little more closely, and will see what becomes of those doctrines which are characteristically Reformed and commonly referred to as the Five Points of Calvinism when "Our Song of Hope" mutilates them.

CONTRIBUTION

About Reformed Methodology

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema, Editor

Dear Brother,

Regarding "Reformed Methodology" in determining truth referred to Feb. 15, 1977 consider the following:

An exegete must search the Scripture. A minister in preparing a sermon (and there is no principle difference with a synodical study committee) must not first consult commentaries, confessions, etc., but he must sit down with his Greek and Hebrew Bible and *exegete*. He must study the words, the sentences, the context, the whole Bible that bears on that particular text. This is the fundamental task of an exegete. He must prayerfully give himself body and soul to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and come to a conclusion which he understands to be the Word of God.

2. Then he consults commentaries, Reformed confessions, Reformed writers, etc. This is important. A Reformed exegete does not work independently, he values the mind of the Spirit as He guided the church in the past, especially in the official confessions of the church. Such an exegete does not live independently in the present, neither does he live in the past, but he lives out of the past in the present day.

3. If there is conflict, he will realize the need for

more study. If the Bible seems to him to teach something other than the church of the past expressed in her confessions or decisions, he has to study further. Both the confessions and his personal conclusions must be subject to the Scripture. He will not be so arrogant as to imagine that his personal conclusions are just as valuable as the conclusions of the Reformed confessions and leading minds of the past, the weight will favor their conclusions. His study will be to convince himself that the confessions state the mind of the Spirit. His mind must be subject to the Scripture and Reformed confessions. If he cannot in good conscience come to that conclusion, it is his duty to show the Reformed churches that the mind of the past is in conflict with the Scripture.

We appreciate your concern to be Reformed, but we must not over-react and lose the Reformed truth of Article 7 of our Belgic Confession.

Reformed methodology is still, Scripture then confessions.

Fraternally

Rev. J. Kortering

Note: I will reply to colleague Kortering's contribution in the next issue. — HCH

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

September 1, 1977

Dear Timothy,

I had not anticipated that this discussion would take quite so long. But the issues are worthwhile enough to discuss them thoroughly.

You will recall that my last letter interrupted our discussion of I Timothy 4 to concentrate on DeKoster's criticism of Lindsell's book, "The Battle For The Bible." And we were particularly interested in what DeKoster's position really was (and is).

We talked last time about the question of whether it is possible for a child of God to say that he holds the Word of God in his hand when he holds a translation of that Word. And we emphasized that it is very important that we understand that this is true.

We also began to discuss DeKoster's emphasis on the importance of the subjective testimony of the Spirit in the believer's heart. You will recall that we referred to DeKoster's many references to Article V of the Confession of Faith which reads that we believe all the books of the Bible to be God's Word "because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts, that they are from God." And we noticed that DeKoster conveniently never refers to the very next clause which reads: "Whereof they carry the evidence in themselves."

Now there are two points which have to be made in this connection. The first point is that the proof that scripture is the Word of God is to be found in the Scriptures themselves. The Scriptures give their own testimony that they are from God. Lindsell made this point very strongly in his book and in his speech. DeKoster never mentions it. May we conclude that he denies it?

The second point is that if we have only the subjective testimony of the Spirit in our hearts we fall into the error of subjectivism. This is what DeKoster in fact does. And this is what Lindsell meant when he criticized DeKoster for teaching that then the Spirit talks out of both sides of His mouth, for He tells Daane one thing and Calvin another.

This is an extremely important point, and we ought not to overlook it. In this day when Pentecostalism is flourishing we have altogether too much of this sort of subjectivism. It has always been characteristic of mystics (and it is characteristic of Pentecostalism) that they taught that the Spirit

speaks directly to a man independent of the Word. It is hard to exaggerate the influence this kind of mysticism has had on the thinking of people. How often is it not true that an individual will defend a certain course of action by saying, "The Spirit led me to do this." Or, "I was convicted by the Spirit to do this or that." Or, "The Spirit guided me in this way." This is a mysticism that has always been anathema to Reformed believers.

This is what DeKoster does. He separates the testimony of the Spirit from the objective testimony of the Word of God. He claims that the believer is persuaded that the Bible is the Word of God by the subjective testimony of the Spirit alone. But if this is true, then it is also true that when Dr. Boer does not believe that God's Word teaches reprobation, and when Daane denies the truth of sovereign and double predestination and appeals to Scripture in defense of his position, then the Spirit says something to Daane and Boer which He did not say to Calvin. And when the Spirit tells me that the Scriptures are without any error, and at the same time tells Daane and Boer, and presumably DeKoster, that there are errors in the Bible, then the Spirit speaks out of both sides of His mouth indeed.

The whole point is that the Holy Spirit says nothing apart from the objective testimony of the Bible itself. There is absolutely no testimony of the Spirit about anything at all apart from the objective testimony of the Scriptures. Do not misunderstand this. The Spirit is the Author of it all. The Spirit is the Author of the Scriptures after all. And the Spirit speaks through those Scriptures by a subjective testimony in the hearts of those in whom He dwells.

The conclusion of the matter is then that the testimony of the Spirit is never apart from and is always in agreement with the objective testimony of the Spirit in Scripture.

Be sure that you make this clear to God's people, Timothy. The quagmires of subjectivism are deep and it is difficult to escape when once one gets sucked into them. But these quagmires pull away from the firm and unshakeable rock of the Scriptures themselves.

The third point which DeKoster made was a point in connection with a distinction between infallibility and inerrancy. I must confess that when I read the

discussion on this point in *The Banner* I was at a loss as to what DeKoster meant. Listening to DeKoster's speeches during the debate, I think that I have discovered what he has in mind. It is possible that I still may be wrong, but if an articulate man such as DeKoster cannot write or speak in a way which makes his position clear, then he must not blame me or you for misinterpreting his words, but must look at himself.

However that may be, it seems to me that DeKoster makes an important distinction between infallibility and inerrancy. He makes this distinction when he says that the word "infallibility" refers to the testimony of the Spirit in the hearts of believers; while the term "inerrancy" refers to the Scriptures. Now why does he make that distinction? He makes that distinction because he insists that the testimony of the Spirit concerning the Bible is "infallible." But the word "infallible" cannot be applied to the Bible itself. Only the word "inerrant" can be applied to the Bible. But it is *not*, says DeKoster, true that the Bible is inerrant. He will, I think, go even a step further and say that the Bible is "infallible." But when he says that the Bible is infallible he does not mean that the Bible is without any error. He only means, I think, that the Bible contains the Word of God so that when I hold the Bible in my hands, I hold the Word of God in my hands.

Now this is another piece of semantic legerdemain which is used to cover up the truth that the Bible has no errors in it. Let's see if we can carry his argument a bit further. Supposing I would insist to him that the Bible is absolutely without error. His response to that would most likely be that this is not true. Everyone recognizes the fact that the King James Version of the Bible is not completely accurate in its translation — as no translation can be, and everyone knows that the Bible was copied in such a way that errors crept in. Now my response, quite naturally, would be that I am talking about the Autographa. I believe that the Autographa were given by God without error. His response to that, I think, would be: But we do not have the Autographa any longer, and therefore have nothing to do with it. If I would press him for an answer and say: Tell me whether or not you believe that the Autographa were given without error, he would answer. . . . Well, I'm not sure what he would answer; but I suspect that if you could get an answer, it would be: No, the Autographa also had errors in them.

