

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

No individual election? One could offer extensive Biblical proof. But just off-hand, what about the 7000 whom the Lord tells Elijah He has reserved unto Himself and who have not bowed the knee to Baal? And if the objection is raised that they are not called elect, then let me call attention to the clear word of Romans 11:4, 5: "But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Seven thousand elect mentioned at once!

See "Clasping A Viper To The Bosom" — page 52.

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MEDITATION

The Wise Builder

Rev. H. Veldman

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock . . . Matt. 7:24-27

Blessed is he who is not only a hearer of the word but also a doer of the same. A mere hearer of the word is one who simply hears with an outward ear, receives the sayings of the Lord intellectually, but does not practice them. These sayings do not affect his life; his life remains unchanged. A doer of the word is one who practices the sayings of the Lord;

these sayings stay with him; he practices and does what he hears.

Besides, we must do "these sayings of mine." A mere hearer of the word can be very active. Notice what we read in Matthew 7:21-22. These people are not merely hearers; they are also doers. They are very

active in their service of the Lord. But, we must do "these sayings of mine." This is exactly what these people of the verses 21-22 did not do. They did not know sin and unrighteousness, were not prompted by the Spirit of Christ. They performed mighty works, but in their own strength; their works were exclusively earthy, to make this world a better place in which to live; they were very busy, but without the blood of Christ and of Calvary; their works had nothing to do with the kingdom of heaven.

Indeed, we must do "these sayings of mine," whereof we have a brief summary in the Sermon on the Mount and as set forth before us in the infallible scriptures.

WHO HE IS

A wise or foolish builder — it is either, or.

Jesus speaks here of "these sayings of mine." Strictly speaking, these sayings of Jesus refer to the Saviour's Sermon on the Mount. Generally speaking, Jesus' sayings are the Scriptures. Of course, they are one. Scripture is but a broader setting forth of what the Saviour declares in His Sermon on the Mount.

These sayings of Jesus refer, first of all, to the kingdom of heaven. This is God's kingdom in Christ by grace, and it refers to the service of the living God with all the love of our heart and mind and soul and strength. This kingdom is heavenly. It is not earthy and does not reach its ideal here below, is not realized in the way of earthly glory and power. It does not come in the way of a social gospel, in the way of banishment of sicknesses and diseases, wars and rumours of war, without the cross of Calvary; fact is, it comes in the way of pestilences and earthquakes, wars and rumours of wars. It is heavenly and will reach its final realization and glory in heavenly immortality. The law, the spiritual law of this kingdom is established by grace and consists in the service of God with all the love of our heart and mind and soul and strength.

Secondly, these sayings of Jesus also speak of our entrance into this kingdom of heaven. We enter this kingdom, first of all, through the blood and righteousness of Christ. The Scriptures teach, emphatically, that we are in ourselves barred from that kingdom. We are hopelessly lost in sin and guilt. We have neither the ability nor the will to pay our debt and satisfy the righteousness of God; the kingdom of heaven is, therefore, hopelessly beyond our reach. The only entrance into this kingdom is the blood and righteousness of Christ, of the eternal Son of God united with our flesh and blood, the blood of the Lamb of God and of Calvary that taketh away the sin of the world. And, secondly, we enter this kingdom, spiritually, by God's irresistible grace. Indeed, except

a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. The only requisite for our entering this kingdom, what must happen before our entrance, is our regeneration by God's almighty and irresistible grace. The Lord must call us out of darkness into the light, out of death into life, out of the darkness and corruption of this world into the light and life of the kingdom of God and of His dear Son.

A wise or foolish builder — either, or. Both hear "these sayings of mine." The text emphasizes this. And, these sayings of Jesus affect both. Jesus does not speak as do the scribes and pharisees; He speaks with authority. No hearer of these sayings can ignore them. He must build. The word of God is powerful, always influencing all its hearers.

What is a fool? A foolish man is not an ignorant man. He, too, hears these sayings of Christ. So, he is not ignorant. A fool is one who denies reality. He is acquainted with the Word of God. He knows of the kingdom of God and that it is heavenly. He also knows of the living God and his calling to serve Him with all his life and being. And he knows that the Scriptures speak the truth . . . And yet he is a fool. Why? Fact is, folly is not merely a matter of the mind, of the intellect. Folly is principally a matter of the heart. The sinner shuts his eye to reality wilfully. He knows all about God, His Christ, sin, etc. But he hates God and loves evil. A fool is beyond the reach of any man.

And who is a wise man? He is a product of divine grace. He is not necessarily a learned man, even as a fool is not necessarily an ignorant man. A wise man is one taught by God. He reckons with reality, builds for the future. He confesses his sin and iniquity, cries to God for mercy, has his eye upon the City that has foundations.

WHAT HE BUILDS

He who hears the sayings of Jesus and doeth them not is like unto a man who builds his house upon sand. How foolish! Especially in Palestine . . . ! He knows how violent these storms can be. But, the sun is shining when he is building. He builds as if the sun will always shine, as if the storms will never come. He fails to reckon with reality.

We must identify this builder. He does not represent the offscouring of society. Really, drunkards and thieves and murderers do not build. They are no asset either to themselves or to society. This foolish builder is indeed held before us in Matthew 7:21-23. These foolish builders are the men of culture; they would improve the world and all human society. The theory of Common Grace lauds them because they do so much good in the world. Jesus, however, calls them fools. And in the verses 21-23 He declares that He never knew them, calls them workers of iniquity.

He builds beautiful and mighty palaces. How he strives to banish war, to deliver this world from the results of sin, from all sickness and misery! He would transform this world into a paradise, a world of sickness and pain and sorrow into a world of joy and happiness. The world, he knows, needs reform. All sickness and disease must be conquered, the world improved in all its aspects . . . All the world's problems must be conquered, and the people of God must cooperate with the children of darkness, it is said, to achieve this goal.

How unutterably foolish is he! He has no foundation. He builds upon sand. He would remove the results of sin but retain sin. He does not reckon with the sayings of Christ. He would be cured of cancer but ignores the Great Physician. Sin is the cause of all misery and the blood of Christ alone cleanses from all sin, but the cross he rejects and Jesus he despises. O, he will use a humanitarian Christ . . . This Christ, however, does not exist. He is a fool, denies Reality.

On the other hand, he who hears and does the sayings of Jesus is a wise builder. He builds upon rock. The fool builds upon sand, does not bother with a foundation. This man digs. The fool undoubtedly has his house completed while the wise man continues to dig. He is determined to build upon rock. Really, as far as this wise builder is concerned, nothing can ever be seen. He does not build for this world, is not interested in what can be seen.

Indeed, to do "these sayings of mine" does not mean that we do big things for God and for His Christ. The building of mighty palaces is a task which the foolish builder has taken upon himself. This wise builder would stand upon rock, and this rock is Christ Jesus. The house he builds is really a house of sin and grace. He has nothing to contribute except iniquity and sin. He was conceived and born dead in sins and in trespasses. He builds and stands upon Christ; in Christ is all his confidence. In Christ is all his confidence as far as his sins are concerned. He glories in the cross of Calvary. He has learned, by the grace of God, to lay all his filthy clothes at the foot of the cross; he clings to the cross of Golgotha. In Christ is also all his confidence as far as his preservation is

concerned in the midst of the world. He knows that he cannot persevere in the way of God's commandments. That future is heavenly. By nature he, too, is earthly and from below. But Christ is risen from the dead, exalted into glory, and he has received life, a new life from above. Hence, he now sees the now in the light of the then, the present in the light of the future, the earthly in the light of the heavenly. And to be inducted into that heavenly Jerusalem he builds upon Christ. He does not cling to his own work. He clings to the work of Christ; in His cross he glories. And for him to do the will of his heavenly Father means that he will declare and show forth His praises, having been called by God's grace out of darkness into His marvellous light.

THE RESULT OF HIS BUILDING

How great is the fall of the house built upon sand! These winds and rains are the symbols of God's judgment. They will occur when the world shall have reached its pinnacle of development, its highest development in culture, and also in sin. Great and magnificent will be this development of the world . . . !

The house of the foolish builder will fall, and great will be the fall of it. Of course! The house will be great. And its fall will be great. Sin will then be revealed in all its awful folly. Even as a corpse must disintegrate when exposed to the rays of the sun, so also all the glory of the world will be revealed in all its vanity and nothingness. Everlastingly the Lord will confront him as a consuming fire.

The house of the wise builder will stand forever. His house is a house of sin and grace. And God is not unrighteous to forget His own work. Even as the Lord loves and seeks Himself, so He will also justify His own work in all His saints. He will reveal, even forevermore, that the work of Christ is eternally sure.

Blessed is he who builds upon that Rock.

Presently whatever is of sin and of the earth shall pass away.

Whatever is of God in Christ Jesus, His Son, our Lord, will abide forever.

EDITORIAL

Clasping a Viper to the Bosom (4)

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

At this point in our discussion of the world-wide erosion of the doctrine of sovereign predestination,

we are viewing the situation in South Africa. When we broke off the discussion in the September 15

issue, we were calling attention to the views of Dr. A. König of the University of South Africa. We had begun to show how he attempts to do away with the doctrine of reprobation. He is right in line with all the present-day deniers of this doctrine, who attempt to reduce it simply to a judicial act of God whereby He rejects those who reject Him.

Before we proceed with our discussion, I must call attention to the fact that this reconstruction of the doctrine of predestination by allegedly Reformed theologians everywhere is indeed a rather amazing phenomenon. I cannot escape the impression that these mid-twentieth century theologians are rather cocky and smart-alecky, first of all. Some of them even seem to go out of their way to make shocking statements. But even apart from their language and style, would it not be an amazing fact if suddenly in this twentieth century theologians gain new insights into the doctrine of predestination which are in flat contradiction to the insights of the theologians of Dordrecht, of Beza, of Calvin, of Gottschalk, of Augustine? The insights are not truly new, of course; they are only old heresies in a somewhat new garb. But they are new and contradictory insights for men who are supposed to stand and who claim to stand in the Reformed tradition and in the line of the theologians mentioned above. Our twentieth century, of course, is characterized by a know-it-all attitude; and it claims for itself the honor of a knowledge-explosion in almost every field of learning. And it seems that this spirit has pervaded the halls of theological learning also. But already this phenomenon should put us on our guard. It would be strange indeed if all the predestinarian theologians of past centuries were theological nincompoops, and if the upstarts of the twentieth century with their new insights were right. This alone should fill us with a healthy skepticism when we study what they have to say.

