

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Now we still look into the mirror of the holy Scriptures. . . . As we stare upon our sinful image we see behind us, as it were, the glorious image of our resurrected Lord, the Lord of glory, the Lamb for sinners slain. He speaks to us through that mirror, and by His Spirit in our hearts assures us that His righteousness is our righteousness, and His blessed resurrection life is ours forever. As we look and listen we are changed, transformed into the likeness of that glorious image of Christ, taking on holiness and righteousness in the true knowledge of Father. See page 2.

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

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

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

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

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Business Office: The Standard Bearer
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Australian Business Office: Reformed Literature Centre,
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Queensland, Australia

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MEDITATION

Languishing for God

Rev. C. Hanko

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he (or better, it) shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

I John 3:2.

"We shall be like Him," like Father.

What child-like faith, what blessed expectation, what languishing of soul in ardent anticipation is expressed in this confession which the aged apostle John, as a compassionate father lays upon the lips of his beloved children in the Lord.

It is true, that "we know not what we shall be." Many questions clamor for an answer as we try to envision the life beyond death and the grave.

We have questions in regard to the intermediate state. How can our souls be active in heaven while our bodies still rest in the grave? Will we recognize our

dear ones who have preceded us to glory? Will there be a closer intimacy between them and us, closer than with the other saints, because our lives were so intimately interwoven here on earth? Will we be like a small family, sharing our mansions, within the family of God? Will we remember the deeds done in the body, also the sinful deeds, but then as completely forgiven in the blood of our dear Savior? Will we know what is taking place on earth as Christ carries out the counsel of God toward His speedy return?

There are also questions in regard to the future life in our resurrection bodies. Will our present weaknesses become our strengths; will our present faults then prove to be our virtues? Will the latent talents and abilities that were never developed here come to their full usefulness there? Will a person with poetic ability compose new songs of praise for all of us to sing? Will a person with musical talent lead the choirs of heavenly hosts? Will the individual with intellectual acumen use that to enrich us in the glories of our God? Will we know Abraham at sight? Will our lives, even though we make up a multitude that no man can number, be so intimately related to each other, that every one in his own individual manner will serve for the blessedness of all the saints? Together, dependent upon one another, yet in perfect unison, like a mighty choir, will we show forth the praises of our God in word and deed every moment, every day, and that with our whole being?

Many, many questions, too deep for us to penetrate now, are awaiting their answer in the life to come. Now we know in part. We do not even know what we shall be. For "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

This we do know, that, when the veil is lifted and it appears what we shall be, *we shall be like God*.

The very thought staggers the imagination. Who can search out the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of that love of God that eternally and sovereignly determined, "My chosen people shall forever be even as I am: they shall dwell in My presence, they shall see My face, they shall bear My likeness as sons and daughters in My House"? Who can tell the infinite price that God paid with His own precious blood to ransom us from sin and death and to merit for us the right to bear that exalted name, "sons of God"? Who can realize the bitter agony in the soul of Jesus, the Son of God, especially during those three hours of darkness when the debt of our sins weighed heavily upon Him, and He unflinchingly paid the price to wipe the slate clean for each of us? Christ did not die for all humanity, nor even for a designated number of people; He died for His sheep, each of which He knew by name even as He was dying. Who can spell out the wonder of grace that changes filthy,

leprous sinners, children of Satan, into holy and righteous sons of God? "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to whom be the glory forever." (Romans 11:33, 36)

How repulsive now is the horrid lie of Satan that once had such a strong appeal for us, "Ye shall be as God"! The devil, whose very name means deceiver, approached Eve in the garden with the subtle question, "You may eat of all the trees of the garden, may you not? It is preposterous to think that your God would withhold the delicious fruit of any of His good trees from His friend-servants. Why should He?" This was sufficient to sow the seeds of distrust in Eve's mind. We are horror stricken to think that this distrust should so soon bear its evil fruit, that the devil could pour out his blasphemous charge against God without shocking the woman who so recently had stood in God's very presence. Yet the devil spewed out his lie, and Eve not only listened, but consented to it. Satan made bold to say, "Your God is a liar. Even though He affirmed that you would die if you ate of the forbidden fruit, that cannot be true. You won't die. In fact, you will know what it is to live. Real living is to assert yourself, insist on your own rights, decide for yourself what is right and what is wrong, what is good for you and what is not. In that respect you will be like, even equal to God."

One shudders to think of what went on in the soul of our first mother as she sought out her husband with the deliberate attempt to destroy him. She had eaten of the forbidden tree; now her soul was filled with contempt for Adam. She could never love him any more, much less enjoy his companionship, unless he became even as she was, filled with the ambition to be a little god. Years later Paul penned those soul-condemning words concerning our first parents and all their posterity: "Not only that they do such things that are worthy of death, but take pleasure in those who do them." (Romans 1:32) The wicked ambition to be as God inspired Pharaoh to ask, "Who is God that I should obey Him?" That was the vain dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the Caesars, the Herods, and will be the boast of the antichrist, who will sit upon the throne ruling all the nations of the world as if he were God. Shame on us, who by nature bear the image and likeness of Satan, for we also want to be independent, self-sufficient little gods, and even gloat about it. Preposterous lie, rooted in sinful pride! We boast of our position, our fortunes, our unique abilities; that big I, I, I.

As saints in Christ Jesus we have learned to loathe the very thought of being a god, humbly to confess: "Thou, O Lord, art God alone! My God!" Then with

grateful hearts to add in eager anticipation, "We shall be like Him." The proud heart that once boasted, "I am the master of my fate, the captain of my soul," shamefacedly confesses that pride is sin, and sin is rebellion against the living God. Moreover, we know that sin is a cruel tyrant, obedience to sin is the worst form of slavery, the clarion call of sin lures only to disaster. Aroused to the consciousness of the dreadful offence of our sins, we learn to plead, "O God, be merciful to this vile sinner." We experience the comfort that has thrilled the souls of the saints throughout the ages, that we are not our own, but belong with body and soul, in life and in death to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. Before the face of our God we are privileged to live as friend-servants, loving Him, trusting in Him, awaiting all good things from His gracious hand, serving Him in obedient devotion.

How do we account for the peace that floods our souls from day to day? The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of adoption. God Himself testifies within us that we are His sons, and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. The still, small voice of the Spirit in our hearts grows into a cry of longing, "Abba, Father." That same cry becomes our cry in childlike assurance, repeating, "Father, I love Thee; I know Thou art mine." Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. That is the name, sons of God, that is rightfully ours from Father's own lips. That is the testimony of the Spirit, Who speaks to us through the Scriptures, assuring us that all of the Father's glorious promises are meant for us. That Word is a power within us, transforming us from children of darkness into sons of the living God. Love, divine love bestowed on us as a free gift, bequeathed unto us as heirs of salvation, knits our hearts to Father in living faith, to know Him, to love Him, to worship and adore Him with our whole being in the beauty of holiness. No, we still do not fully know what we shall be, but this we know, that when that is made manifest, we shall be like Father!

What natural son does not need the repeated assurance that he is father's son? What natural son does not admire father so much that he wants to look like him, imitate him, and some day grow up and be just like Dad. The natural child never fully attains that ambition; we do. We become like our Father in heaven. Our soul languishes in longing for the living God. When shall I come and behold His face in righteousness?

Because of our likeness we shall see Him as He is. Now we still look into the mirror of the holy Scriptures, which fully serve our present purpose, yet always leave us with our problems. At the same time

that mirror does something to us. It exposes our littleness, our insignificance, and the horror of our sins. As we stare upon our sinful image we see behind us, as it were, the glorious image of our resurrected Lord, the Lord of glory, the Lamb for sinners slain. He speaks to us through that mirror, and by His Spirit in our hearts assures us that His righteousness is our righteousness, and His blessed resurrection life is ours forever. As we look and listen we are changed, transformed into the likeness of that glorious image of Christ, taking on holiness and righteousness in the true knowledge of Father.

If that Word is so powerful and so glorious in its revelation, how much more the wonder of grace when we shall see God in the face of Jesus Christ, yes, God exactly as He is in all His fulness. No, no man can see the Infinite, the Eternal, the Omnipresent Spirit Who dwells in the dazzling brightness of His own holiness. Yet our God will reveal Himself continuously in the face of Jesus Christ, so that we will know Him, even as we are known by Him.

O the wonder! Adam knew God the moment he opened his eyes in paradise. He saw and heard the word of God in every tree, plant, bird, four-footed animal and creeping things. Yes, he heard the word of God in the sun, and moon, and stars. He could take that word upon his lips, repeating after God the name that God placed upon the creature. As all creation joined the angels in singing the Maker's praise, Adam and Eve joined in a symphony of adoration.

If Adam could see and hear God's word in paradise, how much more glorious will be the revelation, how much clearer our vision and our hearing in the new creation! We will see God, hear Him, smell Him, taste Him, feel Him, touch Him, sense Him in every heavenly creature. We will see how each creature is related to the other, how they are all related to us, how they all, including the angels, serve us as the Church, Christ's Body, that we in Christ may show forth the glories, the virtues, the praises of our God!

"One thing, just one thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life — to endless eternity; *to behold the beauty of the Lord*, and to enquire in His temple." (Psalm 27:4)

With a name that is uniquely mine as son in Father's House, and with a new song in my heart, I'll join the myriads of the saints, the ten thousands of the angels, and the entire host of every living creature to worship in thankfulness, in awe, in solemn adoration.

For I will be like Father!

That will be glory, glory for me!

EDITORIAL

Changes for the New Volume

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

As is customary at the beginning of a new volume-year, we inform our readers of plans for the contents of the new volume and of changes in the staff.