There are a couple of points which have to be made in this connection. In the first place, the distinction DeKoster makes between infallibility and inerrancy is a false distinction. Both terms have historically meant the same thing. And any good dictionary will tell you that the meaning is so close that the two words are

synonyms. DeKoster acts like a liberal when he takes traditional terms, pours out their old meaning, and gives to them meanings other than the *usus loquendi*. This is not only confusing; it is dishonest. Both terms mean: without error, when the terms are applied to the Scriptures.

In the second place, of course, the testimony of the Spirit is infallible. But it is infallible only in connection with the objective testimony of the Word. The Spirit cannot lie. But as we said above, the Spirit never speaks apart from the Word.

In the third place, it is extremely important to maintain that the Autographa were infallible — or inerrant — whatever one wishes to call them. It is true that we do not have the Autographa any more. But this does not alter the case one whit. An inerrant Autographa is important because we cannot have the Word of God today if the Autographa were not inerrant. Let's be clear on that point. The Autographa are the Word of God *only if* they are inerrant. They are then the Word of God in their entirety and in every part. And then, *and only then*, can we have the Word of God today. To use a figure which I used in my last letter to you: if First Church never was First Church when it was originally built, it cannot be First Church now either. Only if it was First Church then, can it also be First Church now even though it may have a few burned out light bulbs and some plaster coming loose somewhere.

But there is more. The whole question is, after all, not merely a question concerning inerrancy. This is important; but it is not the heart of the issue. The real question is one of authority. There are those who do not want the authority of Scripture. They do not want the authority of Scripture on the truth of creation and the fall. They do not want the authority of Scripture on the truth of sovereign and double predestination. They do not want the authority of Scripture on the question of women holding office in the church. And in order to undermine Scripture's authority, they tamper with the doctrine of Scripture's infallibility — or inerrancy.

Let there be no doubt about it at all. Scripture is authoritative in all matters of faith and life only because it is infallible — or inerrant — in its Autographa. The question of the Autographa is an important one — whether we have them or not. And it is important because these very Autographa testify in themselves that they are of God. They testify in themselves and of themselves that there are no errors in them. And this testimony is the rock upon which the authority of Scripture rests. Take infallibility — or inerrancy — away, and Scripture's authority is gone. The authority of the Autographa is gone. The authority of the Bible I hold in my hand is gone.

But when by faith I receive the testimony of the Scriptures themselves that the Scriptures in their Autographa are infallibly inspired, then I know that the Bible I hold in my hands is the very Word of God!

I know this because the Spirit Who gave the Scriptures as an infallible book is the same Spirit who testifies in my heart in connection with and through the Scriptures that these Scriptures are the Word of God.

DeKoster is wrong — dreadfully wrong. No matter

how pious what he says may sound, he is wrong. His view takes God's Word away from God's people.

Hold fast to the truth, Timothy. It is clear and easily understood. No tampering with words is necessary to make it clear. No vague statements are needed to make it clear. The truth is so clear that God's people can understand it even when they are the lambs of the flock.

Fraternally,
H. Hanko

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

A Burying Place for a Princess

Rev. John A. Heys

It was through Isaiah that God declared, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." Isaiah 55:8. And it is so often in life that we find this to be so very true. Incidents recorded in Scripture show this to be the case, but also in our lives and in the day in which we live, we find that God's thoughts and ours are not the same. We find that the way He intends to rule the world and order our lives differs from what we planned and man expects.

Statistics — which men like to keep, because they like to try to know God's thoughts for their own earthly and worldly good — show that as a rule women live longer than men. And there are more widows living today than widowers. Were we to live by statistics, we would have Abraham dead long before Sarah. He was already ten years old when she was born. Who then would expect that she would not outlive Abraham? Who would expect that she would die at the age of one hundred thirty-seven, while Abraham would go on and outlive her by twenty-eight years? Who would have expected that Abraham would be able to count thirty-eight more years of life, when he was on his death bed, over the number of years that God gave Sarah? What is more, Abraham enjoyed the fellowship and companionship of their son, Isaac, for seventy-five years, while Sarah lived to enjoy it only forty-seven years.

Now neither parent was essential any more for Isaac. As a young man he was quite able to take care of himself. We find shortly after the death of Sarah that Abraham sends to get a wife for Isaac. But this

was not because Isaac was not able to do so himself. He did not seek one. He showed absolutely no interest in having a wife. But it cannot be said that Abraham had to live because Isaac was not yet able to live without him. In fact today we would make a stronger case of the elderly father and mother needing this young man, their son, for their protection and constant care in the twilight days of their lives.

But such was God's way; and all this was according to His thoughts which are so much higher than ours. And we ought to remember that there is a covenant consideration here. Yes, Sarah was a covenant mother and had a great interest in God's covenant. At times she showed more interest in it than Abraham did. And thinking of all this we must not foolishly think that our thoughts are higher than God's and that she deserved to live as long as Abraham and enjoy the wonders of God's covenant with him — such as the marriage of their son to a believing child of God from among Abraham's relatives in Mesopotamia. And God's promise which we find in Psalm 128:6, "Yea, thou — everyone that feareth the Lord — shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel," was not forgotten. God does not promise covenant parents that in this life they necessarily shall see their children's children. Some do not even see their own children. Men have gone to war, had children born to them, and died in battle before they could return home and see their children. Parents have died before they saw their children's children in ways of God that are higher than our ways, and in thoughts that are not our thoughts. Sarah sees them today; and Sarah will

see them to thousands of generations with body and soul in the new Jerusalem. God's promises are not forgotten. God never breaks a promise. In thoughts that are higher than ours, He prepares and promises blessings so much higher and greater than our earthly, human thoughts can imagine.

But, after all is said and done, Abraham and not Sarah is the covenant head of that day. With him and his seed God established His covenant, and in His way, and according to His thoughts, Abraham lives to enjoy the unfolding of God's covenant in his son for seventy-five years before the breath of life is taken from him. And though Abraham deserved no longer life on this earth than Sarah did, it was in God's higher thoughts that it was so to be.

Now that Sarah is dead, Abraham is confronted with a problem. The very nature of death makes it necessary for him to bury the body — at least to hide it from view, to remove it from their midst. And Scripture teaches us that unless it is impossible, we are to bury the dead body. We are to commit it to the ground from whence it came. Cremation, burning the body, when burial is possible is an act of unbelief. Even if it were true — which it certainly is not — that God would then be unable to restore that body and in the judgment day cast it into the torment of hell, the soul of the unbeliever who dies will have been in that torment for many years. That soul is indestructible and at death goes into everlasting woe. Such is the teaching of Jesus in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. The rich man was in torment while the history of this world went on, and his brothers continued to live on this earth. Cremation does not take hold by faith of the comforting truth of God's Word that God will raise up all the bodies of His saints and glorify them with the glory that Christ now has. It does not believe that God is the Almighty. It does not believe in His blessed promises to His people in Christ.

Scripture teaches us to bury the dead. We are told, as in I Corinthians 15:42 ff, to sow it as a seed in the ground, to plant it in the soil in the assurance that it will come out again in a new form, spiritual, glorious, and powerful. Scripture teaches us to have respect for that dead body of the believer. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. But precious also in His sight is that body. It belongs to Christ, His beloved Son. It is part of that glorious Bride whom Christ loves and for whom He returns at the end of time. We do and must respect it. We do and must believe in the resurrection of the body. And Abraham did, even though there is no mention of that fact here at the occasion of the death of Sarah. His action of burying her body does nevertheless speak of it indirectly.

Consider once that Sarah is a covenant child of

God. Consider that she with Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees to go to the land that Abraham had been promised. She believed that she also had a part in that promise. Obediently, in faith, with hope of enjoying the covenant promises she went along with Abraham and never put up one word of complaint. And Abraham has not one thought of burying her back in Haran, or in Ur of the Chaldees. He has no such thought, not simply because it was impossible to transport a dead body that far in those days, but because he, too, believed that Sarah had a place in God's covenant, that she was a covenant child, and that the future blessings of the covenant were hers as well as they were his.