But the matter is even more serious. After all, it is not merely a question of whether you evaluate Calvin as a theologian more highly than some contemporary theologian. And it is not merely a question of standing in traditions of men or disagreeing with those traditions. We believe that the Spirit of Christ was given to the church in order to lead her into all the truth. Did the Holy Spirit fail to lead the church in the past? Or did He mislead the church in the past? Or has the truth into which He leads the church changed? It is especially from this point of view that one must be extremely cautious about alleged new insights and must carefully test them.

This leads me to call attention to another rather amazing phenomenon. These — so I would call them — reconstructionist Reformed theologians often try to leave an overwhelming impression of being Scrip-

tural; they seem to cite much Scriptural evidence in support of their views. To be sure, this is characteristic of heretics. A heretic must, in order to succeed, leave the impression of being Biblical. But in their presentation of this Scriptural evidence they do not hesitate to reconstruct Scripture in a most blatant and preposterous way. Sometimes it almost seems that they are trying to bluff their readers and their students by their very radical use (misuse) of the Scriptures. A little calm analysis by any Reformed believer with only a cursory knowledge of Scripture will frequently enable him to expose the fallacy of the view presented. Of this I hope to furnish some examples in our subsequent discussion.

We may begin with the quotation made at the conclusion of our previous article. In this paragraph Dr. König refers very disparagingly to what he terms the particularistic misconception of the Old Testament. In this connection he writes: "The particularistic view of the Old Testament is supported by yet another misconception, viz. that election implies rejection." Dr. König, you see, does not want this. He does not want double predestination, election and rejection. This, for him, is a misconception.

Now, in the first place, I would point out that these theologians who want an election which does not imply rejection are asking you to believe an impossibility. Even apart from the question of what Scripture teaches, this is sheer nonsense. An election which does not imply rejection? How is that possible? Election means "to choose out, to choose from." If there are 100 men, and I choose 50 of those 100, are not the other 50 rejected? You can phrase it as you wish: they are not chosen, they are non-elect (infralapsarian language), they are passed by (more infra-). The fact remains that the choosing out of the 50 implies the non-choosing, passing by, rejection of the remaining 50. The same is true of God's election: it necessarily implies the rejection (non-election, passing by) of all whom He does not choose. The only alternative to this, it seems to me, is universal election.

But lest I be accused of mere rationalistic argumentation, let me point out that this is the plain teaching of Scripture. First of all, in general, is it not plain from the history of the old dispensation that the gentiles were indeed excluded? Was not Israel the *only* people of the Lord? Were not all the nations, for example, who stemmed from Japheth excluded from the work of God's grace until the time of the new dispensation? And were not the Canaanites rejected and displaced by God's people? And even among the generations of Shem, was not Abraham singled out — to the exclusion of all the rest? And to Abraham was not God's Word: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called?" In the second place, does not the express testimony

of Scripture contradict this notion? Did not God say through Amos, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth?" Or speaking of distinction (König deprecates this as "favouritism"), how about Deuteronomy 7:6: "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth." And if the English text is not clear enough here, let it be noted that the Hebrew term (*min*) very definitely means "from, in separation from." Or to cite a specific instance of rejection in distinction from election, think of Malachi 1:2-4: "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever."

In connection with his view of predestination, Dr. König does not want individual election, but only a *national* election of Israel, an election of the people of Israel. He insists upon this repeatedly, even to the point that he finally teaches that the same people of Israel who are elected can also be and are rejected! And again, in this connection he makes some points which cause one to rub his eyes in amazement. He writes as follows, p.13:

In the Old Testament individuals are seldom mentioned as elected. One can find no other names than those of Abraham (Neh. 9:7); Moses (Ps. 106:23); Aaron (Ps. 105:26); David (Ps. 78:70; 89:4); and Zerubbabel (Hag. 2:23), and even they can hardly be considered individuals; they are each in their own way representatives of the *people*.

Sometimes the king of Israel is referred to as elected. Here, too, it is not primarily the person of the king, but his office as ruler of the people of God which earns him the title. Since *Israel* is God's elected people, the king of Israel is an elected king (II Sam. 5:12).

We have already identified the real object of election according to the Old Testament, viz. the *people of Israel*. Deut. 7:6 ff.; 14:2; Ps. 105:6, 43; 106:5; I Chr. 16:13; Isa. 41:8 ff.; 43:10, 20 ff.; 44:1 ff.; 65:9, 15, 22.

No individual election? One could offer extensive Biblical proof. But just off-hand, what about the 7000 whom the Lord tells Elijah He has reserved unto Himself and who have not bowed the knee to Baal? And if the objection is raised that they are not called elect, then let me call attention to the clear word of Romans 11:4, 5: "But what saith the answer of God

unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Seven thousand elect mentioned at once!

And what about that national election? And how can any Reformed theologian worthy of the name suggest the possibility of those who are elected being rejected? Does Dr. König have no knowledge of the Scriptural truth that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel?" Does he have no understanding of the truth that God's election and reprobation cut right across the generations of Israel? Does he not know that the Lord instructed Moses in this truth at the time of his intercession after the sin of the golden calf at Sinai, and taught Moses with respect to the nation of Israel, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion?"

One of the most blatant attempts to reconstruct Scripture comes when Dr. König writes about the *purpose* of election, introducing this section as follows:

To understand the purpose of Israel's election correctly it is of utmost importance to note that the Bible does not begin with Israel's (or Abraham's) election, [Does anyone teach this? HCH] but the history of Abraham and Israel is preceded by eleven chapters relating God's creation of heaven and earth, and *His continuous involvement from the very beginning with His total creation*. The Bible does not begin particularistically with Israel alone, while ignoring all the other peoples, but God deliberately reveals Himself *first of all*, as the God of the *whole world*, as the God who created the universe, and Who has a claim to (and interest in) all peoples of the earth. In fact, the first eleven chapters of Genesis relate the history of God's dealings with all the nations of the earth.

The history of Gen. 1-11 can be summarised as follows: God creates heaven and earth, *man* being the crown of His creation (Gen. 1). For this reason man is at the centre of creation (Gen. 2). Unfortunately man abuses his responsibility; he is not willing to remain a man, he would rather be like God (Gen. 3). This is the beginning of the process of man's estrangement from God, which would become catastrophic and would spread over the whole earth (Gen. 4-6). For this reason God's judgement cannot stay (Gen. 7-8), but nevertheless God remains faithful to His creation as well as to man (Gen 8-9). A new generation proceeds from the descendants of Noah (Gen. 10); however, they too turn their backs on God. This time He does not punish by water and flood, but causes mankind to spread over the face of the earth and to become estranged (Gen. 11).

If this is an accurate summary of Genesis 1-11, then Dr. König has a different Bible than I have. Notice: 1) There is no mention of the protevangel. 2)

There is no reference to the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (election and reprobation!). 3) There is no mention of the fact that the Genesis-record clearly traces these two antithetical seeds in the generations of Abel-Seth and of Cain-Lamech. 4) There is no mention of the fact that the reprobate – ungodly in the prediluvian world developed in sin, filled the measure of iniquity, and were destroyed in the Flood, while the church (God’s elect, covenant people) were saved in the ark and by water. 5) There is no hint that after the Flood these same two seeds developed anew out of Noah’s sons. 6) There is no reference to the fact that prophetically the line of

Shem is singled out, that prophetically Japheth is to be enlarged and then to dwell in the tents of Shem, and that Ham is cursed in Canaan. What an altogether different picture than that drawn by Dr. König!

It was not my intention originally to offer a critique of Dr. König’s views, but merely to show how in South Africa also the viper is being clasped to the bosom. And even now I do not present the above as a careful and thorough critique. But I considered it profitable for our readers to have a sample of how theology and the Scriptures are dealt with by these reconstructionist-theologians who scorn the traditional Reformed line.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht

At first he sought to free himself from all suspicion of strange doctrine, to such a degree that he even defended the doctrine of the Reformed Churches concerning the satisfaction of Christ, concerning justifying faith, concerning justification through faith, concerning the perseverance of true believers, concerning the certainty of salvation, concerning the imperfection of men in this life, and other chief points of doctrine, all of which he later contradicted and which are today opposed by his disciples, contrary to his own views (as Johannes Arnoldi Corvenus openly admits in a certain German document) in public disputations. But when he had served in his office for a year or two, they began to notice that Arminius was beginning to slander many doctrines accepted in the Reformed Churches, both openly and in secret, to call them into question, and to create suspicion among his pupils. For he sought to render impotent the chief proofs by which those same doctrines were established from God’s Word, using the same exceptions and subterfuges which the Jesuits, Socinians, and other enemies of the Reformed Church attempted to use; and, on the contrary, he exalted the proofs of the opposite doctrines. Moreover, he secretly gave to his disciples, to be copied, certain of his tracts, written by hand, in which he had incorporated his views. Besides, he recommended the writings of Castalio, Cornhert, Suarez and such like writers to his pupils, and spoke deprecatingly of the writings of Calvin, Beza, Martyr, Zanchius, Ursinus, and other outstanding teachers of the Reformed Churches. Yea,

he also openly testified that he had many insights and suspicions against the adopted doctrine which he would in his own time reveal. Some Preachers who familiarly associated with him boasted that he had an entirely new Theology. His students, when they came home from the Academy or departed to other Academies, brazenly took position against the Reformed Churches, disputing, contradicting, and criticizing the doctrine. The Holland Churches, noting these and other things, and being rightly concerned that the orthodoxy of the Reformed doctrine was thus weakened, and that in this manner the youth, who were trained in this “greenhouse” for the hope of the churches, were being taken in by strange doctrines, and that this matter would ultimately burst forth to the great harm, disturbance, and detriment of the churches, deemed it necessary through their Delegates (to whom the common care of the churches was entrusted) to take more careful note of this entire matter, in order that at the next Synod provision might be made that the church would suffer no damage. For this reason the Deputies of the Churches, both from South and North Holland, went to Arminius and confronted him with the rumors which were being spread concerning him and concerning his doctrine, told him how much all the churches were concerned, and in a friendly manner begged him that in case he had anything to say concerning these adopted doctrines he would uprightly inform the brethren, in order that either he might be satisfied through a friendly conference, or that the whole

matter might be brought to a lawful synod. Arminius answered these Deputies that he had never given just cause for such rumors, and that he did not deem it advisable to go into conference with them as with Deputies (if they would make a report of this to the Synod). But in so far as they would put aside this capacity of Deputies, he would not refuse to confer with them as with private Preachers concerning the doctrine, but with this condition, that in case they did not agree they would make absolutely no report of this to the Synod. Since the Deputies judged this to be improper, and since the churches would not be freed from their concern by such a conference, they parted ways with the matter unresolved. Nevertheless, they understood from the other Professors of Theology that among the students of theology various disputes and questions concerning predestination, free will, preservation of the saints, and other chief points of doctrine were conducted with great seriousness, such as had not taken place among them prior to the coming of Arminius.