There is nothing earth-shaking to report. For the most part, our *Standard Bearer* and its staff of part-time, strictly volunteer writers simply "plug along" each year; and we are thankful that we are able to find a sufficient number of faithful writers among our very limited number of workers, and are able to publish our magazine in full format twenty-one times per year. Frankly, I think that is no small accomplishment; and, as we begin a new volume, I wish to encourage my fellow staff members to labor faithfully and steadily, so that together, with the help of God, we may continue to send forth this testimony to the truth.

The changes are the following. Rev. G. Van Baren will shift from *Signs of the Times* to *All Around Us*. *Signs of the Times* will be shared by Rev. H. Veldman

and a new staff member, Rev. Mark H. Hoeksema. Rev. J. Heys will be back in our pages on a full time basis with his contributions to *The Day of Shadows*. Rev. D. Kuiper resigned from the staff, and *In His Fear* will be in sole charge of Rev. M. Joostens. We also decided to introduce a new department; and since it will be introduced in this issue, I will say no more about it here. Again this year we hope to present guest articles by several of our ministers who are not members of the staff.

So much for the staff's part.

We hope that you, our readers, will also do your part. Our magazine is unsuccessful unless it is read!

And, of course, we always foster the hope of increasing our readership. Perhaps some joint efforts by staff, board, and readership could be put forth to this end. How about it?

SEMINARY CONVOCATION ADDRESS

Bring the Books and the Parchments

The subject of my address is borrowed from the last part of II Timothy 4:13, where Paul writes to Timothy: "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments."

This word belongs to some personal items at the close of this pastoral epistle. Paul mentions his desire that Timothy should come to him in Rome as soon as possible. He wants to see him and talk with him: for the apostle is a prisoner in Caesar's power for the second time, is ready to be offered, and the time of his departure is at hand. And when Timothy comes, he must bring to the apostle certain items which he needs — among them a cloak (probably a winter coat)

which had been left at Troas, and among them these books and parchments that are mentioned and that are evidently known to Timothy.

But although these are personal items, yet this word belongs to the inspired Scriptures. There is a Word of God here which we must try to discern. And I believe that Word is appropriate for us as students and professors at the beginning of our new school term, as I hope to make plain. It is appropriate in general for all of us; but I am especially addressing it to our school personnel; and you, our audience, while you may also derive benefit from these remarks, nevertheless function chiefly as witnesses this evening.

THE BOOKS AND THE PARCHMENTS

First of all, we may ask the question: what were those books and parchments which Paul wanted Timothy to bring?

What are called "books" in our English translation were papyrus rolls. They were not books as we know them today, but rolls, or scrolls, of a writing material somewhat like paper which was made from the papyrus reed. The "parchments" were also such rolls, but they were manufactured from animal skins. Not impossibly these parchments were made at Pergamos, in Asia Minor, which was famous for its parchments. However that may be, these parchment rolls were a more permanent, longer-lasting writing material, and therefore more valuable. Even that fact, apart from the question what may or may not have been written on these parchments, would account for the fact that the apostle "especially" desired that Timothy bring to him the parchments in question.

Now as you might expect, interpreters have had a field day speculating as to the nature of these "books and parchments." They are not further identified in the text. But they were evidently important to Paul, even near the end of his life. He wanted them. And that word "especially" shows that there was something important about the parchments: they were valuable to the Apostle Paul, and he especially wanted Timothy to bring them. And so there have been various suggestions made as to the nature of these books and parchments. Some have suggested that these were copies of the Old Testament Scriptures. Others have suggested that perhaps the books were copies of some of the apostle's own writings, while the parchments were some of the Old Testament rolls. Still others have suggested that these "books and parchments" were neither Paul's previous writings, nor copies of the Old Testament Scriptures, nor, in fact, any writings at all, but simply blank writing materials which the apostle wanted to use for his own writing during his last days on earth. Thus, of course, you could speculate without end. Why did Paul want these "books and parchments" if they were already written full? Was he, perhaps, of a mind to divide his few earthly goods when Timothy came to Rome? Were these possibly documents which he wanted Luke (who was with him in Rome) to have? Or did he want to pass them on to John Mark, whom he enjoined Timothy to bring to him? Or would he divide these "books and parchments" among the three men? Or was it simply that the apostle wanted to insure that these valuable writing materials were not lost and would not go to waste? Precisely what was his intent?

We may answer this question both negatively and positively.

In the first place, and negatively, it ought to be

plain that there are several questions here which simply cannot be answered. And we may add: they *need* not be answered. We may rest assured that if it were necessary for us to know these details, the Holy Spirit would take care that we could discover the answers to our questions. We might like to satisfy our curiosity on this score, but the mere satisfaction of our curiosity is not at all necessary. However attractive one or the other of the suggestions which I have mentioned may be, we must note carefully that all are purely speculative. Scripture simply does not inform us as to the specific nature of these books and parchments.

But with that problem out of the way, we may also note, positively, what can be said about the character of these books and parchments. The first item may probably sound like a truism: they were *books*! Whatever their specific character may have been — whether they were papyrus rolls and parchment rolls already written full, or whether they were writing materials for the apostle's use, whether they were some of the writings later incorporated in the New Testament canon, or whether they were some of the Old Testament writings, or whether they were some other, unspecified writings — they were *books*. And some of them, judging from the fact that valuable parchments are specially mentioned, were books of considerable worth, with contents especially worth preserving. For our purposes, we may note that a book is a means for the setting down in writing, the preservation, and the transmission and dissemination of *knowledge*. Whatever these particular "books and parchments" may have been, such is the character of *books* — to one degree or another.

The second item of importance about these books and parchments which may surely be established is that their contents and their use and their usefulness for the apostle stood in relation to the Word of God and the preaching of the Gospel. We may rest assured of that — again, whatever their specific character may have been, and whatever the Apostle Paul intended to do with them. You might probably wonder what in the world the apostle in prison, shortly before his death, wanted to do with these books. And we might like to lift the curtain of mystery a bit. But there are no answers to such questions. Except this one: these books were useful, profitable to Paul with a view to the ministry of the Gospel. Even at this late point in his life — or perhaps especially at this point — this was surely the situation. This was why he wanted Timothy to come. This was literally why he wanted Timothy to bring John Mark: he was profitable to Paul for the ministry. And this was also the usefulness of these books. It is the *apostle* who wants them. And the preaching of the Gospel, the setting forth of the knowledge of the God of our salvation in Jesus

Christ, was the all-consuming purpose of his life. These books and parchments and his desire for them were necessarily connected with that all-consuming purpose.

And thus, today there are various and many “books and parchments.” We live in an entirely different age, an age in which, due to modern printing processes, there is a glut of books in virtually every area of learning — many of these books, even in the theological field, not worth the paper they are printed on. Nevertheless, there are for us what may be classified as “parchments,” that is, books which are especially valuable and worth preserving and using; and there are also many books, that is, publications of comparatively less value, but nevertheless useful and needed.

We may mention various kinds. There are, first of all, the Scriptures themselves, both in their original languages and in various translations. These are “parchments” of a unique sort, being the written record of God’s infallible Word. There are the “parchments” of our confessions, those documents in which our Christian faith and our Reformed faith is set forth and preserved and transmitted. There are the writings of the Reformers, of the church fathers. There are books and parchments in dogmatics, in church history, of an exegetical nature, and writings in every area of theology. There are also books and parchments in those fields of study which are necessary for the ministry, but which are nevertheless only *tools*. I have in mind the study of the languages, for example. You need a knowledge of various languages; and therefore you need good grammar books, syntax books, lexicons and dictionaries. And thus there are many such studies, and books and parchments for all of them. Again, there are the books and parchments of heretics. They are needed, too. You cannot simply say that they are no good, and that you will pay no attention to them, will not have them in your library. You must know and understand their errors, so that you can oppose and combat them.

“... bring the books, and especially the parchments.”

WHY THEY ARE NEEDED

That brings us to a second question: why are these books and parchments needed?

That they are indeed needed is self-evident.

First of all, the Apostle Paul needed them. The text here assumes this. Whatever Paul’s reason may have been at the moment and whatever his specific purpose may have been — this is not stated. But he wanted to have these “books and parchments,” and Timothy must bring them when he comes. Hence, they were needed. You might argue to the contrary.

You might argue that Paul was an apostle, that he was inspired in his knowledge and his words; and therefore he certainly did not have to read and study. Or you might argue that he was nearing the end of his ministry and that he was soon to die apparently. But the fact stands: he wanted them, and therefore he needed them. They were necessary.

Secondly, there is the same necessity for us.

There have always been those who denied the need of a trained, educated ministry. They are mystics. They make a false disjunction between the Spirit and the Word, between the leading of the Spirit and the need of “books and parchments,” that is, the need of education and study. There have been others who are inclined to minimize and belittle the need of thorough training and study. And it is true, of course, that there is reason to have a healthy fear of much that goes by the name of “scholarship” today — not, however, because it is scholarship, but because it is unbelieving. No, the books and parchments are necessary. They must be used diligently. They must be read. They must be studied. I believe it was the homiletician Klaus Harms who once said that if he did not study and prepare to preach, but supposedly trusted to the Holy Spirit’s guidance when he went to the pulpit, the Holy Spirit would indeed speak to him, but would say, “*Klaus, Klaus, du bist faul gewesen.* (Klaus, Klaus, you have been lazy.)” No, all other things being equal, the more books and parchments you have and make use of, the better ministers you will be.

Why?

There are certain patent facts which constitute the reason for this necessity of books and parchments.