Sarah, then, must be buried in the covenant. She must be buried in the covenant land, the land of promise of which this covenant spake. Remember how insistent Jacob was, and later on Joseph as well, that their bones be buried in the land of the promise? Jacob even insisted that they be buried in this very place which Abraham bought for Sarah, his wife. Here is faith. Here is hope. Here is trust in God, a trust that death and years of lying in a grave cannot shake.

But Abraham has no place where to bury his departed wife's body in that promised land. Will it be unbelief on his part to buy a place? Patiently and in unwavering faith he had made no attempt to get one square inch by his own money or strength. Now he needs a piece of land, has none, was given none yet by God; and what shall he do? Will he be denying the promise of God? Will he be accused by God of running ahead and of not waiting upon God?

We know that this was the besetting sin of his grandson, Jacob. He always tried to help God, as though God's ways were not the best and His thoughts too slow. Did Jacob inherit this trait, was this part of his nature a weakness handed down from grandfather, through father, to grandson? Do we see that trait here already, years before, in the life of Abraham? Are we to say, "Now we can see where Jacob got it"?

It is certainly true that we hand down to our children sinful inclinations and natures. We all are what we sinfully are because of Adam's and Eve's sin and corrupted natures which they obtained through the lie. Infants are infected, the Netherlands Confession tells us in Article XV, with an hereditary disease before they are born, which produces in them all sorts of sin, being in them as a root that brings forth deeds that make them vile and abominable in God's sight.

Yet we must not see that here in Abraham. Yes, he too was tainted by the fallen nature of Adam and Eve. But when he bought a piece of land wherein to bury

Sarah, that was not the reason for his deed. Just the opposite, Abraham here is walking by faith. He bought that piece of land in trust and confidence in God. He had his promised son. He was seeing God's covenant realized; and in a firm faith and strong hope for the realization of the fulness of the covenant promises that God will give him this land through his seed, he buys a piece large enough to bury his dead. And he is moved also by the consideration that he is burying a princess. God has changed Sarai's name to Sarah when He announced the birth of Isaac. And although she never attained in her earthly life to such honour among men that earthly princesses enjoy, the name means that she definitely had a place in that promise of God, was a covenant child, and that the blessings of the covenant were hers. Tenderly, therefore, in strong faith and steadfast hope, he entrusts the earthly remains of this princess in God's kingdom to the earth of the land of promise, expecting her to inherit the new Jerusalem and the heavenly Canaan.

For that he will not steal a piece of land. He will not in secret try to bury the body in a place unknown and unnoticed by the Canaanites. He will buy with

money God gave him. He will not take the land by force, for that would be an act of unbelief. He will go to the Canaanites with a strong faith, tell them that he is a stranger and sojourner with them and has no intention of becoming one with them, and that he is sure that God will in time give him the whole land. He will buy from them, not because he is impatient and doubts God's intentions or goodness, but because he is sure that in His own time and in His own way God will keep all His Word.

So he approaches the sons of Heth. In the custom of the day they offer it to him expecting him to turn down the offer; and then get down to real bargaining and demand of Abraham a pretty stiff price.

But Sarah is a princess and the promises of God are so much more wonderful and precious, above all gold and silver, that Abraham without a word measures out the money and has his burying place. And the earthly remains of this princess wait in the silence of the grave for the moment when God will bring all His princes and princesses into the heavenly Canaan as the free gift of His grace in Christ.

STUDIES IN ISAIAH

Isaiah's Vision and its Effects

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

The Trihagia (cont'd). Qadosh! Qadosh! Qadosh! Holy! Holy! Holy! What is it which qualifies and motivates a man for the work of preaching the gospel and his going forth to that task as one divinely called and sent unto it? Nothing less than a sight of the holiness and glory of Jehovah! This is about the strongest impulse to impel a man to the highest calling. It is to see and know by faith that the Lord, the God of the universe, is not dethroned and displaced by would-be autonomous man, but He sits on the throne of His everlasting kingdom, power, and glory! Some do not know this; others deny it and blaspheme Him, but God is still God over all blessed forever. *That* the true preacher of the gospel feels to the depths of his soul. Isaiah, as all the prophets, did too.

Do *you* see the holy Jehovah God in all that glory? If you do, it not only humbles you to the dust, but it also fires you with a holy indignation against those who try to destroy the religion of Jehovah with

idolatry and image-worship! It fills with a consecrated courage to will and to do anything to advance the cause of Christ's gospel. It assures us, with the utmost confidence, of the ultimate success of that cause.

"Above it (or, rather, from above with respect to Him) stood the seraphim." They stood, stationary, above the great King, in mid-air, circularly, like a rainbow round about the throne, or like a body-guard surrounding the throne of majesty. There they waited, on the wing, adoring while they waited, for any directive from the King, instantly ready to execute His will. Hear them as they stand to chorus before the King their perpetual life song: Holy! Holy! Holy! We cannot conceive of God without His holiness. It would be worse to deny His purity of nature than to deny His very being. For the latter would make Him no god, but the former a deformed and detestable God. A devotee of a filthy idol is certainly worse than a complete atheist. This attribute is exalted above all others. What other attribute is

trebled in its praise as this one? We do not read of the cry, Good! good! good is the Lord of hosts! nor love! love! love! No, God fills the mouths of angels forever with holy! holy! holy! When God swears an oath, He swears by His holiness.

This is the most beautiful attribute of God, the beauty of holiness, the very image of God (Eph. 4:24), which makes Him lovely in Himself and to all who love Him. According to seraphic theology God's holiness is His glory (Isa. 6:3), the glory and sum of all His attributes, the glory of His Godhead. All God's attributes are shot through with the pure sunlight of His holiness. His wisdom, therefore, is a holy wisdom, His power a holy power, His justice a holy justice, His name, which also sums up all His attributes, a holy name. His inscrutable nature has no darkness at all, but is pure inapproachable light.

There are signs of anger in God's holiness, for anger is the reaction of His holiness against sin. For this reason, Isaiah is sent on a mission which includes both salvation (election) and judgment (reprobation). According to the latter, his mission will have the effect of making their "heart fat, their ears heavy and their eyes shut" (6:9-12). The seraphim, fiery spirits, applaud Him for His holiness and execute His wrath. When He consumes men in His fury, He does not dim His purity, but manifests it in blazing splendor. "Our God is a consuming fire." God is holy by nature, and is therefore holy not merely because He *will* not be unholy, but because He *cannot* be unholy; it is against His nature to be so. As the third heaven is the heaven of heavens, so God, the Most High God is the Holy of holies.

The Vision of the Shekinah. "Then the foundations of the thresholds trembled from the voice of the one crying, and the house was filled with smoke" (v. 4). The word *shekinah* is not of Old Testament, but of Talmudic origin, which may seem to be double reason, and so reason enough, for rejecting it. But we do legitimately use terms not found in the scripture (e.g., Trinity), yet it is not only natural but necessary to ask, What good thing can come out of the Talmud? It's like asking, Can any good thing come out of the cess-pool? But the word comes from the biblical root *shachen*, so that *shekinah* means *dwelling* or *presence of Jehovah*. Hence, it is in itself, after all, a very good word.