On July 26, 1604, Arminius was also admonished by the Church of Leiden, of which he was a member. Two elders of that church, the Honorable Messrs. Phaedo van Brouckeroven, Mayor of Leiden, and Paulus Merula, Professor of History, admonished him that he should come to a friendly conference with his colleagues or fellow professors in the presence of the Consistory of the Church of Leiden, to make known what he might have against the adopted doctrine. The purpose of the conference was to bring out whether he would agree or not agree with his colleagues and with the other Preachers, and to specify the points of doctrine on which there was agreement or disagreement. To this admonition of the Consistory of Leiden Arminius answered that he could not do such a thing without the consent of the Honorable Curators, and, further, that he did not see what profit the church might gain from such a conference.

The time was then at hand for the annual Synod of the Churches of South and North Holland. According to custom, the protests of the churches of every Classis were forwarded to the Synod. And among others there was this objection from the Classis of Dordrecht: "Since the report is abroad that in the Academy in the Church of Leiden certain differences have arisen concerning the doctrine of the Reformed Churches, therefore the Classis considered it necessary that the Synod deliberate concerning the means by which these differences may be resolved in the best and speediest way, in order that all schisms and offenses which might arise from this may be promptly warded off and the unity of the Reformed Churches may be preserved against the slanders of the enemies." Arminius took that very ill, and he did his best to have this objection recalled. When he could

not achieve this, he obtained from his fellow professors, with the help of the Honorable Curators of the Academy, a testimony, August 10, in which it was declared that there were indeed more disputings among the students than pleased them, but that among the Professors of Theology themselves, as far as was known to them, there was no difference regarding the fundamentals themselves. A short time after this, August 30, the Synod of the South Holland Churches was convened in the city of Rotterdam. This Synod was given to understand by the delegates of the classis of Dordrecht that there were many and weighty reasons why they had sent this protest. The Synod also heard from the synodical deputies concerning the situation at Leiden and concerning matters under discussion with Arminius and the other professors. And after due deliberation, the Synod decided that they must promptly pursue that creeping evil and that they should not postpone the matter on the basis of the uncertain hope of the convening of a National Synod. For this reason they charged the Deputies of the Synod to find out with all diligence which points of doctrine the students of theology in the Academy of Leiden were especially disputing. Further the Deputies were instructed to request the Honorable Curators to charge the Professors of Theology to declare their views concerning these points of doctrine forthrightly and uprightly, in order that thus it might appear whether they agreed or disagreed, and in order that the churches, in so far as the differences might be either non-existent or not serious, might be freed from their concern, or, in case the differences were found to be more serious, might promptly take remedial action. The Synod, November 8, also enjoined all the ministers that they, in order to testify of their agreement in doctrine, should subscribe to the Confession of these Churches and to the Catechism — something which was neglected in many Classes and which was refused by others.

The Deputies of the Synod, after diligent investigation of the case, delivered to the Curators nine questions about which they understood there was at that time much dispute; and they begged the Curators that they, by their authority, would demand of the Professors of Theology fully to declare their views concerning these questions. The Curators answered that there was now some hope that within a short time they would obtain a National Synod, and that they therefore deemed it more advisable to reserve those questions for the Synod, rather than to give more occasion for disunity through further investigation. There were also Ministers who had adopted the view of Arminius and who here and there in the Classes refused to obey the order of the Synod to subscribe to the Confession and the Catechism. And it increased the concern of the churches when they saw that these Ministers, banking upon the favor of

some, simply despised the authority of the Synod and proceeded boldly in their purpose. For this reason, seeing that the evil could not be remedied in this manner, they showed to the States-General in detail in what great danger the churches were; and they petitioned them that the National Synod, which had now for so many years been postponed, might by their authority be decreed at the earliest opportunity, in order that this evil might be warded off. The States-General declared on November 26 that the States of all the Provinces had given their consent to the convening of a National Synod, but that there were some among them who in their letters of consent had added this condition, that at such a Synod there should be a revision of the Confession and the Catechism; on this account the States-General declared that the authorization of the National Synod could not be made without prejudice to the States of such a Province, unless this condition would be added to the decree. And since it was well-known who it

was that had for some years advised the States of Holland that this condition should be added, and who were pressing for this, and since it was to be feared that if this was stated in the letters convening the Synod, that those who sought change in the doctrine would misuse it for their own purpose, and since, moreover, it would cause no small offense to the Churches (especially in the present situation), as though the States or the Churches themselves had doubts concerning the truth of the doctrine contained in this Confession and Catechism, therefore the Deputies of the Church requested, November 30, that the convening of the Synod be authorized and proclaimed in general terms, as they say, according to the old custom. Further, the Deputies pointed out that this clause did not appear to be necessary, seeing that in all National Synods it was permitted that, if anyone thought to have any objection against any article of the creeds, he might present the same freely and according to proper order.

FROM HOLY WRIT

Ministering to the Saints

Rev. G. Lubbers

[Note: The following article is a continuation of the paper presented by Rev. Lubbers at the Office-bearers Conference held on March 4, 1975.]

THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

If this love for the neighbor is the law and the prophets then this ought to become evident also in a detailed study of the "law" of the Old Testament. This means that we must look for the "law of Christ" in the Old Testament Scriptures.

This means that we must look in the moral law for this law of Christ, which is the law of the Spirit of Christ. This we find in what is sometimes called the great "Shamah-Israel," "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deut. 6:4, 5) This means a love for the God who has saved us from the bondage of Egypt, set us free, so that now we may walk at liberty. This places us not under law, but under grace. This is the

"Lord, our God." Thus it is in the beginning of the law in Exodus 20:1. He is Jehovah, the I am that I am, who saves Israel in His great love and mercy, so that they may walk *in thankfulness*. Thus are the two tables of the law, which were not simply written upon the tables of stone, but which were nigh to Israel, even in their heart and mouth. (Deut. 30:14; Rom. 10:8) In this moral law we have "love thy neighbor as thyself." Now no one can love his neighbor who does not love his Redeemer God. The latter is basic. It is basic to all ministering to the saints. This ministering to the saints is the law of God, it is eternal, unchangeable. It is woven into the very essence of salvation, as we have pointed out earlier. Without ministering to the saints, salvation is not salvation. Such is the doctrinal import of the moral law of God. That is why it is treated in the Heidelberg Catechism in the "Third Part" of what a Christian must know to enjoy the only comfort in life and in death. Here is the basic cleavage between the humanistic philanthropy and christian ministry to the

saints. And this is a principle from which we must live, and we must not lose sight of it. Such is the Law and prophets.

But this principle that we are "under grace" is also true as far as the "civil law" is concerned. This becomes very evident in the "Magna Carta" as given in Exodus 21-23, which is the "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus 24:4) that Moses read to all the redeemed people of Israel; which Book he sprinkled with blood (Heb. 9:20; 13:20) as well the entire congregation. This was a blood-sprinkled Book. It was Gospel-obedience that was required under the types and shadows in the land of the Promise. No such Charter could ever be promulgated in the world of men. It was a Book which advocated *ministering* to the saints.

One has but to study such passages as Lev. 19:11-13; Deut. 24:14, 15; Ex. 22:21-24; Lev. 19:33, 34; Deut. 10:17-19 and other passages to see that the civil law in Israel had its motivation in the grace of God, whereby they were delivered from the bondage of Egypt's tyranny of sin and death. They had been delivered under blood. And "when I see the blood" I will pass over. This was, therefore, a law of Christ and not a legal code of precepts for those who must work their own righteousness. It will not do to enter into all of these passages cited. We shall limit ourselves to a few verses from Deuteronomy 24. We notice in Deut. 24:17, 18 that the Lord will have mercy because we have received mercy from Him. Moses writes, "Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless: nor take the widow's raiment to pledge. But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing." Now this is very instructive indeed. This is the key-note in the civil law. We notice the following elements:

1. We have been redeemed from Egypt. That was the benefit of grace, the fulfilment of the promise. Such was Israel's status in the plains of Moab.

2. We must never forget that we once were bondmen, and now are free. We once were strangers. We know the feeling of having been estranged from the life of God. We were in our misery and sin. But we have been translated from darkness to light.

3. This has, therefore, special reference to our treating of our neighbor, of ministering to the saints. We must remember the weak, the poor. The pure religion and undefiled is to visit widows and orphans in their afflictions. This is expressed negatively and prohibitively here in Deut. 24:17, 18 that we shall not (a) pervert the judgment of the stranger; (b) Nor shall we do injustice to the fatherless; (c) We shall not take the widow's raiment for a pledge. In our judg-

ment we have here the key to understand the Christological character of the civil law of the Old Testament; it is a blood-sprinkled law and advocates the proper manner of fulfilling the law of Christ and *ministering to the saints*, selecting the stranger, fatherless and widow as examples.