The objective reason lies in the fact that it pleases God to cause the riches of the truth, the riches of the knowledge of Himself as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ, to be unfolded ever more and more and transmitted to His people down through the centuries through the means of “books and parchments” and in the line of generations. This is true, first of all, with regard to Scripture itself. God’s Word does not have to be revealed anew to each generation. But it has been preserved for us in “books and parchments” and copies thereof from generation to generation down to the present. But that is true, secondly, of the whole organism, the whole body of the truth as it has been mined from the gold mine of God’s Word and has it been expounded and systematically set forth by the church and under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, down through the centuries, and then transmitted to us in hundreds and thousands of books and parchments. You see, each generation does not have to begin anew and independently of the church of all ages to discover and to understand the truth. We do

not, and we may not, in our seminary simply turn to the Scriptures as though we are the first ones to do so and to be able to understand them; that would be an insult to the Spirit of Truth Who has always guided the church into all the truth. No, we have a heritage which has come down to us from the church of all ages. And it is preserved for us in books and parchments. And we must make use of that heritage, and therefore of the thousands of books and parchments available to us. At the same time, it is true that each generation does not have to begin anew to discover error and heresy! This, too, is preserved in books and parchments; and we must read and study them in order to be equipped and to be able to combat it.

Let me stress, too, that ours is a great responsibility in this regard. This is for the simple reason that today, more than ever before, the amount of books and parchments in which the heritage of knowledge is preserved for us is so vast.

Moreover, that responsibility is increased by the fact that we live in an age when the same media of "books and parchments" have been the means for the propagation of the very opposite of the true knowledge of God, that is, the lie, and that, too, more than ever before.

For, you understand, what I am talking about tonight is not mere learning for learning's sake, so-called scholarship for scholarship's sake. There is such a thing. And you must even be on guard against it, especially if you are of a somewhat intellectual bent of mind. You see, you may go to school and become a great scholar in Greek or Hebrew, or even a world-renowned scholar in Dogmatics, let us say. But if all your learning is not strictly in the service of the Word of God as recorded by the infallible Scriptures, then all your scholarship is an abominable evil in the sight of the Holy One. And then you are nothing but a learned fool, no matter how the whole world may hail you as a great scholar. No, all your use of "books and parchments" must be in relation to and in subservience to the Word of God, and that, too, antithetically and over against the lie.

The subjective reason why the books and parchments are needed lies in the fact that God has given you a mind to understand; and that intellect is the channel through which the Spirit of Truth conveys to us the riches of our salvation, the riches of God's grace. The Spirit works through the Word. And that Word addresses the *mind*, first of all, and only through the mind the *heart*. That is simply the God-ordained way. God does not simply pour the riches of salvation into us as I may pour water into a glass. No, He *speaks* to us. He addresses us through our minds. And so the Scriptures are replete with references to

the necessity of knowledge and understanding. And this, in turn, implies that we have need of books and parchments from which we can gain such knowledge and understanding. Moreover, the more richly the Lord endows you and me with good minds, minds which are able to think and to reason clearly, minds which are able to penetrate to the meanings of things, the greater is our responsibility not to let those powers of intellect lie unused, not to let them atrophy, not to waste them on worthless trash, but to use them in order that we may be enriched in the knowledge of the truth.

WHO NEED THEM?

Obviously, it was the Apostle Paul who needed these books and parchments in the first instance.

But if that is true, then how much more true it is that we all, as the people of God, are in need of them.

Let me take this opportunity to stress this point for you, my audience, in general, first of all. It is a rather striking fact that there are more books and parchments available today than ever before; but it is also a fact that our generation is, to put it mildly, not known for its avid reading, and known still less for *good* reading. I dare say we will find this to be true only too often in our own homes. I will let you judge as to the reasons for this. But I assure you that the reasons are not valid, and the situation is not salutary for ourselves or for the church. We must read more; and we must read more good, solid, instructive, spiritually edifying materials. And this holds true for our children and young people, too! Well may we say: "...bring the books, and especially the parchments."

Nevertheless, my main purpose tonight is to address this word to you, our pre-seminary and seminary students. You are students! You are students who look forward to the ministry of the Word! Well, then, *be* students indeed! And that means that you must put forth every effort to use diligently the books and parchments available to you. I refer not merely to those which you must use for your classes, nor merely to those which you are prodded to use by collateral reading assignments. No, you must immerse yourselves as much as possible in good, beneficial books and parchments. You must do it all in obedience and subservience to the Word of God. You must do it *now* while you have the time and opportunity as students. You must do it to become prepared as well as possible for your future ministry. And you must do it so that you form good habits for the future: for do not forget that you are going to be students all your life!

Bring the books and the parchments!

ALL AROUND US

O.P.C. General Assembly

R.P.C.E.S. General Synod

Rev. G. Van Baren

Through the summer months many church assemblies and church councils hold their meetings. In coming issues we expect to point out some of the decisions which were taken in these gatherings.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church met in its forty-third General Assembly in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, beginning on May 27. This group of churches commemorated its 40th anniversary this past summer.

The O.P.C. dealt with much routine business, as reported in its paper, *The Presbyterian Guardian*, but also with one serious case of discipline. For the first time in its history, the O.P.C. was confronted in its General Assembly (comparable to our Synod) with a doctrinal problem. This problem included the question of "speaking in tongues."

The report in the *Guardian* stated this:

Though not the first major business before the assembly, certainly the most significant and time-consuming (three whole days and two evening sessions!) was the judicial case originating in the Presbytery of Ohio against the Rev. Arnold S. Kress.

The case was of interest partly because it was the first time in the forty-year history of the denomination that a judicial case had ever come before a General Assembly. Other doctrinal problems had arisen in the past, but these were dealt with — if at all — by complaints against lower courts or by referring the whole thing to a study committee. In this case, a presbytery had drawn up formal charges of doctrinal error against a member, and both the presbytery and Mr. Kress had "gone the whole route" in seeking a judicial answer to the doctrinal questions.

More important perhaps than such historical precedents was the doctrinal issue itself. Though the modern "charismatic movement" has swirled across many churches in recent years — and often left widespread wreckage behind — it had so far left the Orthodox Presbyterian Church largely untouched. Mr. Kress, though, had sought out the experience of "speaking in tongues" while a missionary in Japan.

Having been brought home by the Committee on Foreign Missions and given a special furlough to study the biblical teaching on the subject, Mr. Kress had produced several papers on various aspects of it. These documents then became the basis for the doctrinal charges brought against him by his presbytery.

Though originally charged with three related errors in doctrine (and a fourth charge on a different subject), Mr. Kress was found guilty by the Presbytery of Ohio on only one (and on the fourth separate charge). The verdict was reached on a charge that Mr. Kress had "asserted that the gifts of prophecy and tongues may continue in the church today." This, the presbytery went on to charge, was "contrary to the Word of God which teaches:

"(1) Tongues were for a sign of judgment against unbelieving Israel — I Cor. 14:21, 22 and Isaiah 28:11, 12;

"(2) Both tongues and prophecy were for the giving of word-revelation in the apostolic church — I Cor. 14:26-33; Eph. 2:20;

"(3) Even private speaking in tongues is speaking in mysteries, i.e., word-revelation — I Cor. 14:2; Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:3-6, 9, 10;

"(4) The gifts of prophecy and tongues were concomitant with the gift of the apostles — Heb. 2:3-4; 3 Cor. 12:12 with I Cor. 12-14."

It should be pointed out that Mr. Kress consistently had rejected the "second blessing" theology of many modern "charismatics." He has also insisted that whatever the exact form of prophecy and tongues that may be found today, it can in no sense be understood as normative, infallible revelation of the kind that was incorporated in the Scriptures. . . .

The final vote of the Assembly was 72 to uphold the judgment of the Presbytery of Ohio and 39 voting against this. The writer of the article insists that the 39 votes in support of Mr. Kress were not in support of his views but rather because of a conviction that a clear case from Scripture had not been made against the Kress position.

This same Rev. Arnold Kress was held guilty of an offense in doctrine contrary to the Word of God in asserting that "the church ought not necessarily to exclude from the office of the ministry of the Word those who, although true believers, hold serious doctrinal errors such as Arminianism, or the denial of infant baptism, . . . contrary to Scripture which teaches that only those should be made Elders in the church who 'hold to the faithful word which is according to the teaching (of the apostles)' (Titus 1:9)."

After reaching a decision on the "tongues" matter, the Assembly did pass a resolution "urging Mr. Kress to accept the decisions of his brethren and further expressing its judgment that his ministerial gifts were of value to the church despite the adverse judicial decisions."

There is no further report in this issue of the *Guardian* concerning the outcome of this case.

The O.P.C. received reports concerning mission work it is doing in Egypt, in Taiwan, in Japan, in Korea. It also received the report that its mission in Eritrea, Ethiopia, was forced by the government of that country to close. Some of this O.P.C. mission work is done in conjunction with other denominations: the Reformed Church, U.S. (Eureka Classis); the Reformed Churches of New Zealand and Australia especially.

The O.P.C. expends considerable monies for "Christian Education" which includes especially a Sunday school curriculum. This it is doing now in conjunction with the new Presbyterian Church in America.

The home mission program of the O.P.C. includes four "missionaries-at-large" who serve as "church-planting evangelists." The committee of the Assembly which oversees its home mission work, also provides loans to newly-established churches or mission churches for the purchase of land, parsonage, or church construction.

A letter from the Reformed Presbyterian Church,

Evangelical Synod, instructed its committee to contact the O.P.C. in order to prepare a new plan of union. This was placed in the hands of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations for consideration.

The next Assembly of the O.P.C. is scheduled for June 2, 1977, at Oostburg, Wisconsin.