The first Shekinah, then, was at the tree of life in the garden of Eden, and in the cherubim (of Gen. 3:24) who are guardians of the divine presence. God's presence was between the cherubim. Cain (4:16) went out from the Shekinah. Later the Shekinah appeared in the cloud, which, in turn, resided between the cherubim on the mercy-seat of the ark of the covenant. In the New Testament, the Shekinah appears in human flesh (Jn. 1:14). The ultimate

revelation of the Shekinah we have in Rev. 7:15, where He that sits on the throne of God shall tabernacle among men — the tabernacle of God shall be with men. (21:3).

The cloud of smoke is from the fire on the altar (mercy-seat) of God (Lev. 16:12-13). In this connection, we should be very careful that we do not use such an expression as "holy smoke!" For that is both profane swearing and taking God's thrice holy name in vain. The smoke on the mount Sinai (Ex. 19:18) was a holy smoke, and represented the presence of God. Such is also the case in Isaiah 4:5, "the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion . . . a cloud and smoke by day. . ." In the kingdom of glory, the whole of Zion will be the Holy of holies. There God shall tabernacle with men in His triune presence. Therefore, the use of the expletive just referred to, or the like, is an insolent affront on the presence and person of God. So also is the common "holy cow!", which is a perverse, profane reference to the golden calf of Aaron's which was intended as a representation of God. So with "holy Toledo!" — a Romish expression in reference to a capital city in a Spanish province which was a walled *cathedral* city and so, superstitiously, regarded as "holy." Let not *our* language imply that we believe grace is in places and things. These expletives are sins against the first and second commandments, sins which mock the evils of idolatry and image worship.

But notice that the smoke does not conceal the Lord as did the smoke on the mount and the cloud on the mercy-seat. For Isaiah clearly saw the Lord (vv. 1, 5). Also the foundations shook as the result of the cry of the seraphim, and smoke filling the house issued forth, impressing the prophet with the fact that he is in the presence of God, and that when He speaks as He does, even through His angelic servants, we may well tremble.

The Effect of the Vision (5-13). His Conviction and Confession: "and I said, 'Alas for me! (why?) because I am dumbstruck (and so every mouth must be stopped! Why?), because a man unclean of lips I (am), and in the midst of a people of unclean lips I dwell, (and finally and most terribly of all) because the King, Jehovah Tsebhaoth my eyes have seen'" (v. 5). The LXX translation of this verse is interesting. "And I said, O wretch that I am! for I am pierced through (the Heb. root means *perished, lost*, Dn. 10:15, 17); because, being a man, and having unclean lips, I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; and I have seen with mine eyes the Lord of hosts!"

At first overwhelmed by the sight of the most holy God, and the holy, heavenly beings at the command of His throne, he, but "a man" is now overwhelmed by the consciousness of his own unworthiness, unholiness, and the unholiness of his people and nation.

He still senses and teaches the same awful reality toward the end of his ministry. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (64:6). Any mere creature, coming into contact with the infinite divine Being, will shrink before Him with a sense of the intolerable weight of absolute majesty. Isaiah felt this in the highest degree, for since Moses' day, he saw the Lord clearer than man ever did. Also he saw he owed God the perfect worship and praise the seraphim give him, but being totally, morally, and spiritually impotent and depraved, he could not do this. Unclean lips imply an unclean heart which must be renewed that the defiled lips may be purified. For "the lips of all men are impure and polluted till the Lord has cleansed them" (Calvin). He will then know that in himself he is lost and undone, not fit to preach His gospel or utter His praise. For mere human talk is uncircumcised and unclean. Only the pure preaching of the gospel comes from God.

Woe! He had denounced woe on others; now he subjects himself to the same condemnation. There is no woe to the righteous; all woe is to the wicked (3:10-11). Why then does Isaiah not only imply but clearly state that he and his people are wicked? Why does he not say, as David, "I am holy" (Ps. 86:2)? (David does not say this in naive pride, but as Isaiah himself would, on the basis of 1:18. Also Isaiah cer-

tainly thinks of himself as belonging to "the holy seed," 6:13). But a holy, righteous man knows he has a deceitful heart (Jer. 17:9), knows his own corruptions, and the sinful flesh which always clings to him. To say, "I am lost," is to say what a saved man cannot be. What Isaiah is saying is that he is lost in Adam. All men are perished in Adam. But that he is saved by Christ is clear from 26:3, 9.

"The King . . . I have seen!" He saw the indisputable, incontestable sovereignty of God! He saw the Lord, Adonai (v. 1), Christ the King, King of kings, Lord of lords, King of saints, King of nations, Ruler of the princes of the earth, Jehovah Tsebhaoth, King of the armies in heaven and of the inhabitants of the earth. By faith, a blessed sight to see! a delightful, saving and glorious sight; an awesome, terrible, temporarily dreadful sight, wherein the beholder is terribly conscious of his own sinfulness and vileness. See what he calls sin here: uncleanness. For sin is any transgression of or lack of conformity to the nature of God. Lack of conformity to God's infinite purity is filthiness. Isaiah taught the total, moral and spiritual corruption and pollution of the whole race of men, a race infected with a hereditary and universally epidemical disease. In personal grief he laments that he is of that race and shares its incurable malady! Earth's only hope is in the great Physician and King himself! See Rev. 3:18-21.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

More Form and Still No Power

Rev. Mark Hoeksema

Writing in the April 15, 1977, *Standard Bearer* we reflected on the subject of life after death under the title "Form Without Power." A review was given of some features of the studies of a Dr. Raymond Moody, who published accounts of strange phenomena connected with the experiences of those who apparently died but were brought back to this life by medical science. It was pointed out that many aspects of his first work, called *Life After Life*, contained elements of truth that could well be compatible with Scriptural truth if interpreted properly by the Christian. It was also pointed out that many aspects, especially the apparent absence of any negative experiences of punishment, were not Scriptural. The conclusion was drawn that all of this illustrates a form of godliness without power (II Timothy 3:5),

and that this is a sign of the end times to those who have spiritual eyes to see.

Now Dr. Moody has published another work, *Reflections on Life After Life*, excerpted in the July, 1977, issue of *Reader's Digest*, in which he attempts to supply answers to some of the questions and criticisms that resulted from his first work. As in the case of his first work, many of the things that he says are fascinating, and some serve to shed light on the character of life after death if properly interpreted by the child of God. But again, there are serious weaknesses evident. There is therefore more form but still no godliness.

Added light is shed on the qualities of the life after life which some of the people whom Dr. Moody

studied experienced. The aspect of a “vision of knowledge” is explained in some detail. The general reports concerned not only seeing one’s entire life pass by, but also the knowing of “all the secrets of all the ages, all the meaning of the universe, the stars, the moon — of everything.” Those who had this experience described it in terms of a school, though not in the earthly or conventional sense, since there were no people that could be seen. Rather, it was possible to sense the presence of other beings, and the information came through all forms of communication, including sights, sounds, and thoughts, and covered all areas and fields of knowledge. As one person described it, “this is a place where the *place* is knowledge. It’s as if you focus mentally on one place in that school and — zoom! — knowledge flows by you from that place, automatically.”