When we turn to the *ceremonial law* it strikes us also that this law is most intimately connected with the temple-worship, with the Levites and Priests and High-priest, as well as with the helping of the stranger, orphan, and widows.

It is true that the titles in the Levitical law were primarily for the Levites and for the priests and High-priest. The Levites had no inheritance in Israel but lived in their appointed cities, forty-eight in number, six of which were cities of refuge. (Num. 35:1-8) Their appointed livelihood, was, besides a little land surrounding each of their cities, (Num. 35:5) the offered titles which were to be given them from the rest of the tribes, both from the flocks and herds, as well as from the land and the vine. This was to maintain the temple worship in Israel. Israel was to take heed that they would not forsake the Levite as long as they lived on the earth. The teaching ministry and that of the sacrifices in the temple were not to be neglected. They were to keep the pictures, shadows, and types of the temple, as these pointed to the Christ as the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. When Israel did not pay the tithes and bring their heave-offerings, they did not desire Christ. That is why Malachi speaks so strongly against Israel for "robbing God." They robbed His altar, as it pointed to Christ. They did not maintain the Levites, priests, and high-priest. They did not love the house of God. Christ comes and will be busy in this house of God. He tells the unbelieving Jews, who desecrate the temple, of His authority in the temple. They must break it down, but He will rebuild the temple as the Son of God in three days in His death and resurrection. Thus the angel of the LORD suddenly comes to His temple. (Mal. 3:1; Matt. 11:10; John 2:18-20) Then shall there be sweet sacrifices as in the days of yore, in the best times of Israel's worship.

Still it must not be overlooked that the tithes were not only for the priests, but that they were also shared by the poor. There was a special provision for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow on each third year. Then the poor could also eat in the temple of God. This was the germ, so to speak, of the poor eating from the altar of God in the New Testament ministry to the saints in Christ's name. These two eat from the altar of God, which is a far cry from eating from a government hand-out. We read in Deut. 26:12f, "When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and has given unto the Levite, and

unto the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates and be filled, then shalt thou say before the LORD thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them . . . Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey."

For our purpose it is important to notice that the ceremonial law also made provisions for the stranger, fatherless, and widow. The law is one, whether it be moral law, civil law, or ceremonial law. The law and the prophets are all taken up in this one word: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Thus the great *Magna Carta* of the Old Testament Book which was sprinkled with blood comes to its own. It is the Law and the Prophets of which Jesus speaks. It was ministry to the saints in the temple of God, "that they may eat within thy gates and be filled." (Deut. 26:12)

SOME CONCLUSIONS:

1. From the foregoing study it appears that the ministry to the saints is not some *appended duty* to the christian religion, but that it is of the essence of the true religion. It belongs to the office of all believers, both in the Old and in the New Testaments.

2. It is also evident that ministering to the saints is rooted in God's great love for us, in His unspeakable gift. (II Cor. 8 & 9)

3. This ministry of the saints cannot be set aside;

it comes in many forms. In the days of affluent society this rule of the Spirit of Christ must not be overlooked. The church must not deny the tithes in the temple for the Levite, poor stranger, fatherless, and widows.

4. Widows and fatherless should be instructed in what it means to eat from the altar of the Priests and Levites in the temple. Deacons should be deeply conscious of their high calling in this regard.

5. The "case-study" of II Corinthians 8 and 9 should not be neglected as the basic principles of New Testament giving. We are not under the "law" of giving one tenth. The following obtains for us:

a. That we give as we have purposed in our heart, think of Ananias and Sapphira. (Acts 5:1ff; II Cor. 8:8) The sincerity of our hearts must be proven by our giving.

b. That we first give ourselves to the Lord as priests at the altar and then give our gifts. (II Cor. 8:5) Think of the widow and her one penny. (Lk. 21:2, 3)

c. That we give cheerfully and thus liberally from the heart in hope of a spiritual harvest. It is more blessed to give than to receive. (II Cor. 9:7, 8; Acts 20:35)

d. That the deepest principle and incentive for our giving both in the Old and New Testament is that Christ became poor that we might become rich. (II Cor. 8:9) That is the deep meaning of what the Lord says in the Old Testament ". . . for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD". (Lev. 19:33, 34)

May the Lord increase our knowledge in His will concerning the "Ministering To The Saints" also by these our humble efforts.

My Sheep Hear My Voice:

Letter to the Members of the Congregation at Philadelphia

(Note to reader: The next series of letters will be addressed to the "Members of the congregation at Philadelphia," a congregation which once, in fact,

existed (see Rev. 3:7-13), but which is now an imaginary congregation which includes all the people of God in every place.)

November 1, 1976

To the Members of the Congregation at Philadelphia:

It has recently come to my attention that a small group of people has left your congregation and has established a group which meets from Sabbath to Sabbath to study the Word of God together outside of its former affiliation with the established Church. The news has come to me that this group has been joined by a few members from other congregations and has come to the conclusion that, rather than forming a new congregation, it would be more spiritually advantageous for them to remain as an unorganized band of "believers" whose purpose it will be to study together the Word of God, to pray together, and to edify one another as they apply the Word of God more directly to the problems of life. I have also heard that some members of this group have talked with members of your congregation and have spoken in glowing terms about how spiritually uplifting these meetings are, so that you yourselves are sometimes tempted to join them and participate in their Sunday Bible-study exercises.

I want to write about this to you because, on the one hand, it may indeed be a temptation to you to join yourselves to them; and, on the other hand, because this practice is rather widespread in our day. One will find such groups in many different places. The group which has left your congregation is by no means an isolated phenomenon. In fact, one gets the impression that the idea is increasingly popular and that there is a sort of "movement" in this direction.

These groups take on many different forms. Sometimes they are groups from one or more congregations who, without withdrawing their membership from their own congregations, nevertheless want to supplement the preaching which they receive with personal Bible-study and group devotions. Their purpose is to study the Word of God in small groups in which believers together will feel free to contribute their own ideas about that Word, and where there can be a more intimate discussion of how that Word applies to the particular problems of life which the saints face. They point out the fact that one of the principles of the Reformation is the priesthood of all believers, and on this principle they defend their actions because, they maintain, and correctly so, that God's people need not that any should teach them, for they are all, from the least of them to the greatest, prophets.

Sometimes these groups are composed of a small number of people who have actually left their congregation or congregations for one reason or another and have decided that their souls can better be fed in small, intimate groups where God's Word is studied, than by the preaching in the congregations where they were once members. They have become dis-

illusioned with the preaching and with their former church. Sometimes their disillusionment is unwarranted, for they are merely looking for something more exciting than the worship services. But sometimes one must admit, in all honesty, that their disillusionment is indeed justified. The minister in their congregation has abandoned the pure preaching of the Word and has substituted for the preaching discussions on various social issues. The preacher has perhaps decided not to preach at all on a given occasion, and has turned the worship services over to the young people or to some guest speaker with an axe to grind or an experience to tell concerning some far-off mission field. Or perhaps the minister has forsaken the traditional approach to the worship service where the preaching has occupied a central place, and has introduced an elaborate liturgy which appeals to the senses particularly. Or again, perhaps a movie is shown instead of the worship service, or a musical group is brought in to entertain the audience with the latest in gospel music. Sometimes these groups which separate from their church have justified their conduct by pointing out that the denomination to which their congregation belonged has drifted further and further away from the truth, and this apostasy has become apparent in the pulpit. But whatever the reason, they have lost their interest in the Church and have found a haven in a small group of like-minded people who gather to study the Word.

Sometimes these groups come together only to study the Word as they mutually contribute ideas as to what a particular passage means. But sometimes they even appoint an individual from the group to give some short edifying message as some kind of substitute for the preaching. Sometimes they are concerned about the fact that the sacraments are not celebrated, and so they make an effort to have communion together and perhaps even to administer the sacrament of baptism. But mostly the idea is to edify one another and to encourage one another in the faith.

The people who attend such groups speak very movingly of their experiences in such a group. They will tell you that they are greatly blessed — far more blessed in fact than when they attended Church. They will tell you that they are members of the *body* of Christ and that they have clear and unmistakable joy in fellowship experiences with other members of that body. They will tell you that the Word of God has come to mean much more to them since they have been attending such a group; that they have learned more and more what it means to live a Christian life; that their own devotional life has been enormously enriched; that the experience of the communion of the saints has never been greater; that they have come to share the joys of their faith with like-minded people of God from other congregations

and denominations to learn what it truly means to be a member of Christ's body.

All this talk sounds very pious and it is difficult to refute such argumentation. When a person tells you he has been extraordinarily blessed in such a group, it is difficult to deny such an allegation and to say to him that he is deceiving himself if he thinks he has been blessed. He will merely look at you and tell you that he *knows* how blessed he has been, and who are you to deny what he has truly experienced?

And it is just possible I suppose that such a person, glowing with spiritual ardor, talks with you on a Monday morning after you have not, for one reason or another, received very much of a blessing the day before in the Lord's house. Your own life by comparison looks rather sterile and barren; your own participation in your congregation looks like a desert place in which no waters be when you compare it with the description of the man who has just attended his Bible-study group. And you conclude that he has found something in life which you lack.

I thought it best to write to you about this modern phenomenon because we must not only be warned of the danger of this movement, but also be shown that there is a very great sin involved in this sort of thing.

This is not, however, a new phenomenon in the history of the Church. It has, as a matter of fact, a rather long tradition. In a certain sense, the tradition goes way back to the early Montanist movement in the second and third centuries and which was made famous when the well-known church father Tertullian joined the group. It also has some points of similarity with various mystical movements which arose in the Church during the Middle Ages prior to the Reformation and which were also protests against the deadness of the Roman Catholic institute. But more closely connected to the present day phenomenon were the Conventicles which arose in the Netherlands in the Eighteenth Century. They were called "Gezelschappen" and were very similar to what we find so common today. These Conventicles were also groups of believers who met together for common edification because of a deep dissatisfaction with the State Church which had become increasingly dead and apostate. These Conventicles appeared on the scene prior to the separation under De Cock, Brummelkamp, Van Raalte, and others.