* * * * *

R.P.C.E.S. General Synod

The Presbyterian Guardian gives also a report on the meeting of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, whose synod met at Colorado Springs, Colorado, beginning on May 21, 1976. Here too there were decisions concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. A committee report of one and a half pages (based upon three earlier lengthy reports) was presented. This "signalled a shift away from the view of Warfield that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit (as tongues, healings, prophecies, etc.) ceased with the end of the apostolic age." The report concluded: "the canon of Scripture is closed, that speaking in tongues is not to be sought as an attestation of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that speaking in tongues is not to be encouraged or lauded, and that those who have had special experiences with God should guard against the divisiveness of making their private experience with God normative for all believers." The reporter suggests that much was left unsaid and unexegeted, and that many in that church thought that more ought to be said of the work of the Spirit as currently interpreted and experienced. The conclusion was that the most useful "course under the circumstances was to agree on what they could agree on and not attempt any further clarifying consensus."

This same denomination dealt with the role of women in the church. A lengthy report of some 49 pages and extensive exegesis emphasized that there was "but one authoritative church office, that of the elder. While women are clearly excluded from that one authoritative office, the report contended, they are not to be excluded from the non-authoritative office of deacon." The report insisted that in the church there are but two groups: elders and non-elders. Also: male non-elders and female non-elders are equal in authority in the church. Much of the report was adopted, but the question of whether women could be ordained as deacons was sent back to the committee for further study. One suggested that the Synod would be known as the "Synod that recommitts." The approach taken concerning women in office differs somewhat from others taken in our day within various denominations. But it appears that the general approach is to destroy the scriptural principle little by little. One Christian Reformed man, a judge, recently recommended a similar approach with his own denomination. He insisted that the

people generally would most readily accept women in the office of the diaconate. Once that gap is bridged, then there could be similar attempts with respect to the office of elder — and later, of that of minister. He thus encouraged the churches to ordain women deacons — and await any possible protests against the action taken.

So the various denominations have faced, and continue to face, many of the difficulties of this age. It would appear increasingly difficult to hold the line on the one hand against the liberalism which encroaches in our day, and on the other hand against the errors of pentecostalism, etc., which have been troubling denominations.

STUDIES IN ISAIAH

Israel's Woe -- Judgments a "Future Shock"

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

Isaiah 5:12-16

1. *Woe against the drunkards who fare sumptuously and laugh now.* "And harp and lyre, timbrel and flute, and wine shall be (at) their banquetings; and they do not regard (with pleasure) the work of Jehovah, neither have they respect to the product of His hands" (v. 12, Heb.). "They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ" (Job 21:12). The drunkards already mentioned are busy in their excess of riot with wine and exciting music as they celebrate their Terpsichorean and Bacchanalian gods. They make a sinful use of music. Amos complained of this: they "chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (6:5-6). To take music, which as a science is a gift of God, and pervert and pitch it to a screeching, blaring level of sound to drown out the voice of conscience is immoral. Such carousing goes on in the air. That tiny speck you see in the sky — perhaps it would never occur to you, but in this futuristic age it is both possible and probable that that jet is filled with scores of passengers who have chosen a flight on which the food, wine, music, magazines, movies, stewardesses and their mini-skirts are all French! They madly dance, sing their bawdy ballads and laugh now, but the day will come when they shall mourn. "The mirth of timbrels ceaseth, the noise of those who rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong

drink shall be bitter to those who drink it" (chap. 24:8-9). It was bad enough that they carried on such celebrations at times when they should have been warned by the Lord's works of judgment. But worse, they continued getting drunk and playing with sex while judgments were actually threatening all around. Well then! "because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, He shall destroy them, and not build them up" (Psm. 28:5). "In their joy and glory they had no sense for what was the most glorious of all, viz., the moving and working of God in history; so that they could not even discern the judgment which was in course of preparation at that very time." — Delitzsch. On the contrary, Isaiah had a great sense of appreciation for this when he wrote, "For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob" (14:1). For more of God's hand in history, see 14:24, 27; 19:12, 17; 23:8, 9, 11, and especially this, "For I the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior, I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee, because thou *art* precious in My sight, thou *wast* honored, and I *love* thee; therefore will I give mankind for thee, and races for thy person" (43:3-4, transla. and emph., RCH). Out of the sinful nation God has a remnant according to the election of grace.

2. *These drunkards spewed out of the land.* "Therefore My people are carried away captive with-

out knowledge; and their (his) glory is men of hunger, and their crowd (of drunks) dry (from) thirst" (v. 13, Heb.). Rich gourmets would starve and the drinking set would die of thirst. Eating and drinking in this opulent age goes on in the manner of pagan gluttony. Then the senses are dulled, leaving men without understanding and threatened with hunger and thirst. Luther put it, "They will pay for their drunkenness with thirst." When they do suffer that enervating judgment, they never know what hits them. They go into captivity without knowledge. Their land would be invaded by the enemy, and a hostile nation would carry them away. As with all captive nations today, their exile would be a divine judgment, a punishment for sin, as it was for Israel and the other nations. But here it is "My people" who go into exile under the blast of judgment. Why is this? They were "without knowledge" (Rom. 1:31a; 3:11a). How were they God's people, without knowledge? Through sin, the sin of languishing in their wretched ignorance of the working of the Lord in providences, judgments, and manifestations of His righteous wrath. The wicked cannot see, and "My people," sadly enough, cannot rightly interpret the signs of the times. For they despise instruction and hate to be reformed. We suffer every time we do not allow ourselves to be taught by the Word of God. But it is the worst form of lack of knowledge when people do not know the Lord, do not know His person, work, office, grace, and salvation; worse still when introduced to Him they reject Him. But in the case of Israel, their lack of knowledge was their own choice; they would not have any knowledge of God, so that theirs was an affected ignorance. They did not want to know the Messiah (of chapter 53), nor any of the clear, irrefutable evidence of His being that prophesied Messiah.

They had been brought so far down that "their glory was men of hunger." Like the great tribes of American Indians, their mighty warriors, hunters, and red men nobility, became pitiful remnants of a decimated people starved on reservations by the U. S. government, and turned into shivering, shriveled, famished old men, dying of hunger. But though it is easy to flick off the story of *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* with a wave of the hand, we are not far from a like situation. For the government is becoming more and more antichristian, and fast getting to the point of Revelation, chapter 11 and 13:17, when it will turn against the church to starve and exterminate it.

So Israel as a nation had come to hate the light and love darkness, which means they despised God's law, and went on stumbling without knowledge. Therefore, it was the Lord's purpose to destroy the kingdom. God would come against them "that forsake the Lord, that forget My holy mountain (kingdom) . . .

therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall bow down to the slaughter, because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spoke, ye did not hear, but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that in which I delighted not. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, My servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, My servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; behold, My servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall wail for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto My chosen; for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call His servants by another name" (Isa. 65:11-15).

3. *They are cast down to hell.* "Therefore Sheol enlarges her self (soul) and opens her mouth to no limit (illimitably) and (into it) shall descend her (Jerusalem's) splendor, (together with) her multitude, her tumult and the one rejoicing in her" (v. 14, Heb.). The captivity will come, and with it, siege, hunger, and thirst with a great mortality rate. The titanic sea-monster, Sheol, Death, shall rush at the famishing shoals with wide opened jaws to gorge itself on all swept into its maw. The cemeteries do not make up the bulging belly of the Sheolic monster, for there will not be enough of them to accommodate all the bodies going down to Tophet. Sheol never says, Enough! (Prov. 30:5, 16; Num. 16:30-33).

Sheol is the Hebrew word used to express the idea of the grave. "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the *grave* and bringeth up" (I Sam. 2:6). "Like sheep, they are laid in the *grave*; death shall feed on them, and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning, and their beauty shall consume in the *grave* from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the *grave*: for He shall receive me" (Psm. 49:14-15). "I will ransom them from the power of the *grave*, I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O *grave*, I will be thy destruction" (Hos. 13:14).

Sheol also means *hell*, as the context will show. "A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest *hell*" (Dt. 32:22). "The wicked shall be turned into *hell*, and all the nations that forget God" (Psm. 9:17). "Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on *hell*" (Prov. 5:5). "Though they dig into *hell*, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, then will I bring them down" (Amos 9:2). *Sheol* then is the earthly place in the dust which holds the bodies of men and the deathly place which holds the souls of the wicked.

"Her splendor" refers to the nobles of Jerusalem, their civic rulers, ecclesiastics and society's rich. "Her multitude" applies to the common people. "Her tumult" means the noisy ones (like the "tumultuous

ones" of Jer. 48:45; but see Isa. 24:6-12) who sing, dance, roar, and create a continual din at their parties. Then they who made a god of their belly (Lk. 16:25; Phil. 3:19) go down to the belly of hell. But then, "had not victory been swallowed up by death? So it might have seemed; but God, who carries out His plan, would so work that one day, inasmuch as from Judah the Lord had sprung, the triumphant message of salvation might be proclaimed. 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' I Cor. 15:54b" (Prof. E. J. Young).

4. *Man abased; God exalted.* What God purposes and intends by these woes and the punishment of death already described is accomplished effectually and patently in the humiliating of man and the exalting of God. "And the little man (common man) shall be brought down, and the big man shall be humbled; and the eyes of the exalted (self-exalted, i.e., arrogant) ones will be humiliated. But Jehovah Tsebhaoth will be exalted by judgment (justice, right!), and the (true) God, the Holy One, shall be made holy (sanctified) by righteousness" (vv. 15-16, Heb.). (See remarks on 2:9). The big man will be brought down by death to nothing, and the little man who is already nothing, will be by death made less than nothing. In the judgment, the eyes of the arrogant will be downcast. The rich with their wealth gone shall suffer miserable famishing. Now all

boasting is also gone. How the Pharisees boasted that they were children of Abraham, were free men, never in bondage, were righteous, and so not as other men! In that day they will be brought down in humiliating judgment, while God will be exalted in holiness and in righteousness. Holiness is not a mere action of God, but an attribute of His being. *The God* means the only and true God. The God the Holy One means God is absolutely and exclusively holy. Holy is His name. The seraphim call Him by that name, saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! Holiness is that attribute of God's essential nature "according to which He eternally wills, seeks and is consecrated to himself as the only good."