It seems that much of this fits well with what the Scriptures have to say. While the Bible does not detail the characteristics of the life to come, it may be observed without danger of contradiction that Scripture in many places stresses the knowledge of the child of God. To know God, the way of the truth, Jesus Christ, the proper walk of sanctification, etc., are just a few examples. In fact, Peter in his entire second epistle emphasizes the spiritual knowledge of experience which the Christian by grace possesses and which he must strive to increase and use to the glory of God. The life of the Christian, moreover, is never presented as static, but always a life of growth, particularly growth in knowledge, which will evidently continue also in glory. We shall continually be learning and increasing our knowledge of God and the glories of His wonderful works. This is undoubtedly why the Apostle John even defines eternal life in terms of knowledge in John 17:3: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” And Paul in I Corinthians 13:12 says that when we are perfected then we shall know even as also we are known. Surely, whatever else this may mean, it does mean that as God has intimate spiritual knowledge of His people, so they will experience that communion of knowledge with Him in glory in an altogether wonderful fashion. Is it not possible that the descriptions given (though they are given in very imperfect earthly terms), approach the truth of glory of which the Bible speaks? Even assuming that the experience of those who went to this wonderful place are tainted by sin and the imperfections of human and earthly character, and assuming that the reality of heaven and heavenly knowledge is much more glorious than these fragmented accounts, does this not say something to God’s people about the character of the inheritance God in Christ has prepared for His elect? Understand, however, that Dr. Moody does not say these things, for his writings reflect merely the form of godliness

without the power thereof. But can we not learn from this?

Another interesting factor is the way in which the descriptions of those who experienced life after life fit with the Scriptural picture of the final inheritance. These people described the place to which they went as “beautiful,” a place of music, “a countryside with streams, grass, trees, mountains,” a place of “bright colors, not like here on earth, but just indescribable,” a place in which there were “gleaming, bright buildings,” “sparkling water and fountains,” a “city of light.” The Scriptures speak of the redemption not merely of God’s people, but of the change and perfection of the entire creation as the place in which God’s people shall dwell everlastingly. Paul speaks of the longing and deliverance of the creation in Romans 8:19-23, and other places in Scripture include the creation as part of the life to come. And when the descriptions of those who went to this place are matched with the language of Scripture in a place such as Revelation 21 and 22, the similarity is striking. There John describes symbolically the new heavens and new earth which comes down from God out of heaven, a creation characterized by perfection and indescribable beauty. In describing the New Jerusalem John speaks of a vision of a city of glass and gold and precious stones with a river of pure water flowing through it, a place of light and glory. Again, though the language of those who give such descriptions is perhaps not intentionally Scriptural, the similarity cannot be denied. Even conceding that the language both of the Scriptures and of those who underwent these experiences is figurative and earthly (for how else would we be able to understand, since we are of the earth earthy), does it not reflect in a small way the glory which God has prepared for them that love Him? Though the power of godliness is sadly lacking in these descriptions, the similarity of form cannot be denied.

Dr. Moody also acknowledges that his first work was criticized by many for omitting the “reward-punishment model” to which many traditionalists hold. That is, as was pointed out in the previous *Standard Bearer* article on this subject, the emphasis was all positive and no mention was made in any precise way of punishment or negative experiences. This omission Dr. Moody corrects in his latest work. There are indeed those who experience some form of punishment, which had three major characteristics: first, they seemed to be unable to surrender their attachments to the physical world; second, they appeared dulled, so that their consciousness seemed more limited in contrast with others; third, these “dulled spirits” appeared to be in this state of existence only until they solved whatever problems were holding them in this inferior state. Further,

these spirits seemed abnormally and inextricably attached to the physical world, which attachment was in some way punishment for them. Still more, their judgment seemed to consist of their being aware of the wrong that they had done during their lives, all of their selfish acts of which they were repentant and ashamed. There was, however, no "archetypal Hades," and the people who suffered thus were not the sort that should be consigned to a fiery pit. Finally, the author faces the problem of those who, like the Nazis of Hitler's Germany, committed atrocious crimes, and concludes that the punishment of seeing the tragedies they inflicted come alive in their consciousness would be the worst punishment possible. "If they would see all these things come alive, vividly portrayed before them," says the author, then "in my wildest fantasies, I cannot imagine a hell more horrible, more ultimately unbearable, than that."

It must again be observed that this is another example of form without power. Scripture clearly teaches hell as the place of eternal punishment, and describes it graphically in terms of fiery torment, Dr. Moody's studies notwithstanding. We must reject any denial of the so-called "reward-punishment model," since this is clearly the teaching of the Bible. But it certainly is conceivable that the sort of spiritual and conscious punishment described above is part of the condemnation of hell. After all, Scripture teaches that both reward and punishment shall be in harmony with and in proportion with the deeds done in the flesh. Since God as the just God always makes the punishment fit the crime, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that such spiritual and mental remorse (not repentance!) is part of everlasting punishment.

But however accurate such accounts may or may not be, they serve to give a glimpse into the terribleness of punishment compared to the wonders of glory.

Perhaps one more matter ought to be mentioned. Perhaps the question has arisen in your mind, as it has in mine; Assuming that even a small part of what Dr. Moody reports is true, why does God in His sovereign control choose to reveal these things? Surely there is a message and significance in this for God's people, but what is it? I would suggest that generally this is another sign of the times in the sense that knowledge is being increased, as well as in the sense that it reveals the perilous character of the last times, times in which many will have the form of godliness without the power thereof (II Timothy 3:1, 5). More specifically, is it not possible that God reveals such things to the wicked in increasing measure, not only so that they may be left without excuse in the day of judgment, but also so that their punishment may be made the greater? As Peter says (II Peter 2:21), it would be better for the wicked not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. And is it not the will of God to encourage His saints by this revelation, be it by means even of wicked man, by giving them a partial and imperfect glimpse into the future glory of the faithful? God's people do not need proof of what the Scriptures say; but God does, from time to time, confirm the words of His revelation in other ways, that the faith of His people may be strengthened as the end approaches. Recognize, therefore, the signs of the times, for they indicate that the Lord is coming back; and hope for the eternal reward of glory, being faithful, that no one take your crown.

ALL AROUND US

The C.R.C. Synod in Review

Rev. G. Van Baren

Various magazines and papers from within Christian Reformed circles are reporting on the action of their last Synod. These reports indicate a great amount of activity — one is amazed at the amount of material that is treated within the span of less than two weeks.

The Outlook of Aug. 1977, through its reporter, Rev. John Piersma, summarizes the Synod as follows:

Surely we must say, "Old issues never die, in fact, they don't even fade away!"

If I had to characterize the '77 synod I'd say that it was not marked by decisive and courageous action.

Many issues were dealt with procedurally rather than substantively. Those who were prepared to debate the issues surrounding the ordination of Dr. Allen Verhey or the gravamen registered against the doctrine of reprobation as stated in the Canons of Dort never really had a chance to speak their minds. These things were pushed off rather than faced — in my opinion to the possible hurt of the churches.

Many things were treated at this Synod. Several items remind how far there has been from the principles held by Reformed churches in past ages — and also by the Christian Reformed Church in the past. One obvious departure is that increasingly this synod and church (together with many others of our day) take action in non-ecclesiastical matters. There were, for instance, “guidelines” adopted on how to make “Christian ethical decisions when your government goes to war.” Or, there was appointed a “Task Force on World Hunger” which must report to Synod of 1978. This committee is also instructed to deal with the question of “international poverty.” Such non-ecclesiastical matters ought to keep any body very active for a long time to come! But what of the affairs of the church?

Several ecclesiastical matters brought to this Synod have caught the attention of many within and without the C.R.C. One of these was the “Verhey Case.” No fewer than 34 appeals were made against the decision of Synod of 1976 approving the ordination of Dr. Allen Verhey — an approval made in spite of the fact that Dr. Verhey denied the literal account of some portions of Scripture. Dutton’s consistory specifically appealed to the Synod to reconsider its protest of last year. Dutton had protested the action of Classis G.R. East in approving the ordination of Verhey — yet Synod insisted that Dutton’s only course was to object to Verhey’s ideas by way of confronting him and his consistory with Verhey’s possible violation of the formula of subscription.