There is some tendency also among some of the leaders of the A.A.C.S. (Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship) to go in this direction. As you know, this organization has promoted a sort of conservative "social gospel" which is intended to involve the Christian in all sorts of social activity to subject all areas of life to Christ. This organization also takes the view that the chief, if not only, purpose of the church institute is to promote and support

such Christian activity. Hendrik Hart, in his book "The Challenge of the Age", writes:

Learning to live biblically in a secular world means learning to give full and active support to christian education, christian political action, christian labor activity, christian everything; *and learning to understand the church-institute as the organization which is called upon to promote such support concretely and authoritatively in the name of Christ.* (The italics are mine.)

If this is the role of the church institute, then it is no wonder that the church institute does not have a very important place in the Christian's life. What the church institute is supposed to do can very well be done by other organizations. It is not surprising therefore, to discover that the same author, in the same book, writes in another place:

The exercise of the faith in the home is of extreme importance and perhaps the only means of recovering a life close to the Scriptures.

In many areas, therefore, where the A.A.C.S. has had influence, there is a tendency in this direction. There is a certain lack of respect for the institute of the Church among some of the leaders, and there is a certain desire to emphasize the importance of small groups of believers gathering together to find out what Scripture means to them in their lives.

The rise of Neo-Pentecostalism has also given considerable impetus to this movement. There are groups of people under the influence of Pentecostalism who are stressing strongly this idea. There are places where these Bible-study groups, sometimes composed only of women, are so popular that they have almost defeated their own purpose. Hundreds flock to these sessions, and the group becomes so large that part of the purpose of having small intimate groups meet together is lost in the rush of clacking heels.

And so I would like to discuss some of these things with you. Perhaps in a few letters we can examine this movement a little more closely from a historical perspective; but especially from the viewpoint of the Scriptures and the importance of the church as institute in the light of the Scriptures.

But we must close for now.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

A debtor to Jehovah's law,
My soul by nature; stood;
And justice was about to draw
His sword to shed my blood.

"Sinner, stand forth," he sternly cried,
"And pay me that you owe."
"Tis done," says Jesus, "for I died;
Loose him, and let him go."

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Covenant Laughter

Rev. John A. Heys

Yes, you may laugh.

Solomon does indeed say in Ecclesiastes 7:3, "Sorrow is better than laughter." Yet laughter is not necessarily foolishness, nor it is always sinful. It can be both, and so often it is both foolishness and sin. Yet remember that God laughs, and a child of God may laugh in the joy of the fulfillment of God's covenant and of its promises. There is such a thing as covenant laughter.

Once in Genesis 17, and once again in Genesis 18 we read of the wrong kind of laughter. Both Abraham and Sarah let echo in their souls the laughter of unbelief. For they laughed in God's face. O, yes they did. They laughed at His Word. They did not laugh with Him and in His Word. They laughed at Him and at His Word. Principally they laughed at the idea of that Word of God becoming flesh. For, laughing at the idea of Isaac's being born of Sarah, they laughed at the miracle of the incarnation of the Word of God, which was by far a greater miracle.

And is not all unbelief a laughing at God and at His Word? Does not unbelief always ridicule the truth and dare to disagree with God Himself? Does not unbelief always call God foolish and the things of His kingdom foolishness? Do not the unbelievers shake their heads and look upon the believer as a fool? They see us go to God's house on the Sabbath as they rush to satisfy the lusts of their flesh; and inwardly, if not even openly, they smile and laugh. They spout forth their evolutionistic Atheism with straight faces and "learned" nods of the head; but they look down in scorn and ridicule upon the child of God Who bows before God and His Word and ascribes the whole creation to Him. Unbelief laughs in God's face — for a little while. The unbeliever will have endless time to weep when he finds out his folly in the torment of hell.

We do, however, also find children of God laughing in a sinful way. In fact at this crucial moment in the fulfillment of God's covenant promises, when the time has arrived for God to inform Abraham that

Sarah will bear him a son through whom these covenant promises will be realized, both Abraham and Sarah, as we said, are guilty of this laugh of unbelief. Abraham was now ninety nine years old, and Sarah was eighty nine. Abraham was sexually dead, and Sarah had never in all the years of their marriage even displayed the power to have a miscarriage. Conception was impossible for her. And now that it ceased to be with her after the manner of women, all hope of being the mother of a child was gone. And let us understand that it was gone and did not simply appear that way. God will give Sarah that power, but He did not restore what had been lost. He gave her, after she had passed her eighty ninth birthday, what she never had before and what He gave to other women only in earlier days of their lives. To what could Abraham and Sarah point for hope of having a child of their own? Man had lived long enough on this earth, and sufficient generations had come and gone, so that man knew the span of years during which it pleased God to give conception to a woman. Man knew at that day and in that age already the evidence that spoke of the beginning of a woman's period of fertility; and he knew the signs that indicated that a pause had come in "the manner of women."

Let us also appreciate the fact that apart from the miracle of life in the ark for a year and ten days during the flood and the period when the water covered the earth, there were no miracles of God, no departings from the laws of creation which God executed in His work of providence, to which Abraham and Sarah could point. It just never happened before, that when God caused it to cease to be with a woman after the manner of women, He gave them what they never had before! Abraham had never seen a miracle of any kind performed. Nor from the days of the flood are any recorded in Holy Writ. Abraham and Sarah had certainly never seen or heard of a miracle of healing, either from a disease or from barrenness.

Let it be stated parenthetically that the sons born

to Abraham through Keturah, as recorded in Genesis 25, were born before the birth of Isaac. Scripture does not always follow the chronological order in relating the events in the lives of men. Note that in Genesis 23 we read that Sarah was 127 years old when she died. That means that Abraham was now 137 years old. In the next chapter we read of the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, when he was forty years old; and then Abraham was one hundred and forty years old. And it is after this that in chapter 25 we read that Abraham took to wife Keturah and begat these sons. All this would mean that this new power which God gave Abraham, and whereby He could at the age of one hundred father a son with Sarah, remained in him for another forty years. And he who was as good as dead was very much alive sexually for another forty years. We must, therefore, insist that Moses goes back and picks up the thread after presenting the covenant line as it was gathered in Isaac. And these sons of Keturah were born before he became as good as dead. How else will you explain the words of Sarah in Genesis 18:12, "After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord (Abraham) being old also?"

But, returning to the promise of a son through Sarah, let it be borne in mind that Ishmael was as really a son of Abraham as Isaac was. In fact, at that moment, Ishmael was far more really Abraham's son. He was a son Abraham had. Isaac was at that moment only a child promised. And although Sarah regretted having given Hagar to Abraham to raise up seed for herself, Ishmael stood there as big as life. Whether she liked it or not, seed of Abraham stood there without a miracle's being performed by God. Sarah laughed when she heard that she would bring forth a son, but she shed many tears after Hagar bore Ishmael. This was so especially when Abraham more and more showed his love for and keen delight and interest in Ishmael.

Now Abraham's laughter differed from Sarah's. And it is interesting to note that Abraham is not rebuked for his laughter, while Sarah is for hers. As we already stated, both were the laughter of unbelief, and both deserved a rebuke. Both laughed at the idea that people of their ages could bring forth a son. But there was a difference. Sarah deemed it utterly ridiculous and hopeless that she would conceive and bear a son. Abraham, who also believed it ridiculous to think of such a thing, saw no necessity of it. He had a son in whom all the covenant promises could be fulfilled. He did not need Isaac. Mind you, he did not see the need of Christ, Who would come in the line of Isaac's seed. Not that he did not want Him to come. It was not that kind of unbelief. He would expect Him through Ishmael. He expected all the covenant blessings to be his through Ishmael. That is also why

he cries out, "O that Ishmael might live before Thee." He had a different problem than Sarah did, and he needs some further instruction. He still is rebuked, but in a different way. He is not directly rebuked for his laughter, but for his insistence that he laugh with covenant joy in Ishmael. Sarah laughed at the idea that she would be used by God in the fulfillment of the promise of a covenant seed. Had it not ceased to be with her after the manner of women? Had God not ceased to do in her what He does in women whom He has appointed to bring forth seed? It is not at all impossible that this ceased to be with Sarah thirteen years ago when she was 76 years old, and that this is the reason why she gave Hagar to Abraham to raise up seed for her. Her first reaction now, upon hearing that she will still bring forth that promised seed, is to laugh at the idea. For that she must be rebuked, even though it was "within herself." Perhaps a silly grin appeared on her face, as is so often the case with us when we laugh inwardly. But it evokes from the angel those sharp words of rebuke. "Is anything too hard for Jehovah?"

Surely there is not, and the Almighty is able to make the sad and sorrowing laugh with an everlasting joy and gladness. He is able to wipe away all tears from our eyes and to fill our days with joy and gladness.

As we stated, Yes, you may laugh. The same Solomon who says, "Sorrow is better than laughter," also said, "There is a time . . . to weep and a time to laugh." Jesus said to His disciples, "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh." Luke 6:21. And Bildad said to Job, "Behold, God will not cast away the perfect man, neither will He help the evil doers: till He fill thy mouth with laughing and thy lips with rejoicing." Job 8:21. There we have the clue. Sorrow is changed to laughter, the laughter of unbelief is changed to the laughter of the joyful reception of what God has promised, in the perfect man, that is, in the man who is made perfect by the Seed of Abraham that will come through Isaac.

No wonder then that the seed to be brought forth by Abraham and Sarah, who will in time bring forth The Seed in Whom all nations shall be blessed, is called Isaac, which means laughter. For he will bring forth Him Whose name is Jesus because He shall save His people from their sins. And in that way He will bring laughter to all whom the Father gave Him from eternity to be His people. A prophetic name then is this name Isaac. And Sarah, moved infallibly by the Holy Spirit, to an holy laughter, also stated and explained that name by saying, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all who hear will laugh with me." Genesis 21:6. We may laugh at this wonder-birth of Isaac because in that way God is bringing The Seed of the covenant Who will make us laugh with holy glee

in the salvation He has prepared for us. Isaac's conception and birth is a step in God's realization of such covenant laughter for us.