The wicked, whether little men or big men, must know and will know that God is God. The world must know and will know that God is a holy God. They will know His holiness and hatred of sin. They will learn to know this, either as repenting Nineveh did, or as condemned Jericho did. Either way, the Lord will be exalted and sanctified in justice and righteousness.

Correction (error in copy): in Aug. 1, 1976 issue, p. 956, 2nd col., 8th line, for "the person and his household" read "the person and his inheritance."

GUEST ARTICLE

The Necessary Keys

R. G. Moore

The church of Jesus Christ, as the body of Christ, is holy. So we confess together in the "Apostles Creed." When we say the church is holy, we mean that both as to her calling and in respect to her virtue she is holy. The church is consecrated unto God. The church is such in principle, in and of grace alone. Her holiness is the gift of grace. Thus neither with respect to her spiritual virtue of holiness, nor with respect to her calling, may she exalt herself. The church is holy only in Christ Jesus, our Lord. In and of herself the church, with the whole human race, is defiled and

dead through sin and trespass, and is wholly incapable of knowing God or serving Him. Yet the church, elect in Christ, is called in I Peter 2:9 "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." For God in His rich mercy saves her in Christ, redeeming her by the precious blood of His only begotten Son. Christ bore the sin and guilt of His Elect Body and was raised as a pledge of God of the church's righteousness in Christ. And now our Lord dwells with His Body by His Spirit, making her partake of His righteousness. Thus by grace in Christ the church, as His body, is holy.

However, of this holiness the church partakes but in principle. And in this life she has a battle of faith to fight against her threefold enemy: Satan, the world of darkness, and her own flesh. The church in this life has not obtained perfection. She, in her elect members, has but the beginning of new obedience. And because of the conflict between light and darkness the church must be constantly on guard, and must put off the work of the flesh and darkness, which would deprive her of her holiness. Therefore, the church has the calling to be holy. She has a holy ministry to fulfill, the ministry of the Word of God as it has been delivered to the church in the Holy Scriptures. Further she has the calling to administer the holy sacraments. The truth she must preserve, appropriate, and develop. And with the world and darkness she must not fellowship, for darkness hates her and her God.

Essential to the fulfilment of our calling as the "Body of Christ" is the maintenance of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Christ maintains the purity of His Body by the exercise of the key power in the church. Christ employs the keys of the kingdom of God through His church. Note Matt. 16:19: "And I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. "As the church properly employs the keys of the kingdom, Christ opens and closes the kingdom. In harmony with God's eternal counsel some are efficaciously drawn into the kingdom of God, but others are as powerfully excluded from the kingdom of heaven in the way of their sin and rebellion. The church that fails to properly exercise the key power to close the doors, never really opens them to anyone! She rather invites destruction, for "know ye not that a little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump?"

However, in the day in which we live it has become more common, also in the "Reformed Community," to express that the church instituted must be an open-ended fellowship. And this is not difficult to understand for many openly teach that heaven's gates are closed to no one; but God, they say, invites all to partake of the blessings of salvation. This theory views God to love all men, and thus the membership of the church must be closed to no one. Further, the success of the fulfilment of the church's calling is often measured by the number of members that can be enrolled. Consider the position of Rev. Dr. Robert H. Schuller of the Garden Grove Community Church near Anaheim, Calif (who graduated from a reformed seminary, and whose congregation is affiliated with a reformed denomination). He suggests that we think of our church as a supermarket for Jesus Christ — the church is in the business of "retailing religion." Then

he sets forth several principal ways in which this can most successfully be done in order to fill the church. The result of the above reasoning in both cases is that a particular belief in Christ is no longer an essential criterion for church membership.

However, Scripture teaches that there shall be many false christs who will put on sheep's clothing. The church, as well as individual christians, must try the spirits, whether they be of God or no. The question in the sphere of the church must be one of true doctrine and faith, or false. It must be that of belief in the Christ of Scripture, or in a christ of man's imagination. This belongs to the exercise of the keys of the kingdom. But the exercise of the keys is almost unheard of in our day. If one can "love" and is sincere (even if sincerely wrong), the church embraces him and he is received with joy. There is no more a concern for the spiritual, moral walk of her members; and the antithetical walk of the christian and the church is barely visible. The result of casting off the key power is fellowship with darkness. But Christ says by His Spirit, "What concord hath Christ with Belial, or light with darkness? . . . Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." cf. II Cor. 6:14ff.

There is a desire to break down all barriers in our day, so that all can be united together in outward unity. This desire is also very much present in the "reformed circle." But the result of such a unity can only be a compromise of doctrinal purity, and such a unity leads to the removal of the key power of Christ from the church. The result is inevitably that christian discipline is not exercised, the preaching is diluted (predestination, sin, the wrath of God against the wicked is not proclaimed), and the Lord's table is opened to all without reservation. The marks of the true church disappear. When this happens the wicked and the worldly take control of the church, and the true cause of the church is lost. When worldliness enters the church, the church loses her distinctive character of holiness, and consequently, is emptied of all blessing and grace.

It is a most grave situation when the church fails to employ the key power of the kingdom of God. Make no mistake, however! Christ never fails to exercise the key power unto the salvation of His people. But if we fail as churches to employ the keys, and fail to stand in faith, and follow the trend of modernism, we cast off the yoke of Christ and shall no longer manifest ourselves to be His true body, the true church. For where Christ maintains His true church, there He exercises the keys of the kingdom with power. By those keys our Lord powerfully causes His own to come into the kingdom, but also closes the kingdom to others, who are made manifest not to be of Christ. The true preaching of the ever abiding Word and the

true exercise of Christian discipline expels the latter from the church! The power of the keys draws or casts away!

The keys of preaching and christian discipline are the powerful means of Christ to open and shut the kingdom of heaven. The reason for their power lies in the fact that in the sphere of the true church Christ exercises them. The key power is essentially Christ's: "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." (Rev. 3:7). The exalted Christ, Who was crucified and raised from the dead, Who is ascended into heaven, and unto Whom is given all power in heaven and earth, holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven. His is all authority and power to include and to exclude from the kingdom of God.

This key power it has pleased God through Christ and His Spirit to exercise in the church in the midst of the world. This is evident from the Scriptures in such passages as Matt. 16:17-19, to which we have already alluded, and in Matt. 18:15ff. Read these. In the first place Christ has conferred the authority and power to open and close the kingdom to His apostles. And secondly, it is evident that through them He has conferred this authority to the church institute. It pleases Christ to exercise this authority through the ministers and elders particularly, and through the members of the church in the office of believers. This power can only be properly exercised as Christ speaks. Hence the church has the sacred obligation, by the Word and through the power of the indwelling Spirit, to exercise the keys of the kingdom. As the Scriptures are faithfully and distinctively proclaimed, Christ exercises the keys and maintains His church and her character of holiness.

For the chief key of the kingdom is the preaching of the gospel of Christ. It is through the preaching that Christ addresses His church; and through the preaching comes the only content for proper discipline. Christ powerfully speaks through the pure preaching of the Word. (cf. Rom. 10:14ff). In the preaching, Christ speaks His own efficacious and living Word. And it is only because it pleases Christ to

speak His Word through His ambassadors, that the preaching becomes effective as a key power. Through His preaching, Christ promises the fulness of salvation; and such as God hath ordained unto eternal life believe unto salvation. True preaching saves! Likewise, because it is Christ Who preaches, those hardened in sin are cast off by the Word. Hence, never may we conceive of preaching as an offer of salvation. Scripture never speaks thus. It is the authoritative proclamation of the gospel promise to all elect sinners that their sins are forgiven them of God for the sake of Christ's merits, and the declaration "to all unbelievers, and such as do not sincerely repent, that they stand exposed to the wrath of God and eternal condemnation, so long as they are unconverted." (H. Cat. Lord's Day 31) As such the preaching is a key to open and close the kingdom of heaven. May God continue to give us grace to so preach the Word and to desire the preaching of the pure Word of God.

Where the Word is properly proclaimed there also the key power of christian discipline will be maintained. There is an essential unity between the two. Also in regard to christian discipline we must understand that its key power lies only in the Word of God. The word of man has no power to open or shut the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whether discipline is exercised in private admonition in the way of Matthew 18 (between brethren), or in the exercise of discipline of the church through her officebearers, always the content of our exhortation and admonition must come from the Word of God. Again we must note that Christ holds the keys and He speaks through His Word. In the second place, all discipline is motivated by love of God and, hence, in the love of the brother or sister in the Lord. Therefore, again, its proper exercise is intimately connected with the preaching of the gospel. For through the preaching Christ works the love of God and of the neighbor in our hearts. Our calling is to properly exercise this key also in harmony with the Word of God. May our God also give us the continuing grace to properly exercise this key. By the keys Christ keeps us in the way of holiness until it shall be perfected at His second coming.

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FROM HOLY WRIT

Ministering to the Saints

Rev. G. C. Lubbers

[Note: The following article first appeared as a paper presented by Rev. Lubbers at the Office-bearers' Conference held on March 4, 1975.]