This year, the Synod again neatly sidestepped the issue and ignored the legitimate objection of Dutton by deciding:

1. That synod consider the adjudication of the Dutton protest concerning Dr. Verhey’s views presently engaged in by the Neland Avenue consistory an adequate way of dealing with the matter.

Ground: The requested examination of Dr. Verhey’s views is provided in this way. Neland Avenue plans to determine the validity of his views, to persuade him to conform to an acceptable view, if his views should be outside of our confessions, and to attempt to reconcile the parties in this protest in a pastoral way.

2. That synod communicate the concerns about Dr. Verhey’s views raised in the appeals and overtures to Neland Avenue’s committee for discussion with Dr. Verhey, namely:

- the nature of his hermeneutics, whether the event-

character of the Scriptures is excluded or called into question.

- his understanding of the serpent in Genesis 3.
- his understanding of the earthquake in Matthew 28.

3. That synod ask the consistory of Neland Avenue CRC to report the result of its investigation to the 1978 synod.

Ground: Since the appeals, overtures and communications have been addressed to synod, synod should receive a report of this investigation.

4. That synod declare these actions to be its answer to the appeals, overtures and communications.

And that’s how Synod treated 34 protests, appeals, etc. It is in no way an answer to the original Dutton appeal against the action against G.R. Classis East. And it would seem highly irregular if not utterly improper for Synod to ask a committee from a local consistory to report its conclusions to Synod. Such is hardly an answer to legitimate protests and overtures.

Another item debated on the floor of Synod was the question of dancing at Calvin College. According to the *Outlook*, the board of trustees reported:

... the Board instructs the Administration to implement immediately the development of social dancing in a Christian manner. . . .

... the Board accepts the recommendation included in the report of the *ad hoc* Committee on Dancing that Calvin College “allow for social dancing as an acceptable and wholesome, on-campus, recreational activity for Calvin students and staff. . . .

A motion that “synod disapprove of the Board of trustees policy on social dancing” was defeated. Congregations and classes are invited to send reactions to this policy. These will be presented to the 1978 Synod — and then the policy will be implemented, probably in September of 1978. (In the meantime, almost everyone acquainted with Calvin is well aware that “parties with music” have been regularly held — a euphemism for “social dancing.” The only change in the future might be the numbers of such “parties” and the freedom to call “a spade” by its real name.)

Another question of burning interest was the “confessional-revision gravamen” of Dr. H. Boer. This objected to the teaching of the Canons of Dort concerning reprobation. Some of the 15-page document is quoted in the *News Bulletin* of the Association of Christian Reformed Laymen. These are some of the things Boer states:

By the doctrine of reprobation, therefore, I understand that credal confession of the Christian Reformed Church which teaches an unchangeable decree made in eternity by God which has the same irrevocable binding power as God’s decree of election

and which effects the declaration set forth in I/15 above (Canons of Dort). . . .

. . . It is my position that so sinister and doomful a teaching as reprobation, whereby a massive segment of mankind, generally considered in Reformed theology to be the great majority of the human race, past, present and future, is consigned to everlasting damnation before they ever came into being, must, if it is to be confessionally held, be directly, explicitly and unambiguously taught in Scripture itself. No consensus of theologians, no authority of the church, no weight of history or tradition is entitled to regard or obedience so long as such consensus, authoritative declaration or weighty tradition are not based squarely and fully on the Word of God written (Belgic Confession, Article VII, notably the words, "Therefore we reject with all our hearts whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule.") This is the essence, the heart, the soul, the *sine qua non* of my gravamen. . . .

. . . I am a minister of the Word of God. I am not a minister of theological deductions, or of ecclesiastical conclusions, or of religious traditions that have only age and uncritical acceptance to commend them. I do not believe, and I refuse to entertain, that my election "*ipso facto*" requires a corresponding reprobation of others. I do not read in Scripture that the sovereign grace that elected me to be a child of God without regard to any merit on my part has as its logical and necessary opposite a sovereign wrath that damns men to an existence of everlasting death without regard to any demerit on their part. As I believe in *sola gratia* for salvation, so do I believe in *sola Scriptura* for my understanding and proclamation of that salvation, and even more for the Church's understanding and proclamation of salvation.

It is my belief that in taking this position I stand on firm Reformed ground. For that reason I submit herewith for synodical *examination* and *adjudication* this gravamen, this confessional revision gravamen, against what I judge to be a grievously unbiblical, therefore unReformed, indeed, unChristian doctrine.

The same *News Bulletin* reports part of the minority report of the committee of Synod:

The minority would like to make some observations about the gravamen itself. We believe that it is a caricature of the Canons. It affirms what the Canons themselves most emphatically state would be a wrong understanding of them. In their conclusions we read that the Reformed Churches "detest with their whole soul" and "do not acknowledge" as true

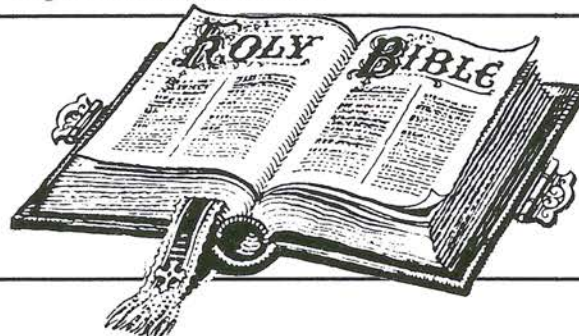
that God "by a mere act of his will, without the least respect or view to any sin, has predestinated the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation, and created them for this purpose." Yet this is what Dr. Boer states they teach. In the Canons themselves we find evidence which does not warrant Dr. Boer's conclusions. They were against "inquisitively prying into the secret things of God," (1st Head, Art. 18) and tell us to have a "holy adorations of these mysteries." (1st Head, Art. 12). The gravamen views the Canons as supralapsarian while it is generally held that our creeds are infralapsarian.

The conclusion of the Canons wars against those who bear "false witness against the confessions of so many churches; for distressing the consciences of the weak; and for laboring to render suspected the society of the truly faithful." If this synod submits this gravamen with all of its weaknesses to the church without comment, it would distress the consciences of many. The minority committee believes that it would be the height of irresponsibility to do so.

Synod decided: 1. That Synod accept the confessional-revision gravamen of Dr. Boer and declare it legally before Synod. 2. That Synod publish Dr. Boer's gravamen in the Acts of Synod 1977 and declare that it is before the churches for their consideration. (The Synod adopted last year the policy: ". . . when the constituted synod declares the matter to be legally before it for action, all the signers of the Form of Subscription shall be free to discuss it together with the whole church until adjudicated by synod.") 3. Synod appoints a committee to receive reactions of the churches — and advise the Synod of 1980 how to deal with this gravamen.

There is something radically wrong when this sort of gravamen will allow one to ignore the formula of subscription which he has signed with respect to one important doctrine of the confessions — and for *three years* dispute or denounce the doctrine in the churches both privately and publicly. Even if the 1980 Synod were to reject the gravamen, how much doubt and question will be instilled in the minds of the unlearned, and how much confusion will be generated about this doctrine of the Reformed churches! Would these churches treat another's "confessional-revision gravamen" this same way if it concerned the doctrine of the Trinity? The C.R.C. has opened the door which leads to utter chaos with respect to its confessions!

**The STANDARD BEARER
makes a thoughtful gift
for a shut-in.**



STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Our Appeal to Scripture

(3)

Rev. J. Kortering

The Bible is the final authority on all matters of what we believe and how we are to live.

Our Reformed fathers expressed it this way, "We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever men ought to believe unto salvation, is sufficiently taught therein. For since the whole manner of worship, which God requires of us, is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures, nay, though it were an angel from heaven, as the holy apostle Paul saith," Belgic Confession Article 7.