But get the point made by Sarah. The Holy Spirit is speaking through her and causing her to speak infallibly. God, she said, made her to laugh. Any laughter we make will soon bring us to tears. God forbid that we should laugh with the world — and how hard they try, how numerous are their comedians, how much time of their radio and television programs, what a vast number of pages of their magazines is devoted to trying to make man laugh and forget the sorrows of life, to try to get our minds off sin and the curse! How desperately they try to keep us from knowing our sins and misery, because they do not want us to know the redemption that there is in Christ, and because they shudder in displeasure when they see those who know how to express gratitude to God by a walk in good works.

Yet the more the unbeliever laughs in this life, the more weeping and gnashing of teeth is going to be his in the lake of fire. He will have to give an account for all his laughter and suffer the punishment of laughing in and with sin and of being entertained by it instead of being grieved at the very sight of it.

But the laughter God gives us will be ours everlastingly. He will never cast the perfect away and take from them their covenant laughter. Hell will be silent as far as the laughter of unbelief is concerned. There men will find nothing to laugh at, and the divine wisdom of the "foolishness of preaching" will be confessed by all. But in heaven now, and soon in the new Jerusalem, there will echo the laughter which God gives His people. And looking back the saints will see that although they were as good as dead, could not even produce the will to be saved and laughed at the idea of it, God came in His grace to take away that laughter and all our tears and guilt and death to make us sing to His praise forever.

GUEST ARTICLES

Do We Need a Protestant Reformed Teacher Training School ?

Rev. Wayne Bekkering

Does the subject of the title strike you as a strange question? Do we really have a need for such an institution? Do you really understand what it takes to be a Protestant Reformed teacher? I think that there is more involved than we may first think. I had not given the subject much thought until I had opportunity to visit with a young man from one of our congregations who was considering going into Christian Education. This young man related to me some of the soul vexing experiences that he had gone through at one of the existing Christian colleges. The question that pressed this young man was "Can we expect to have truly Protestant Reformed teachers if they are trained in apostatizing Christian colleges or in secular, antichristian, state colleges?" I became conscious that we were talking about a very important subject, a subject that may have the very continuation of our schools, as truly Protestant Reformed schools, at stake. I asked myself, "May we

continue to have our Protestant Reformed teachers trained as they now are and expect the Lord's blessing on our schools?"

The first question that we face is, "What is the condition of the colleges of our day?" Can they prepare prospective Protestant Reformed teachers, from both a spiritual point of view and an academic point of view, to teach in the Protestant Reformed classroom?

I do not profess to be able to give a thorough evaluation of the conditions in the various colleges that our prospective teachers use. However, from my own experience, and from talking with others, I know that the conditions are bad. I see conscientious young people vexing their souls in the existing colleges. Not only do they find that the instruction is a perversion of the Truth of God's Word, but they also find them academically unsuitable to prepare them to teach in a Protestant Reformed classroom.

Someone may say, "Don't be so critical! Don't get so excited! I went to college 15 or 20 years ago and things were not intolerable." This may be exactly our problem. We have failed to take into account the fact that colleges change. Especially in our day of modern educational "advances" and of spiritual and moral decay we see changes, great and rapid. Nor ought that surprise us. We have before us the important matter of Christian education, and the Devil is zealously desirous to take that away from God's people. He will have all our children trained in the public school where he has built the foundation for education which will serve to establish his Antichristian kingdom.

But against this raging torrent of antichristian humanism our schools must stand! We must have teachers who have a Biblical view of life in this world, and they must be able to teach from that proper Biblical perspective so that in *all* the subjects our children are prepared to fulfill their calling and place in the world.

If our teachers never learn to teach from a truly Biblical world and life view, then our schools will become, at best, "public schools" plus Bible. Or we will be able to distinguish a certain number of secular subjects from other religious subjects. If this ever happens then we have lost our schools. We have lost them in the sense that they no longer fulfill their role as an indispensable help to our parents. We have lost our schools in the sense that they simply become private Protestant Reformed educational institutions but have really lost their primary reason for existence.

I am not saying that our schools are lost, but I am saying that good teachers are inseparably connected with good schools. By God's grace we have had and still do have good teachers. But I am saying that if we want to keep our schools, then it is time to begin considering a place where prospective teachers can learn to become truly Protestant Reformed teachers. This matter is very important to the very future of our schools. We would not think of having our preachers trained in the apostatizing seminaries of our day. That truly would be the death of our churches! But we expect our teachers to go to any college of our day and come out equipped to teach in Protestant Reformed classrooms. Will that not be the death of our schools?

Someone may object that a Protestant Reformed Teachers Training School would be a financial impossibility. Indeed, it would cost money, but we should make it a matter of considering priorities. Should we expand our present school buildings or

should we take steps to provide good education for prospective teachers to teach in the schools that we already have?

Someone else may maintain that a Protestant Reformed Teacher Training School is not necessary because we have good grade schools and a good high school, and prospective teachers can gain an adequate foundation there. The fact is that our present schools are simply not geared to prepare future teachers. Furthermore, not all of our people have the advantage of using Protestant Reformed grade schools and high schools.

There is no doubt about it there would be many problems and difficulties in such a venture, but we must not be turned back because of foreseeable or unforeseeable difficulties. We must continue to train our children to the best of our ability, and that takes dedication and faith.

As a step toward our own Teacher Training School perhaps we could set up a structured program designed to prepare future teachers for our schools. The prospective teachers would still have to pursue a regular course at an existing accredited college in order to be qualified for certification by the state. What I am proposing would have to be added to and worked along side of a regular college course. In order to guide aspiring teachers through the proposed program, perhaps a well qualified man from our churches could be hired. The work of this man would be that of a "curriculum coordinator" or an "educational counselor." He would help the prospective teachers chart the best course in the existing colleges. He would serve as a counselor to help the future teachers gain a proper perspective and to help them become prepared to teach in a Protestant Reformed classroom. He could do that by teaching or arranging to be taught certain courses especially designed to help teachers to attain their goal. Perhaps some of our well qualified and experienced teachers could participate in such a way that the prospective teachers could benefit from their experience. In this connection, perhaps we could have a more extensive practice teaching program than is presently used with our aspiring teachers. The prospective teachers could work in the classrooms of our present teachers, as teachers' aides.

Well, what do you think about this? These are simply my thoughts on the matter. I would like to see our people seriously consider this important matter and then to give their reactions. If you would like to express your views, either pro or con, send your comments to the editor of the *Standard Bearer* so that we can profit from them.

Know the standard and follow it. Read the STANDARD BEARER!

ALL AROUND US

Reformed Ecumenical Synod

Combined meeting of two Synods in Netherlands

Rudolph Bultmann dies

Carter and his religion

A new Lutheran denomination

Rev. G. Van Baren

From the Reformed Ecumenical Synod *News Exchange*, of July 6 and September 7, 1976, we received a brief review of the meeting of the R.E.S. Some one hundred and ten delegates from 38 denominations of Reformed persuasion from around the world met in Cape Town, South Africa, from August 2 to 20. Fifteen of these denominations come from Africa itself.

The R.E.S. met at a time when rioting was going on in Soweto. It was apparently the intent of the R.E.S. to meet in South Africa as expression of interest in and concern with the racial policies of that nation. In addition to this racial issue, several other important items were scheduled for discussion and decision. One day was set aside for a consideration of the biblical teaching of the Holy Spirit. There was scheduled also a discussion of the doctrinal deviations of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands as well as a consideration of the question whether those churches could simultaneously belong to the World Council of Churches and to the R.E.S. Reports were to treat too the question of Sunday observance — reports which contained divergent views on whether the Sunday remains a creation/redemption ordinance. Two other studies were to be considered: the social calling of the church, and, the nature and scope of salvation.

The R.E.S. obviously became rather deeply involved in race issues — and especially those of South Africa. The Synod “adopted a resolution in which it called upon all people to refrain from fomenting unrest and violence.” It urged South Africa to give “early and serious attention to the problems involved in creating an atmosphere of dissatisfaction and unrest and to prepare memoranda on these grievances for consideration at a Southern African Conference in April 1977.” It addressed itself also to the unrest in other parts of the world, and adopted a statement to “request all member churches of the R.E.S. to give serious attention to the problems involved in creating an atmosphere of dissatisfaction and unrest in their own lands and throughout the world, and to do all in their power as Christian churches to promote justice, order and peace everywhere.”

The R.E.S. reaffirmed an earlier stand suggesting that there was nothing wrong with interracial worship and interracial marriage. The latter was qualified by pointing out that problems could easily arise in such marriages — and all parties ought to be reminded of this.

The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands were asked to give account of their actions in regard to their membership in the World Council of Churches and in regard to their failure to discipline Prof. H.

Kuitert and Dr. H. Wiersinga. An advisory committee recommended a decision declaring "membership in the W.C.C. to be inconsistent with membership in the R.E.S." That proposal was adopted only after an amendment was made as follows: " 'Inconsistent' meaning in this instance, a deviation from the decisions of previous R.E.S. Synods, but does not imply an immediate irreconcilability between the R.E.S. and the churches that are members of the W.C.C." The denominations involved were asked to give serious reconsideration to this dual membership.

In regard to Prof. Kuitert and Dr. Wiersinga, there was a recommendation that would have ruled the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands to be not in harmony with the membership requirements of the R.E.S. This, however, was altered to express regret because of certain theological developments within this church. Yet, since the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands, through their delegates, stated that they "are faithfully exercising church discipline in the case of Prof. Kuitert and in the case of Dr. Wiersinga," the R.E.S. urged them to continue this procedure with all due haste, and assured the G.K.N. of their concern, support, and prayer.