In this paper we attempt to set forth the Biblical teaching concerning the practical service of thankfulness of a living faith. (James 1:26) Faith without works is dead! We do not intend to come with a great number of practical suggestions as to how we can minister to the saints in our day and age. We will try to study the Bible and elicit from it some basic teachings and principles, both from the Old and New Testaments. The principles of the Scriptures are the rule of all ministering to the saints, and these principles are eternal and unchangeable. They span the ages of the church of God in this world.

Rather than speaking of the office of the diaconate, we chose to speak of the *Ministering to the Saints*. This is the general term, which is employed by Paul, and is very significant. It is significant, in the first place, because it shows that the objects of the diaconate-ministration are *saints*. This is a ministry of Christ in His church, who are saints in Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the second place, the term ministry (diakonias) shows that the care which is shown to the poor and needy is a ministry, that is, it is performed by one who receives commands from another. This signals the truth that this ministry is not a matter merely of human invention and ordinances, but that it is an ordinance of God in Christ for His people. Not to minister to the saints makes one guilty of not performing the Lord's work, be that the church as a whole or individual members. And, therefore, we speak of the "Ministry" to the saints in this paper.

TERMS IN THE SCRIPTURES:

The term "ministry" in the Greek is diakonis. It is translated in the KJV with the following terms: administration, ministering, ministration, ministry, office, relief, serving, do service. (See *Young's Concordance*) The term ministering is a verbal intransitive, referring to the *functioning* and functions of a minister of religion, in one form or the other. In II Corinthians 9:1 it refers to the actual giving of help to the poor by the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, for the poor saints in Jerusalem, believers out of the Jews. The poorer churches in Macedonia desired to share in this ministering to the saints in Jerusalem. (II Cor. 8:4) All the other terms by which the Greek *diakonia* is translated are some facet of this ministry. Some emphasize the relief given, others the actual service, the real administration. Each passage will need to be considered in its context. This is not the place to make such a detailed word-study.

It is, however, of interest to notice something of the etymology of the Greek verb *diakoo* and *dieekoo*, one who executes the commands of another, especially of a master: a servant, attendant, minister. This meaning is borne out by the usage in such passages as Matthew 22:13, where we read, "Then said the king unto his servants, (*tois diakonois*) bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The same thought is expressed concerning a minister in Matthew 20:26, where we read "but it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister" (*diakonos*).

In connection with the latter, Jesus teaches us the profound mystery of His sacrificial work on the Cross. Says He, "Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered to (*eelthen diakoneetheenai*) but to minister (*alla diakoneesai*) and give His life a ransom for many". (Matt. 20:28) We learn from this that Jesus connects our ministering with His self-sacrifice on the Cross through the eternal Spirit. Without His giving of His life for many there is not ministry nor administration of love and love-gifts for the altar among men. This ministry and self-sacrifice is the divine pattern of ours. We must do "even as the Son of man" did. He that is great in the church is the least. That is the great difference between the sons of God and the princes of the Gentiles, who exercise authority over the people. This is not an exercising of brutal authority of would-be benefactors, (Luke 22:25) but it is the tender mercy of Christ which is manifested in our tender mercy to the saints. This places the term *diakonia* on a very high and lofty plane; it is basic in the kingdom of heaven as manifested here among the saints.

THE DEEP BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF MINISTERING

The truth of the Gospel that Christ is among us as one that serveth stands out so strongly in all the Scriptures. This is really something new and different under the sun in this sin-cursed world of men. Jesus asks the penetrating and disclosing question of His disciples, "For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? (*ho diaknoon*) is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth." (Luke 22:27) It should not escape our attention that this is too the profound teaching of Paul in Philippians 2:7, "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness (*habit*) of men." He took upon himself the very *essential form* and *nature* of a servant. He did not simply appear like a servant; he was wholly servant in his very human nature, although he was in the form of God, that is, in the very *essential* nature of God.¹ He did not need to make being like God something which he aspired after, something which did not belong to him, which he would need to rob in order to have. THIS ONE became a servant, humbling himself unto death even to death on the Cross. Unless we can connect our ministry with this Christ, and have the same mind in us of a servant which was in Him, all our ministry will miss the mark. Such is the basic and profound teaching of Scripture concerning ministering to the saints.

This is the mind, the basic thoughts and intents of our aspirations, which must be in us in ministering to the saints. We must have the bowels of Christ in us yearning for the saints.

There is a very close relationship between the sufferings of Christ and of the church in the world. When Paul persecuted the church, even unto death, he is met by the glorified Christ on the way to Damascus. The manner of Christ's address to Paul is "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Now Christ was in heaven as the head of the church. But the church, which is His body, was on earth. And Paul in persecuting the body of Christ railed against Christ Himself. This is a truth which too must be remembered in ministering to the saints; it must be remembered that any thing evil or good done *against* or *to* the church is done in that form *against* Christ or *to* Christ Himself. The question: what think ye of the saints is at bottom the question: what think ye of the Son of God Who came into the flesh to minister for the saints. It is of this that Jesus speaks in Matthew 25:36 and 43, "Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me." Again, "I was a stranger and ye took me not in: naked and ye clothed me not, sick and in prison and ye visited me not." The truth here is that what we do unto the least of these who are Christ's brethren we have done unto Him, and what we have not done to them we have not done to Christ Himself.

We cannot omit that awesomely majestic passage from Colossians 1:24-26, where Paul speaks of the ministry which was given Him. The *diakonia* here spoken of is not the distribution of monies to the saints, but rather the ministrations of treasures of the glorious gospel of Christ, the mysteries hid from the ages in God, but now manifested to His saints. However, there is here a facet of this ministry of Christ by Paul which sheds a great deal of light on the close relation of Christ to His church in the world, as she is bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, ruled by one Spirit. Paul has a great deal of sufferings to endure. He suffers for the sake of the Gospel and for Christ. He feels that his sufferings have their source in his *diakonia*, his ministry of Christ. He therefore glories in them. Affliction for Christ is given us out of grace. There was still something lacking in these afflictions of Christ in the world before the full measure had been suffered. His suffering is viewed as a *filling up* of what was still lacking in this suffering of Christ. In effect he says, "Now when I see this full extent of God's mercy, now when I ponder over His mighty work of reconciliation, I cannot choose but rejoice in my afflictions. Yes, I Paul the persecutor, I Paul the feeble and sinful, am permitted to supplement the afflictions of Christ."² From this inner relationship of Christ and the church we also see the truth underscored that the Son in His ministration of mercy can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

Such is the deep Biblical concept of this ministering of Christ in His church. It is I in them and thou in me that we be perfect in one. (John 17:23)

FULFILLING THE LAW OF CHRIST

The ministering to the saints is not according to the law written upon tables of stone, but is the expression of the law written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (II Cor. 3:3) Such is the law of the Spirit in Christ. Just as Paul filled up the measure of the suffering of Christ, we are to fill up the law of Christ in our ministering, so that every jot and tittle of the law is fulfilled. (Matt. 5:17-20)

In I John 3:14 we read, "We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren." This love for the brethren must be more than lip service. Our ministering to the saints must be first of all, a giving of our life for the saints. Why? Because Christ gave His life for us. (I John 3:16) That was the unexpressible gift of God. (II Cor. 9:15) And when this love of Christ *dwells* in our hearts we will minister to the saints. When we see our brother having need, and we have this world's good, we will give to him. Otherwise the love of God does not dwell in our hearts. Giving to our neighbor, ministering to the saints, is an infallible proof that we have passed from death into life. It is an infallible proof of a living faith, which is merited for us on the Cross, as the fruit of elective love of God.

The very heart and marrow of this law of Christ we find in Matthew 7:12, where we read, "Therefore all

things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Now Jesus did not come to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill them. (Matt. 5:17-20) All the law is fulfilled in one word, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Rom. 13:8-10; Leviticus 19:18; Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31; Gal. 5:12; James 2:8) Such is the basic law of Christ. This is not a new commandment; it is the Old Testament Scriptures. It is the fulfilment of them. All the law and the prophets depend on it. Thus spoke He who interpreted the Scriptures to us. Did He not write these Scriptures by His Spirit? (I Peter 1:11) It was His Spirit in the Prophets. And, therefore, the "Golden Rule" is basic, central, all-pervasively up-to-date. It is, in one word, relevant to our times in the church!

This touches on the very heart of ministering to the saints. We all love to be done good to, to be loved and respected and helped. No one ever hated his own flesh. Well, that is the measuring-rod of our conduct toward our neighbor — to others.

Such is the law of Christ in us and for us!

(1) Compare: Lightfoot's Commentary, p.110. Writes he "...Though *morphee* is not the same as *physis* (nature) and *ousia* (being), yet possession of the *morphee* (form) involves participation in the essence. For the form implies not external accidents but essential attributes"

(2) Lightfoot on Colossians, page 230

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

A New Name

Rev. John A. Heys

A rosebud opens slowly. Yet after a time the flower unfolds fully and stands before us in all its beauty of color, form, texture, and fragrance. This is God's work; and this is the way God works.

A baby is born. Through a period of weeks and months it begins to learn to crawl, to talk, and to walk. In process of time we see a vibrant, play-loving boy or girl; and then soon enough a promising young man or young woman, strong and talented, revealing

physical, mental and spiritual powers that were not to be seen at birth. This, too, is the work of God; and this is the way in which He works.

We must not, then, think it strange when in the life of Abraham the matter of God's covenant develops so slowly, that is, so slowly according to our clocks and calendars. "O, God," we are inclined to cry, "Why keep Abraham in suspense so long?" The rosebud of His covenant opens so slowly! It takes so long before

the patriarch Abraham has all the details of that covenant. For years God had been talking about it, and the man is ninety-nine years old before he is told that Sarai shall bear him the son in whom all these covenant promises will be realized.