Still more.

The entire Bible does this. We may not take certain parts of it or change other parts; we must bow before the entire Word of God. Of this we read in Rev. 22:18, 19: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

In order to use the Bible, we must know our Bibles.

NEED TO KNOW THE BIBLE ,

Are you sometimes ashamed of how little you really know your Bible? Maybe you experienced this when you had contact with someone who could really quote passages and was able to prove what he believed. Sadly, many who are trained to misuse the Bible and quote it wrongfully are better able to do that than we are able to use it correctly.

I'm afraid that sometimes you young people are better able to explain what you believe and argue dogmatically, that is, defend what you believe following cogent logical arguments, than you are able to

prove what you believe from the Bible. I know some of you share this concern with me.

It all boils down to this: do we really know what the Bible says and where? Can we quote the Bible properly, that is correctly and in a way that applies to the need at hand? If not, we really don't know our Bibles.

If we don't know our Bibles, we are missing something.

God Himself impresses upon us how important it is to know what is said in the Bible. This is true in different ways.

First, for our spiritual growth. Listen to Job: "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food," Job 23:12. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," I Peter 2:23.

Second, for dealing with life's problems. How often are we disappointed, fearful, questioning, maybe even rebellious. We need to open the Bible and hear what God has to say in such circumstances. Of this Jeremiah speaks: "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by thy name O Lord God of hosts," Jeremiah 15:16.

Third, for sanctification. Just consider, "Where-withal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word," Psalm 119:9. Similarly, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another," I Peter 1:22.

Fourth, for avoiding error. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge I will also reject thee seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children," Hosea 4:6. Jesus delivered a similar

reproof, "Ye do err, not knowing the scripture, nor the power of God," Matt. 22:29. Ignorance of Scripture leads one into error.

Finally, the knowledge of the Scripture is necessary for a person to be established in the truth. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," II Tim. 3:16.

One conclusion is obvious: there is great spiritual benefit from knowing the Bible. The reason for this is that God works *through* His Word, not apart from it.

OBTAINING THAT KNOWLEDGE

There are two ways that this important knowledge is obtained. The one is through the teaching of others, that is, you are given this knowledge by someone teaching you. The other is that you do your own studying and reflecting and in this way obtain knowledge of the Bible for yourself.

It is wonderful when it can be said of you as Paul said of Timothy, "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," II Tim. 3:14, 15. Most of you young people have had this kind of training since you were very young. Your parents read the Bible and discussed it at home. You were taken to church and Sunday School when very young. You eventually attended catechism and a Christian school. You now add young people's society to this list. You have been taught the truths of God's Word all along.

How do you respond to this? Do you say, I know that Bible, I have had to read it ever since who knows when? And can you really quote the Bible, look up passages when you desire it, find them, use them in the different ways mentioned above? Do you remember the passages memorized in grade school and high school? Can you recall the texts learned in catechism? Are they part of your life? I think this is the area of lack. It is not that we have not learned them at one time; rather, they fail to remain part of our working vocabulary so to speak.

In this connection, I would like to give a suggestion.

It is tremendously useful to compile a small notebook containing Scripture texts that prove different points. One can arrange this according to the general division of doctrinal proofs and practical proofs. Within the two divisions, you can file alphabetically. For example, in doctrinal proofs you can arrange it

this way: atonement, creation, grace (particular and common), trinity, virgin birth. Practical proofs can be arranged: dancing, drinking, drugs, movies, sports, war. Within each entry, you include a few important proof texts, *written out*, along with the reference to where it is found in the Bible. Under these texts, summarize in three to five points the pertinent arguments that follow from the Scriptural texts. As you go along, this notebook will increase in size and importance.

The advantages of compiling a small notebook is that you can refer to it in a hurry (usually when you need some "proofs" you are in a hurry), and you can use it for reflection in your personal devotions. In this way you increase in your understanding, and the texts become more and more part of your memory for recall at any time.

From my experience, it is hard to motivate young people to begin such a project. I suppose it is just too much bother. We are all extremely lazy. Maybe this suggestion will help. Why not do this together within the framework of your young people's society. This leads me to my purpose of writing this article now. We stand at the beginning of our new society year. The usual question arises, how can we make our society more interesting? Here is one suggestion.

This could be done on a regular basis as Bible study. I'm convinced that it takes more time than trying to squeeze this in as an after-recess or program period. You could do this each week, or if the society would rather study a Bible portion weekly, do this once a month for variety.

The idea is to have a certain subject set ahead of time. The society is told that the next meeting will be occupied with discussing Scriptural proof and a Scriptural defense of, for example, the trinity. Each member is expected to look up ahead of time certain texts which he feels best defines the doctrine of the trinity. He can use Rev. Hoeksema's dogmatics for texts, he can use our Reformed confessions, all contain many references to Scripture. A large part of the time will be taken by looking up the suggested texts. After some consideration, decide together which ones prove it best. Agree on about three or four of these and write them down in your notebook, or on a scratch copy. This then would be followed by the question, how can we best explain to someone who either rejects this truth or doesn't know anything about it, what is involved? This too will come by discussion. After such discussion state the four or five points that express best the line of reasoning, drawn from the Bible texts and the teachings of our Reformed confessions. These too can be entered into the notebook.

This will increase our interest in society as well as

help us come to a better understanding of the truth and enable us to defend it.

You will find that such a notebook, if developed carefully and used regularly, will be a real treasure.

The key is systematic development of different doctrinal and practical subjects. This must then be followed by daily reflection and further pondering.

INCLUDE YOUR BIBLE

It might be worth mentioning that in order to do this, you should also have your own Bible. All of you have a Bible, whether it has a fancy binding or not. You should select one Bible which you consider to be your working Bible. It is just that, a working Bible. You should feel free to write in it, underline passages, make notes in the margin. Read the same Bible and use the same one for society and church. It will help you to fix the passages in your mind. By using the same Bible, you become more familiar with it.

Personally, I like the idea that people take their own Bibles to church, society, catechism, and Sunday school. It really becomes part of you and no book is a greater "friend" than your own Bible.

Consider this idea prayerfully.

We must appeal to Scripture.

It is the only standard of truth.

It is truth from beginning to end.

We believe in God, the Author.

We believe it is His Word.

Make sure you know what it says and are able to use it in your daily life. There is much more meaning if you are not only able to summarize what the Bible teaches, but also prove it from the very Word of God.

May this God bless us in our study of His Word during this society season.

Continue to appeal to Scripture.

Book Review

FREEDOM AND GRACE: ESSAYS by J.R. Lucas; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976; 138 pp., \$7.95.

The author of the essays in this book is a fellow of Merton College, Oxford. The book was first published in Great Britain, but Eerdmans has received publishing rights in this country. The author is an excellent writer, somewhat on the order of C.S. Lewis; and the book makes for interesting reading.

However, while Lucas claims to be a Christian, and is in fact a member of the Anglican Church of England, he denies in this book the fundamental truths of Scripture. He is concerned to explain philosophically various theological problems. His philosophical approach is due to his denial of the infallibility of the Scriptures.

The first essays in the book treat particularly the relation between God's sovereignty and man's

accountability and freedom. Lucas comes down strongly on the side of the freedom of man — to the extent of denying explicitly God's sovereignty, omniscience, omnipotence, unchangeableness, etc. The last part of the book is an attempt to outline a Christian morality on a philosophical basis. In this attempt the doctrines of the historicity of Genesis 2 & 3, original sin, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, etc., fall by the wayside, and what is left is a Pelagian moralism.