COMBINED MEETING OF TWO SYNODS IN NETHERLANDS

In *Calvinist-Contact* of August 27, 1976, Dr. L. Praamsma reports that on Sept. 17 and 18 of this year the synods of the Dutch Reformed Church (Ned. Herv. Kerk) and the Reformed Churches (Ger. Kerken) met in combined meeting. Local congregations of these two denominations have been holding combined services for several years already. In fact, reports Praamsma, at least one Reformed Church held combined services with a local Roman Catholic Church. Praamsma views this combined synod as a clear indication of the desire for a united church. When the Reformed Churches separated from the N.H.K. in 1834, it was with the understanding that they would gladly reunite as soon as this state church would return to the confession of the fathers. But such a return has not taken place. Yet, since both denominations contain many leaders who have adopted a new and critical view of Scripture and the confessions, these find a basis for unity now. The paper, *Waarheid en Eenheid*, calls this synodical gathering a "presentation of a totally irresponsible show-of-unity." In this connection, Praamsma expresses a measure of doubt concerning the wisdom of seeking closer contact between the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church of America. He sees the Reformed Church as having no "confessional unity" — a matter which ought first to be discussed before taking additional steps toward closer fellowship.

RUDOLF BULTMANN DIES

Perhaps to most of our readers, the name "Rudolf Bultmann" means nothing. Nor is that surprising. What this man had to say was not for the edification and spiritual comfort of true Christians. The man, however, is regarded as a great theologian in many circles. This "theologian" was from Germany. The views of this man have been popularized in English through the book of Bishop Robinson, *Honest to God*. Bultmann was the man who would "demythologize" Scripture. He regarded as "myth" virtually all the significant truths of Scripture. This man believed that Jesus was not conceived by the Holy Spirit, was not born of the virgin Mary, that though He did suffer and die by crucifixion, He did not descend into hell, did not rise again, did not ascend into heaven, does not sit at God's right hand, will not come again to judge. He believed in neither heaven nor hell. Yet many who called themselves "Christian" were influenced by this "theology" — even some within the Reformed circles. This Bultmann died last July 30 at the age of 91. What an awful way to find out that hell is real after all!

CARTER AND HIS RELIGION

Reports have been given concerning the religious convictions of the two candidates for the presidency. The sincerity of each, at times, has been questioned. *The Christian News* of Aug. 30, 1976, records the report of a Lutheran pastor as given in the *Milwaukee Journal* of Aug. 20, 1976. Part of this report reads:

The *Journal* reports that Jimmy Carter's brand of religion worries some people, especially Roman Catholics, because of his permissive, even approving, approach to abortion on demand (*The Journal*, July 16).

As an evangelical Lutheran Christian I suppose I should be delighted that a "born again true believer" may be headed for the White House, especially after a series of presidents who seemed to be lukewarm at best in their religious convictions, or at worst appeared to exploit religion for crass political purposes by inviting big name religious leaders to a weekly game of musical chairs in services at the White House during the Nixon years.

However, I, too, am troubled by the Carter brand of religion, over and above his stand on abortion. On the campaign trail, candidate Carter sought to reassure a predominantly Jewish audience in New Jersey by saying: "I worship the same God you do." Surely the sincerity of a man who contends that he never lies should not be questioned, but it should be pointed out that Carter's statement in New Jersey is completely at odds with a basic truth of the Christian faith. It is apparent that the Plains, Ga., Sunday school teacher still has a big gap to close in his knowledge of the Bible.

In the Scriptures Jesus insists: "I am the Way, the

Truth, and the Life: No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6) . . . "all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him (John 5:23). Christians and non-Christians alike must recognize those exclusive claims of Christ . . .

. . . Because of his fuzzy stand on the God issue and his failure to grasp a golden opportunity to confess Christ before a group of non-Christians, the competence of Carter as a reliable spokesman for evangelical Christians must be called into question.

Compromise plays a key role in political maneuvering, but it is completely uncalled for when it comes to confessing Christ. Jesus said: "He that is not with Me is against Me." In New Jersey, at least, Carter was caught straddling the fence and was unconvincing as a confessor of Jesus Christ.

A NEW LUTHERAN DENOMINATION

In past years there has been great dissent within

the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. The division is between the "conservatives" and the so-called "moderates." The "moderates" call into question the event-character of many of the Scriptural accounts. These do not want to maintain the traditional and Scriptural view of inspiration of the Bible. After the "conservatives" gained control of the principal offices of the denomination, the "moderate" president of their Concordia Seminary was removed from his position. The result was that most of the professors and students also left to establish Seminex (Seminary in exile). Recently, some of the "moderates" have established a separate denomination: the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC). As of Aug. 16, there were 32 congregations affiliated — and doubtlessly more by now. The aim of this group is to maintain their "moderate" views and to seek affiliation with other Lutheran bodies in the country.

Secretary's Annual Report

Dear Members and Friends of the R.F.P.A.:

Once again near the end of our 52nd year of publishing the *Standard Bearer*, your Board comes to you with a report of the activities connected with its publication during the past year.

On October 1, 1924, the *Standard Bearer* made its first appearance. Since that date, almost 52 years ago, the *Standard Bearer* has been faithfully published.

The *Standard Bearer* now has a publishing total of 1660. We are printing a total of 1900 copies. Of these, 200 are kept for bound volumes and 40 for reprints. This past year we have gained 150 new yearly subscribers and 125 10-for-\$2 subscribers, for a total of 275. We've also had a total of 80 cancellations.

Four years ago we started the program of sending 10 issues for \$2.00. This has proved to be very successful. A total of 207 have taken advantage of this offer so far. Of these, 110 have become regular subscribers.

The board acknowledges all gifts of \$10.00 or more by means of a letter of thanks. This year the gifts received were \$10,000. Church collections totalled \$5,800 and individual gifts \$4,200. The board takes this opportunity to thank you for your interest in our endeavor and for your financial support. Your prayers are needed, and all gifts toward the support of this work are much appreciated.

The board has a committee working with a committee of the Permanent Committee for Publication of Protestant Reformed Literature in order to obtain a tax exemption letter as a non-profit organization.

Through the efforts of the Southeast Young People's Society, work is being done by each person in the society to contact one family in a foreign country who is receiving the *Standard Bearer*. They are asking for response from these people about the *Standard Bearer*. Each of the young people is to receive a free book for his efforts. The board appreciates these efforts of the young people.

This year the board decided to underwrite the cost of sending the *Standard Bearer* to the newly-weds of any of our Protestant Reformed Churches for one year. The consistories of these churches should take note and forward the names to our Business Manager. The board also decided to underwrite the expense of a Managing Editor. Mr. Don Doezeema has agreed to do this work. The board is grateful to him for his efforts, because he took much of the work-load that the Editor-in-Chief, Prof. H.C. Hoeksema, had done before. The board also covered the cost of several reprints, one of which was 100 copies of "Clasping A Viper To The Bosom" — airmailed to Australia for distribution there.

The board gratefully acknowledges the work of our Business Manager, Henry Vander Wal. Again this year

Gerrit Pipe has helped Henry with the mailing of the *Standard Bearer*. Gerrit Vander Lee has consented to help with the mailing work in the event of the absence of one of these brethren.

To publish the *Standard Bearer* on time, everything must be at the printer promptly each 2nd and 16th of the month. With thanksgiving we acknowledge the faithfulness of our Covenant God. He has provided the means to publish our magazine and has, by His Spirit and grace, guided and sustained our editors. The Lord has provided an open door for the Reformed Free Publishing Association by means of the printed page. To Him be all the glory!

The *Standard Bearer* is mailed to forty states. The only states where it does not appear are: Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Colum-

bia, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Utah. One hundred copies are mailed regularly to Australia and New Zealand, and sixty copies to other foreign countries.

Retiring from the board this year are H. Kuiper, A. Rau, and G. Vanden Top, all of whom have had various functions and committee assignments during their terms. We thank these men for their labors. We are thankful to the Lord that He supplies men who give many hours of their own time for the board in support of this kingdom cause.

In conclusion, the Board of the R.F.P.A. and the Staff covet your prayers and support of this kingdom work. May the Lord continue to bless us and all His people through our distinctively Reformed magazine.

— W. De Kraker, Sec'y

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ

Prof. Robert D. Decker

"We confess, therefore, that God did fulfill the promise, which he made to the fathers, by the mouth of his holy prophets, when he sent into the world, at the time appointed by him, his own, only-begotten and eternal Son, who took upon him the form of a servant, and became like unto man, really assuming the true human nature, with all its infirmities, sin excepted, being conceived in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, by the power of the Holy Ghost, without the means of man, and did not only assume human nature as to the body, but also a true human soul, that he might be a real man. For since the soul was lost as well as the body, it was necessary that he should take both upon him, to save both. Therefore we confess (in opposition to the heresy of the Anabaptists, who deny that Christ assumed human flesh of his mother) that Christ is become a partaker of the flesh and blood of the children; that he is a fruit of the loins of David after the flesh; made of the seed of David according to the flesh; a fruit of the womb of the Virgin Mary, made of a woman, a branch of David; a shoot of the root of Jesse; sprung from the tribe of Judah; descended from the Jews according to the flesh; of the seed of Abraham, since he took on him the seed of Abraham, and became like unto his brethren in all things, sin excepted, so that in truth he is our *Immanuel*, that is to say, God with us."

The Belgic Confession, Article XVIII

Article XVII spoke of the promise which God made to fallen man to "give His Son, who should be made of a woman, to bruise the head of the serpent, and would make him happy." With article XVIII our *Confession* speaks of the fulfillment of that promise in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. That promise spoken to fallen man was spoken repeatedly to the fathers throughout the Old Testament times "by the mouth of the holy prophets." The speaking did not cease with the "mother-promise" of Genesis 3:15.

Shortly thereafter Enoch spoke of the Lord's coming in judgment with ten thousands of his saints (Jude 14, 15). God spoke of the promise to Noah who was saved by the flood of great waters. Even more clearly and fully did God speak to the patriarchs. Abraham received the assurance: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be

blessed.” (Genesis 12:2, 3) On his deathbed Jacob spoke of the promised Christ: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” (Genesis 49:10) Moses testified of Christ as the great prophet: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken.” (Deuteronomy 18:15) Never was Israel without the witness of the prophets concerning the Wonder of the fulfillment of the promise. In their songs both David and Solomon sang of the coming Christ. In the Book of Proverbs He is presented as the highest Wisdom (cf. chapter 8). Isaiah spoke of Him as the “root out of dry ground” (chapter 53) and as “the Lord’s anointed” (chapter 61). Jeremiah spoke of this Christ as: “the Branch of righteousness” which the Lord would cause to grow up unto David. (Jeremiah 33:15) Ezekiel and Daniel both spoke of Him. Many of the minor prophets spoke of the blessed hope of Israel. Even the place of His birth, Bethlehem, was spoken of. (Cf. Micah 5:2) Not until Malachi had passed from the scene was the voice of prophecy silent for a season. Christ when He came could say to the Jews: “Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” (John 5:39) Truly, therefore, when Jesus Christ is born of the virgin: “God did fulfill the promise, which he made to the fathers, by the mouth of his holy prophets.”

And God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, “at the time appointed by him.” This the Scriptures call “the fulness of time.” (Cf. Galatians 4:4, 5) This was that precise moment when all things according to the eternal counsel of God were prepared for the coming of His Son.

Concerning the incarnation of our Lord, the Article emphasizes several facts. First, the Article makes very clear that Christ assumed a real human nature. Early in the history of the Church this was denied by the Docetics who taught that Christ only *seemed* to assume a human nature. The human nature of Christ was no more than an appearance. But this is not the case. In the words of our *Confession*, the eternal Son of God “took upon him the form of a servant, and became like unto man, really assuming the true human nature, with all its infirmities, sin excepted . . .” He was born just as any other child. He also had flesh and blood and was like us in all things with the exception of sin. Scripture declares: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” (Hebrews 2:14) Verses sixteen and seventeen of that same passage teach: “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

That Christ assumed a real human nature means also that He was a definite individual with an individual human nature. Some have taught that Christ assumed not an individual human nature but human nature in general. This, however, cannot be, for “Human Nature” in general is an abstraction which has no concrete reality. We believe with our *Confession* that the Savior possessed a definite or concrete human nature. Christ had a certain color hair and eyes, measured a certain height, had a definite complexion. He was not red or yellow, but white. More specifically He was a Jew with Jewish characteristics. He had His Own personality with His Own character traits. Closely connected with this is the fact that Christ assumed a central human nature. He took hold of our human nature at its very center. Thus the Savior was a Jew in the line of the covenant. Again our *Confession* emphasizes this aspect of Christ’s human nature when it says He was “a fruit of the loins of David after the flesh . . .” This was denied by the Anabaptists who are mentioned in the article. These taught that Christ did not assume the flesh and blood of His mother, but that God created a special human nature in the womb of the Virgin Mary quite apart from Mary herself. Scripture teaches otherwise. According to the Word of God Jesus Christ was born in definite generations. He is the Son of David. (Cf. Matthew 1:1-16) The genealogy of Jesus according to the flesh can be traced all the way back to Adam. (Cf. Luke 3:24-38) The generations of Christ may be compared to a large pyramid, wide at the base in Adam, but narrowing down through Seth, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, and finally reaching its peak in the Virgin Mary who was the last remnant of the line of the royal house of David. Hence Christ’s human nature was principally and organically in the loins of the promised line from the very beginning of time until the moment of His conception and birth.

In this connection it must be maintained that Joseph was not the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We believe in the Virgin birth of our Savior. This needs emphasis again in our times. Even in traditionally Reformed circles there are those who deny the fact and the necessity of the Virgin birth. Scripture very plainly teaches that Jesus had no earthly father. We find this already in the Prophecy of Isaiah: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14) Those who deny the Virgin birth are quick to point out that the word “virgin” in this verse can also mean “young

woman" or a woman of marriageable age. This is true, we readily grant. But the text is speaking of a *sign*, and a sign is something out of the ordinary. There is certainly nothing extraordinary about a young woman conceiving and bearing a son. The sign lies in the fact that a *virgin* conceives and bears a son. That is extraordinary indeed! It's an utter impossibility from every human point of view. Besides, that this is the meaning of Isaiah is plain from the New Testament reference to this very passage. In Matthew 1:18ff. we read that Joseph was minded to put away his pregnant wife thinking that she had committed adultery. An angel explains to him that Mary has conceived by the Holy Spirit. Joseph is told that she shall bring forth a son, and he is instructed to name that son Jesus. Then the Scripture teaches that all this was done "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." (Verses 22, 23) This is also plain from the announcement of the birth of Christ to Mary. When Mary is told that she shall conceive and bear a son she responds: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" The answer of the angel is: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luke 2:28-35)

The human nature which Christ assumed was a complete human nature. Christ, as the *Confession* emphasizes, was born with a human body, but also a human soul. This means that Christ, along with His

divine mind and will, also possessed a human mind and will. This was necessary for, the Article explains, Christ had to save not only our bodies but also our depraved souls.

Still more, the human nature of Christ was a weakened human nature. His nature was not strong as was Adam's before the fall. Jesus was like us in every respect and could be and was tempted in all points like as we and touched with the feeling of our infirmities. (Cf. Hebrews 4:15) We never read that Christ was ill, but the possibility was certainly there. He became weary, hungry, and thirsty. Jesus wept. Finally He also died. This too was necessary, for He had to become like us in every respect in order to atone for our sins.

Finally this article also emphasizes that the human nature of Christ was sinless. In this one respect Christ was different from us. He partook neither of our guilt nor of our pollution. This too was important, for only because Christ was free from personal guilt could He take our guilt upon Himself. And, only because Christ was the holy Son of God could He walk the way of perfect obedience to His Father.

Finally let us note that all this we can never comprehend. The incarnation of Jesus Christ is a transcendent miracle. It is the Wonder of all wonders. The God of our salvation brought forth the Eternal out of the creature, the holy One out of the unholy, the perfect Mediator out of a fallen, dead human race. What remained forever impossible for man was possible for God! A Virgin conceived and brought forth a Son. His Name is Jesus: "... for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

*Report of Classis East
held October 6, 1976, at the
First Prot. Ref. Church, Grand Rapids.*

Classis East met in regular session on October 6, 1976, at the First Prot. Ref. Church. The business before the session was routine. The chairman of the session, Rev. M. Joostens, in commenting upon the routine nature of the business before classis, expressed gratitude to God that the churches were at peace and that, routine as the business, the classis must keep in mind the seriousness of doing the business of the Kingdom of God.

The Finance Committee for this session was Rev. Van Overloop and Elder H. VanderKolk. Expenses authorized amounted to \$378.65.

Classical appointments were requested by Kalamazoo until Rev. Woudenberg arrives. Kalamazoo was

advised to ask the seminary to fill its pulpit until that time.

In regard to other business, the classis re-elected the present Stated Clerk to a three-year term, and agreed to raise the stipend for elders' lost wages from \$20 to \$30. The church visitors have not yet visited Covenant Church in New Jersey and consequently had no final report. After the asking and answering of the questions of Article 41 of the Church Order, classis adjourned. The next meeting will be held on January 5, 1977, in the new Hudsonville Church (alternate site: Southwest).

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 11, 1976, the Lord willing, our parents MR. & MRS. GERARD BORDUIN, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We are thankful that their lives were spared all these years so that they together might see God's faithfulness to His promise from generation to generation. We are grateful for the example of their faith that God would indeed supply all their needs and ours.

Psalm 128

Mr. & Mrs. Herman Van Dyke
Mr. & Mrs. Ignacio Quenga
Mr. & Mrs. Theodore Borduin
Mr. & Mrs. Melvin Borduin
13 grandchildren
2 great-grandchildren

916 Oakdale St., SE
Grand Rapids, Mich.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 17, 1976, our beloved parents, MR. and MRS. JOHN BODBYL, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their grateful children, thank God for the many years of love and Christian instruction they have given us. Our sincere prayer is that God may continue to bless them in the future as He has done in the past.

Mr. and Mrs. George Postmus
John, Nathan, Cathy
Mr. and Mrs. George Bodbyl
George
Mr. and Mrs. John Bodbyl
Jennifer, John
Thomas Bodbyl
Joan Bodbyl
Daniel

News From Our Churches

Rev. Kortering was scheduled to preach his 'farewell sermon' on October 10 in Hull, Iowa, before departing with his family to his new charge in Redlands, California. The Hull congregation extended a call to Rev. R. Van Overloop of our Hope (Walker, Michigan) church.

God's Church is a singing church. With a view to that fact, the Junior Young People's Society of First Church decided that it would be very profitable for the entire congregation to sing Psalter numbers for about 15 minutes immediately following the evening service on the last Sunday of each month. The first such 'singspiration' was held the last Sunday in September. All but a very few of the congregation remained for a few moments of song. Mr. Ed Ophoff, who has demonstrated his talents as a songleader, as those of you who attended our 50th anniversary celebration last summer will attest, led the spirited singing.

I always thought that annual cleanings were to be done in the Spring. But many of our church bulletins have carried requests for 'volunteers' to be armed with mops, buckets, and whatever else one needs to clean and scrub down various of our churches, including Hull and Isabel, as well as several of our Christian Schools.

This is also the time of year in which many of our churches begin the Sunday School sessions (although several schedule Sunday School only during the summer months). The Faith Church bulletin

announced the beginning of Sunday School classes and continued with these words, "As we begin a new Sunday School season, let us as parents and children, remember the words of Proverbs chapter 4, 'Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding... Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.'"

Our church in Holland, Michigan, started their society season with an inspirational meeting of all their church societies on September 15. Seminarian Rich Flikkema was asked to speak for them. Rev. Engelsma's book on marriage is receiving considerable attention in our various society gatherings. The Hull Mr. & Mrs. Society has also decided to use this book as a study and discussion guide. The Hull Young People's Society began their season with a discussion of the importance of Protestant Reformed education, a topic that must seem very close to them, with the opening of their new Christian School this fall. The South Holland Mr. & Mrs. Society decided to study the distinctive teachings of the Protestant Reformed Churches regarding both faith and life this year. A fine opportunity for the young couples of the church to grow in their knowledge of what it means to be Protestant Reformed. The Randolph Ladies Society just completed a project of installing a new stove in the parsonage. Rev. Bekkering and his wife extended thanks to the ladies for "the love, interest, and concern expressed in your kind deed."

K.G.V.