Twenty-four years had come and gone since God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees. And during those twenty-four years God said nothing about a child that Sarai would present to him. Instead it seemed as though God was saying by the advanced age of Sarai and her continued barrenness that she would never furnish him with an heir of all these covenant promises. Meanwhile, in Ishmael he seemed to see the opening of that rosebud and the realization of the joy of the fulfillment of the covenant promises. Sarai and Hagar also thought that this was a sure way of making sure these promises. After Ishmael's birth God still said nothing to Abram to turn his eyes away from him as the one through whom Abram would have seed as the sand upon the seashore.

We can trace the steps, and we can see how slow these steps must have seemed to be to Abram. At the age of seventy-five Abram was called by God out of Ur of the Chaldees. Then already God promised to make of him a great nation; to bless him and to make him great; to make him to be a blessing and to bless all who blessed him, and to curse all those who cursed him; to lift him up so that all nations would be blessed in him. All this we may find in Genesis 12:1-3. When Abram arrived in the land of Canaan, God promised him further that unto his seed He would give all that land. This is taught in Genesis 12:7. After Abram some years later, and as the peace-maker, separated from Lot, God confirmed all this by stating more specifically that the land which he saw to the northward, to the southward, to the eastward, and to the westward would all be his and his seed's. And He added that Abram's seed would be like the dust of the earth in number. Genesis 13:14-17 informs us of this. A step further is recorded in Genesis 15:4 where God informed him that one that would come forth of his own bowels would be the heir. This was before the conception of Ishmael. There was yet no definite word that Sarai would be the mother. And at that time it was repeated to Abram that his seed would be innumerable. Sarai at this time is seventy-six years old and Abram is eighty-six. And on God's clock and according to His calendar the message that Sarai shall conceive and bear him a son must wait another thirteen years! The rosebud is opening, but from our point of view the progress is very slow.

It cannot be denied, however, that here we have come to a very crucial moment in the fulfillment of God's covenant promises not only, but also in the

revelation that God gave us of that covenant and its promises. And not at all strange is it that at this juncture, and with this last bit of revelation to Abram, God gives him (and Sarai) a new name. For that new name stands in an inseparable connection with the covenant Seed that will be given to Abram. He will beget Isaac, and in due time — O how slowly that rosebud opens — Christ will be born. It is through Him that Abram will receive a new name; and without Him Abram can never become Abraham, and Sarai can never be called by God a princess.

To appreciate this we ought to bear in mind that when God tells Abraham that He will establish and make His covenant with him and with his seed, there is only one covenant. That covenant is the Covenant of Grace. To Noah God had spoken those same words, and He did not establish one covenant with Noah and another with Abraham. To both He says, "I will establish My one and only covenant with thee and with thy seed after thee."

Actually it was a covenant of grace in which man was created in the beginning. It was no covenant of works, for man was *created* in a covenant relationship. He did not have to do anything to enter into it. There was a way to walk so as not to become a covenant breaker, but the continuance of that covenant did not depend upon his works. It continued only by God's grace. Indeed, it was not grace in the sense that Adam received the opposite of what he deserved. That is God's grace to us as sinners fallen in Adam. But in the state of perfection in Paradise Adam lived in a covenant relation with God because God was pleased to *give* it to him. It pleased God to create him in a relationship of friendship entirely without his works, for he was not there to do anything to earn it. And it pleased God to keep him in that relationship until the moment that He had decreed for the fall. Adam did not continue in it because he earned one split-second of it. His obedience earned him nothing. It also was God's gift to him.

But Adam did, according to God's counsel, become a covenant breaker and forfeited all right to God's fellowship and favour. And God glorified and restored that covenant in Christ, the last Adam, through His cross and by His Spirit. Of this God spoke in the mother promise of Genesis 3:15, where He spoke not only of a Seed of the woman that would crush the head of the serpent and of his seed, but also of One Who would restore in His people's hearts the love of God and hatred of all sin.

That promise He reaffirmed to Noah. To Noah He did not promise a covenant of nature or with nature. He reaffirmed this same promise that was given to Adam, the one restored in Christ. As a phase and aspect of that covenant He promised to work in all

the creation (nature) where that covenant people lived to realize that covenant in all its fulness. Therefore there will be seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, and no worldwide devastation until all the covenant people have been saved and brought in to the blessings of that covenant. That covenant He also reaffirmed to Abraham. It is all one covenant and one covenant work; and a covenant of grace.

And we ought to bear in mind also that all history, both sacred and profane, both that of the church and that of the world, all in the lives of the seed of the woman and all in the lives of the seed of the serpent serves the perfection of that Covenant of Grace in Christ. All that happens in time – and that includes the whole history of Satan and his devilish kingdom – serves the day when the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them in all the glory and blessedness of that covenant. For, indeed, all things work not only, but they all without exception, in heaven and on earth, in the church and in the world, work *together* for good to those that love God. And THAT our children should be taught in school as well as in church. The wheat cannot grow without the chaff and never grows apart from it. And you cannot teach the children about God's precious wheat without showing them the work God performs through the chaff in His inscrutable wisdom and sovereign workings whereby He sent His Son into the world and exalted Him above that world in order to realize this covenant of His grace.

One more truth to bear in mind is that because this covenant is restored in Christ, and because, as the last Adam, He is the Head of that covenant, all its promises are given *in the first place* to Him. And, indeed, He earned the right to all the blessings of that covenant by His cross and obedience. Abraham, therefore, receives these promises for His sake; Christ does not receive them because of Abraham. Christ, though He came out of the loins of Abraham, as far as His human nature is concerned, owes Abraham nothing, and does not have the covenant promises because of Abraham or because of anything Abraham had done. Christ does not have them because the promise was given to Abraham. Abraham has them because they were given to Christ. That is what we are taught in Galatians 3:16, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one. And to thy Seed which is Christ." Christ is that Seed of Abraham. Abraham is in the flesh and in time before Christ, but Christ is before Abraham legally and in God's eternal counsel. Christ is the physical seed of Abraham, but Abraham is the spiritual seed of Christ brought into being by His Spirit.

And so, when God promises Abraham a son

through Sarah He promises this Christ and all the grace of God in Him. And that makes it possible for Abram to receive the new name of Abraham, which means, "Father of multitudes." And this does not mean that earthly multitudes and fleshly nations of men shall come from him. There were nations besides the nation of Israel that sprang forth from Isaac who owe their existence to Abraham. Nations came forth from Ishmael and from the sons of Keturah. But this is not meant. What is meant is that a multitude of believers, a whole kingdom of elect will be his spiritual seed. That is also why he is called "The father of believers." And that this multitude is the innumerable host of the saints is evident from the fact that the same thing is said to Sarah. In Genesis 17:16 we read, "She shall be a mother of nations." And from her came only the Israelites. But through her son Isaac, and the Christ, Who came in his line, a multitude of elect, a host of believers were born. But take away the Christ, remove this covenant Head, in Whom the covenant was restored after the first Adam fell, and Abraham and Sarah themselves are not in the covenant. They cannot be named in it, for then there is no covenant. And surely they cannot be called by their new names, "Father of Multitudes" and "Princess." Instead they must be called covenant breakers and rebels of the Most High!

And we, that multitude of Abraham's spiritual seed, also receive a new name through this Seed of Abraham. We, who have no physical connection with Abraham, we who have no blood ties with him, become his spiritual seed through the Seed to Whom the promises were given after the first covenant head, Adam, fell and became a covenant breaker. We have the new name "Children of God." And some day soon – for the rosebud has unfolded considerably, and we are in the last hour of its development – the truth of Revelation 2:17 will be ours to enjoy. We shall, each one of us, receive "a new name which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it." We shall receive a new name in a new creation; and all God's children shall be home with Him. And all this is through that Seed Who is promised to Abraham. For, as children of Abraham, as his spiritual seed, this promise is also unto us.

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STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Remember Thy Creator

Rev. J. Kortering

It's that time of year again.

Schools beckon for occupancy. The hinges are oiled, the desks polished, the floors waxed. Yes, it all sounds only too familiar. The opening day of school even has its own smell.

Mental cobwebs have to be brushed away. Those brawny muscles toned by hard work can relax and now push a pencil, and that for some six hours a day. The fluorescent lights won't be able to condition that beautiful tan; that too will fade.

Ah, yes, it's back to school. And quite a change.

With mixed emotions you reach for your alarm on that fateful day. School — the kids, teachers, books, assignments, games, yes, it's all there — some anticipation, some dread!

But is it necessary? True, it's required by law — educated citizenry and all that. But, why must *I* go to school? Why should I want to go to school? Why should I make something of going to school?

That is a different story. It spells the difference between going to school and being a student!

THY CREATOR

God provides the needed incentive. Consider the timely words of Solomon, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Ecclesiastes 11:9–12:1.

Going to school is a matter of sanctification!

We are to reckon that if we walk in the ways of our evil flesh, it will bring us into judgment. To avoid this we are rather to remember our Creator and thereby when the evil days come we will say, I have no pleasure in them.

The central thought here is — Our Creator! He makes all the difference.

Purposefully, the Holy Spirit made this reference to God this way. Solomon does not say, remember thy God, or remember thy Savior, but rather remember thy *Creator*. We are to remember God as our Creator.

And what is so special about this?

This is the first principle of all instruction. Take God as Creator out of the picture and you have nothing but a lie. Does not God Himself make this point in the very first verse of the Bible, "In the beginning *God* created!"

The schools of the world, and even, sad to say, some so-called Christian schools cast this truth aside. In the former, they openly mock the idea of God's creating; in the latter some of them cleverly conceal their acceptance of evolution by simply adding that God watched the entire process which took billions of years to develop. The end result however is the same: God is not the *Creator*! And if He is not the Creator, He is not the God Who is Sovereign over all events in history, and you end up with the devastating lie that God would like to save people in Christ His Son, but it is ultimately up to man whether he wants to be saved. A compromised Creator leads to a possible Savior.

To abide by this exhortation of Scripture, we establish our own schools so that this truth may be taught daily without compromise. We must see our Creator. Mightily, He formed the chaos and called the creation into being. In six days of 24 hours, limited

by evening and morning, God finished His creative work and rested on the seventh.

This creation tells us something about God! Who cannot be struck by the great power of this creation? Mind you, the things that were not become the things they are by His *voice*. He spoke and it was done. How great our God is. We can even see this in the creation that groans to be delivered. How beautiful creation is and our God made this simply by speaking.

Still more, the creation tells us that God has a purpose with all things. All His work of creating ended in the seventh day of rest. We can see this by faith now, when we remember that even that rest was a picture of an eternal rest that remaineth for us. As the seventh day depicts God's purpose, so today that purpose still influences us. Why are we here; what is our goal in life; what must be our attitude toward God and society? The answers to all of these questions come to us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Our purpose is to rest in Him, believe in His finished work, flee from evil and do good as we delight in His work. We are to further His cause and kingdom with an eye directed to heaven. Our Creator makes this plain to us.

Finally, we put power and purpose together and we have the beautiful, reformed truth of God's sovereignty. The purpose is accomplished by His power and nothing can withstand it. God wills the salvation of His people in Christ and everything serves that glorious end.

We have a great God. He is our Creator.

REMEMBER THY CREATOR

He is to be remembered.

It's significant that Solomon assumes that you know about Him. You don't remember something that you didn't know already. We know our Creator. What is important is that we must remember Him.

To remember means to recall. We have many things in our minds that are there, but unless we are able to recall them before our consciousness, we really don't remember them. They are rather forgotten.

The idea here is that Solomon instructs us to remember our Creator in such a way that He lives in our consciousness daily. That which we know about Him we recall and act accordingly. Let me illustrate. We remember Him when we pray. We have been taught about the great power of God and that He sees everything and calls us to be holy in the days of our youth. While we pray we remember Who God is, and this influences us in our prayer. The same is true when we evaluate our faith. What do we believe about God, His Word, ourselves, the world and all that it contains? We remember God as revealed to us in His

Word, and this governs our faith-life. We know God has given us the Bible by the wonder of inspiration. The Bible is His directive for the whole of our personal lives, not only, but also explains His purpose for the nations of the world and His church which is gathered from them. Finally, this also applies to our daily activities. Our work, our future calling in life, our recreation, our sports, our fun activity. We remember our Creator and His memory governs us in our behavior; we do not want to sin against Him, rather we desire to be faithful in doing all things to His glory.

Going to school teaches us this wonderful remembrance. Our Christian covenant teachers help us see these truths and live before so great a God. Hence Solomon says, Put away evil from thy flesh for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

DAYS OF THY YOUTH

Probably we should say a word about the emphasis he places upon the time of life when this should be done: days of thy youth. These days are further defined as follows: "while the evil days come not nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

Solomon speaks of "evil days" in a two fold sense.

First, they are connected with the preceding context. "Put away evil from thy flesh . . . remember thy Creator . . . while the evil days come not." In this sense the evil days refer to impending corruption, from a moral point of view. Solomon was aware that such days lay ahead for Israel. We are aware that such days lie ahead of us in the future, with the coming of the antichrist and his kingdom. The importance of remembering our creator is that it will help us say when the evil days come, "I have no pleasure in them."

The spiritual implications of this are great. As covenant youth you must study hard and put forth all effort so that you are able to appreciate what your Creator has done and is doing and reject any attack upon His work. The future will bring about apostasy in the churches; public sin will be extolled; men will call evil, good; they will persecute the faithful church and thereby think they do God a service. All this is plainly part of the evil day. The effect this will have upon us as people of God is two-fold. We will be sorely tempted to go along with the fun and games. It will offer great sport and pleasure. It will attempt to give to mankind the license to sin and not have to be troubled with a guilty conscience. Don't we like that? But it will also bring about a terrible persecution for the faithful children of God who resist these temptations and stand faithful even unto death. We read a great deal about torture in the news media today.

Just imagine if we have to bear these things because of our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ!

It takes a great spiritual strength to be able to say, "I have no pleasure in these evil days." Only remembering our Creator will give us such spiritual faithfulness.

There is another way of looking at the evil days. Those days would then refer to old age in which all men say, I have no pleasure in them. This receives the emphasis in the verses following. There Solomon describes all the effects of old age upon us. The family unit breaks up by the presence of death, verse 2. The body breaks down, verses 3-6. Finally death claims us and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it, verse 7. From this point of view, it is important to remember our Creator in the days of youth because such remembrance prepares us for our purpose in life not only, but also for death.

The time to learn is during youth. At such a time God has given the gifts of memory and spiritual aptitude to receive it as at no other time in life. It's amazing how children and youth learn.

Through such learning, youth is guided by God in

all his way and such things learned remain even until old age. It is always striking to me that the things quoted by the dying saint are the things learned in kindergarten and school.

Remembering such a Creator makes dying a little easier.

REMEMBER

Yes, it's back to school.

May I remind you that such precious moments are only in the days of youth. Take advantage of them. Be diligent in your studies, apply yourself in the pursuit of knowledge.

We may have expensive school facilities. We may have parents that labor hard to provide for these means. We may have teachers that graduate from college and diligently put forth effort to teach us the knowledge of God. But if we are not going to be equally diligent in remembering our Creator, it is all vain.

And youth is vanity.

May the Holy Spirit encourage you to be faithful in your studies and enable you to be sanctified in your life.

The praise returns unto our Creator.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull (Iowa) Protestant Reformed Church extends its Christian sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. Frank Vogel, in the loss of her mother, MRS. ARIE BOMGAARS. It is our hope and prayer that she may receive comfort in His Word and by His Spirit. "Blessed be the Lord that hath given rest unto His people." (1 Kings 8:5,6).

Rev. J. Kortering, Pres.
Mrs. Bernard Driesen, Sec'y.



News From Our Churches

Our church in Kalamazoo, Michigan, extended a call to Rev. Woudenberg of Lynden, Washington, to be their pastor. Kalamazoo's trio consisted of Rev. Woudenberg, Rev. Slopsema (Edgerton, Minnesota), and Rev. Van Overloop (Hope, Grand Rapids). Rev. Kortering was granted an extension of time in which to consider his call from Redlands, California, due to

vacation time and the meeting of Classis West the first week in September.

Rev. Marvin Kamps was scheduled to be installed as the pastor of our church in Doon, Iowa, on September 10. Rev. Kamps preached in Hull, Iowa, for Rev. Kortering on September 5. Seminarian Ken Koole spent most of the summer in Doon ministering in that congregation.

The Reformed Witness Committee in Northwest Iowa and Minnesota is busy with another project to continue their work in the area. Plans are being made to publish in the *Doon Press* a condensation by Professor H. Hanko of chapters taken from his book on the parables. These will be published separately in pamphlet form for distribution.

The Randolph, Wisconsin, bulletin reported that a monthly gathering of the Young Married Couples (we call such a gathering a Mr. & Mrs. Society in the 'East') of the congregation has been proposed and has been well received by those contacted. It has been proposed that "Marriage" be the subject for study, with Rev. Engelsma's book on marriage serving as a basis for discussion. A ballot was taken as to a preference on meeting time with the result that one Sunday evening per month will be scheduled for this new 'gathering.' Other of our Mr. & Mrs. Societies have used Rev. Engelsma's fine book on marriage as a guide in their discussions.

The Grand Rapids area Sunday School Teacher's Mass Meeting is scheduled for October 1st at Southeast Church. Mrs. Gertrude Hoeksema will speak on "Teaching Bible Stories to our Covenant Youth." Mrs. Hoeksema is well qualified to speak on this topic by virtue of her many years experience as a Christian School teacher. I have a suspicion that Mrs. Hoeksema was asked to speak on this topic because of the writing project with which she has been busy for the last several years. With the aid of a grant from the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies, Mrs. Hoeksema spent a year writing a 346 page 1st grade Bible curriculum. Presently she is working on a classroom Bible study guide for the 2nd grade. Her plan is to complete a series of guides for the elementary grades which would give a unified, Reformed, treatment of the Bible — something which we have not had until now.

There has been a good deal of activity in our Protestant Reformed schools of late. One year ago a new Protestant Reformed school was opened by our people in Redlands, California. This year another new school opened in Hull, Iowa. The following is from the Hull bulletin of August 29: "Tomorrow morning will be a significant day in our congregational life as the doors of our school will open for the first time. Much planning and work has made this possible for us, but we know that without God's Fatherly care it could never have been realized. Let us humbly thank Him for providing for us the building, the materials and furnishings, the teachers, and above all else the grace whereby we parents have come to see the need. We seek His guidance that the benefits of these labors may continue from generation to generation."

Our schools in Walker, Michigan, and South Holland, Illinois, are in the process of constructing an additional classroom on each of their buildings. South Holland is increasing its teaching staff as well. The Covenant Christian High School Society met on August 18 to consider adding a physical education wing to their building. This proposal was rejected by the Society. The Adams St. School Society will have a special meeting on September 30 to consider purchasing land which would make relocation of Adams School possible in the future.

I think the note that was placed in the Grand Rapids area church bulletins to mark the beginning of the school year at Covenant High school can well apply to all of our schools — that as we begin another year of covenant instruction we wish to express our earnest desire that you remember us (that is, the board, the faculty, and the students) in your prayers before the throne of grace. With the blessings of our Father in Heaven, our efforts will surely not be in vain.

K.G.V.