Two thoughts especially came to mind as I read the book: 1) what a shame that such talent in writing is made subservient to the propagation of doctrines inimical to the Christian faith; 2) those within Reformed circles who have recently attacked the doctrines of predestination and the absolute authority of Scripture would do well to read this book to find out where they will themselves be a few years from today.

The
STANDARD BEARER
makes a thoughtful gift
for any occasion.

Know the standard
and follow it.

Read the
STANDARD BEARER!



NOTICE

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, October 6, 1977, at the Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least ten days prior to the convening of the session.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

ANNIVERSARY ANNOUNCEMENTS

The consistory of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses in the name of the Hudsonville congregation our sincere and hearty congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. John Boelema on their 55th wedding anniversary, which they celebrated together on the 16th of August, 1977.

For many years they have been faithful and zealous members of our church. We commit them with all their needs to our merciful and gracious Father in heaven, Who has always been and will always be their Guide and their Protector.

The consistory of the Hudsonville
Protestant Reformed Church,
Mr. Harry Zwak, clerk.

We, the children and grandchildren of Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Bylsma wish to announce that on August 15 they celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We thank our covenant God for them. They have led us in the way of the Lord by His grace. May He richly bless them in the years which lie ahead and keep them in His everlasting love.

Gary and Karen Bylsma
Christy, Steve, Danny
Rich and Marcia Flikkema
Tammy
John and Carole ten Haaf
Mike, Jon
Phyllis
Sharon

On September 9, 1977 our beloved parents, Rev. and Mrs. Herman Veldman will celebrate their forty-fifth wedding anniversary. This occasion will also mark the forty-fifth year of ministry in our churches for our father. We thank God for His preservation of these loved ones and for the wise counsel and training provided us through them. May He keep them in their future years together.

Wyoming, Michigan

Mr. and Mrs. Cornie Den Ouden
Mr. and Mrs. Jack Van Dyke
Mr. and Mrs. Jon Huiskens
eleven grandchildren

TEACHER NEEDED

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School of Grand Rapids is in need of a full-time Kindergarten teacher for all or part of the 1977-78 school year. Michigan certification is required. Send your inquiry to 1545 Wilson Ave., S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504 or call the school at (616) 453-9717.

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY AS TO STUDENTS

The Hope Christian School of Redlands, California admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs and athletic and other school-administered programs.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING!!!

The annual meeting of the R.F.P.A. will be held on Thursday evening, at 8 PM, September 15, 1977, at the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. Nominees for the board, (three to be chosen) are J. Cleveland, D. Harbach, J. Kuiper, Sr., J. Van Overloop and H. Velt-house.

Our speaker for the evening will be Rev. B. Woudenberg, who will speak on the topic: "TO BEAR OUR STANDARD HIGHER" — A consideration of how our STANDARD BEARER can be used more effectively in Church Extension work.

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND!!!

THE BOARD OF THE R.F.P.A.
Wm. DeKraker, Sec'y.

RESOLUTIONS OF SYMPATHY

The Board members of the Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School wish to express their deepest sympathy to their fellow member, Mr. Floyd Jansma, in the recent loss of his brother, MR. TUNIS JANSMA, of Hudson, South Dakota.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II Cor. 5:1).

The Hull Protestant Reformed
Christian School Board.
Alvin J. Kooiker, Sec'y.

On July 17, 1977, the Lord took unto Himself, MRS. HENRY I. (MAGGIE) VISSER, of Manhattan, Montana. She is survived by 8 sons, 4 daughters, 42 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

The Ladies Aid Society of The First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan, express their sincere sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. J. Newhouse, in the loss of her husband, MR. JAMES NEWHOUSE.

May she be comforted in the Word of God as written in Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

Mrs. P. Decker, Pres.
Mrs. C. Pastoor, Sec'y

News From Our Churches

Rev. Wayne Bekkering, pastor of our church in Randolph, Wisconsin, has accepted the call to be the first pastor of our new church in Houston, Texas, Trinity Protestant Reformed Church. From a trio of Candidate Ken Koole, Rev. James Slopsema, and Rev. Ronald Van Overloop, Randolph has extended a call to Rev. Van Overloop. A Farewell Potluck Supper

was planned for Rev. Bekkering and his family on August 1 in Randolph Park. Rev. Bekkering planned to preach his farewell sermon on Sunday, August 7. Upon the request of the East Friesland Christian Reformed Church and with the permission of the Randolph consistory, Rev. Bekkering conducted the evening service at East Friesland on July 17.

At age of 70 years, Rev. C. Hanco has been emeritated at his request. It does not sound as if Rev. Hanco is planning to 'retire' though. He has already been asked to teach in our Seminary. According to the Redlands bulletin, Rev. Hanco is also interested in laboring in New Zealand, a country he visited with Prof. H. Hoeksema in 1975. Rev. Hanco's charge, Hudsonville, has called Rev. James Slopsema from a trio which included Rev. David Engelsma and Rev. Gise Van Baren.

At the request of several families, Rev. Robert Harbach, our home missionary, expects soon to begin three months labor in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. This period of labor may extend for a year. Victoria is on Vancouver Island and is located a little north and west of Lynden, Washington, where a Protestant Reformed Church is established. The Mission Committee also expects to begin labors in Birmingham, Alabama, at the request of four families there. Probably, different ministers will be requested to labor there in turn for periods of two or three weeks. A young man from this area plans to enter our seminary this fall.

In our last column, we reported that the ladies circle in Hull scheduled a money raising project called 'bean walking.' Some degree of puzzlement was expressed as to what bean walking consisted of. Readers in Minnesota and Iowa kindly wrote to explain. Simply put, bean walking consists of weeding a soybean field. One of the definitions received goes as follows (edited for lack of space): "Bean Walking may be defined as that activity consisting of ambulating through a field planted with soybeans while armed with a hoe or other sharp instrument of destruction. It is generally a group activity, the purpose being the destruction of various noxious weeds inimical to the soybeans and incongruous in the field, which purpose is usually accomplished by a straggling line of persons of all ages engaged in sighting and uprooting such noxious weeds. This activity is designed to produce, among other things: blisters, perspiration, aches and pains, and questions as to how much more remains to be done." For the complete definition, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

K.G.V.

*Report of Classis East
July 6, 1977
Southwest Prot. Ref. Church*

Classis East met in regular session on July 6, 1977 at Southwest Church. Covenant Church, Wyckoff, New Jersey, was the only delegation absent and that due to the recent birth of a child to the Rev. den Hartogs. Rev. Van Overloop chaired this session of classis.

As is typical of a July meeting of classis, the meeting time was short and much of the business was routine. One agenda item of this meeting, however, did have particular significance for the churches: the request of Hudsonville for the approval of the emeritation of their minister, Rev. C. Hanco. The request was approved. The chairman spoke for the classis when he thanked God for all the work which He has done through this servant of His and when he thanked Rev. Hanco personally for his work in the churches. Rev. Hanco's future plans are yet indefinite although it appears that he is not taking to the easy chair. The seminary has requested him to teach Dutch and he has been asked to spend some time in New Zealand.

In other business, the church visitors presented their report. The contents of that report can best be summarized by quoting directly: "We found in our visits that all the churches are experiencing the blessing of God in the form of peace, spiritual growth, steadfastness in the truth, and faithfulness on the part of the officebearers."

The normal business of the classis was also conducted. The Classical Committee and Stated Clerk reported; the Finance Committee was constituted and reported expenses of \$4.00.

Kalamazoo requested that classis meet three times a year. Classis instructed Kalamazoo to come via overture if they wish this matter to be considered.

Rev. Van Overloop closed the session with prayer and classis stood adjourned until October 5, 1977 at Faith Church.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk