

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Since the Bible is the very Word of God, the authority of the Bible is the authority of God Himself. Whoever recognizes and submits to the authority of the Bible is actually bowing to the authority of God. Whoever refuses to acknowledge the authority of the Bible is, by virtue of this fact, denying the right of God to rule over him.

See "The Bible" — page 277

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THE STANDARD BEARER

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.

Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

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

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. Mark H. Hoeksema, Rev. Meindert Joostens, Rev. Jay Korterling, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Rodney Miersma, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. James Slopsema, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Ronald Van Overloop, 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

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

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

New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer,
c/o OPC Bookshop,
P.O. Box 2289
Christchurch, New Zealand

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

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Bound Volumes: The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

MEDITATION

Calvary's Superscription

Rev. H. Veldman

"And set up over His head His accusation written, This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

Matt. 27:37

The superscription as nailed to a cross was a Roman custom. It was nailed to the upright, above the crossbeam, and it declared the ground of the crucifixion. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ also bore such a superscription.

It is peculiar of Jesus' superscription that we read of four different versions in the four gospel narratives. This must have been very unique, hardly ever done. Modern criticism has called attention to this to undermine the trustworthiness of Holy Writ. There is

surely no reason to assume that this superscription was the same in all three languages, and that therefore Scripture is in conflict with itself. May we assume that the Latin version appears at the top (would not the Roman Pontius Pilate favor his own language?), the Aramaic at the bottom, and the Greek version appears then in the middle? All these versions, we understand, purpose to present Jesus as the king of the Jews.

What a wonderful superscription we have here!

Pilate and Caiaphas, both of whom played a very significant role in the passion history of our Lord Jesus Christ, have proclaimed a truth with respect to our Lord Jesus Christ which far transcends their own conception and meaning, their own personal intention. Caiaphas declared that it is better that one man die than that all the people perish. And he also tore his high-priestly garment or robe. Pilate commands this superscription to be nailed to the cross. Indeed, we have a biting mockery here. Nevertheless, how true it is that Jesus is crucified because He is the King of the Jews.

A BITING MOCKERY

Why does the Roman governor direct this superscription to be nailed to the cross? Fact is, from the viewpoint of Pilate this superscription is a lie. This superscription is supposed to state the ground for the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. From the viewpoint of the Jews, they never accused Him of being the King of the Jews. They had said that this Jesus of Nazareth claimed Himself to be this king. And as far as Pilate is concerned, he had repeatedly declared Him to be innocent. Fact is, he had never condemned Jesus, had simply delivered Him over to the wishes of the people because he would be Caesar's friend. The Jews had confronted him with the threat that he would not be the friend of the Roman emperor. Why, then, did he command this superscription?

Why this superscription? It is rooted in the governor's hatred of the Jews. On the one hand, he simply hated the Jews. Somewhat acquainted with the Jewish Messianic expectation (although, of course, not understanding it, and conceiving of it in the earthy sense of the word), he, of course, despised this expectation. On the other hand, however, the Jews had just caused him the most anxious and wretched moment of his life. Superstitious as he was, he was afraid of Jesus, especially because the Lord had claimed to be the Son of God. And the governor was afraid that this claim might be true. Then, the Jews had threatened to accuse him before the emperor that he was not Caesar's friend. Pilate, therefore, seeking to save himself, without condemning Jesus, had sentenced Him to die the death of the cross. And now he will avenge himself upon these Jews. He will provoke them with a superscription which will make a mockery of the Jewish Messianic expectation. The Jews are furiously indignant. Indeed, they, too, fear Caesar. Besides, they had never accepted this Nazarene as their king. Moreover, as far as Jesus' actual claim to a kingship is concerned, they will have no part of it. They demand of the governor to change the superscription so that it would read that this Jesus of Nazareth had called himself the king of the Jews. And now the cruel governor becomes implacable. He now laughs at his Jewish tormentors. The superscription remains as it is.

Indeed, a biting mockery!

As such it is meant by Pilate. Indeed, he does not hurl this mockery at Jesus. The hated Jews are here the objects of his scorn, and he aims this mockery at their Messianic expectation.

However, although Pilate here would merely ridicule the Jews' expectation, the result is nevertheless that that superscription causes the mockery with respect to this Jewish expectation to descend upon the head of this Jesus of Nazareth, that He is viewed and ridiculed as King, and the Jewish expectation is presented here in all its absurdity. The superscription itself is only too plain. It says that Jesus is the King of the Jews and that He hangs there as a rebel. It declared that this Jesus, born at Bethlehem, is the Jewish Messiah, their king. It places Him over against the Roman Caesar. It declares that He would fain be king over all. And now He hangs upon a cross. How ridiculous is His claim! What a king He is! Having travelled up and down the country, agitating against the Roman emperor and seeking to establish His own kingdom, He comes to this ignominious end. True, there is a difference between the Jews' reaction to this superscription and that of the Roman soldiers. The former ridicule the Nazarene's claim to this kingship, the latter regard Him as the King of the Jews. Both, however, ridicule and reject Jesus as the King of the Jews.

This mockery becomes more intense in the light of the fact that the superscription is written in three languages. We may assume that the Hebrew or Aramaic language represents religion, the Greek language represents art and culture, and the Latin language represents law and power. Fact is, the whole world is represented by these three languages. Besides, we do well to bear in mind other circumstances. The Lord was crucified upon a feast day, the Passover. Jerusalem was crowded. Then, the cross was erected upon a hill, beside a very busy highway. Indeed, the biting mockery of this superscription is truly world-wide, and intended as such.

AN APPARENT CONTRADICTION

Is this Jesus not really the King of the Jews? As such He was proclaimed in the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures. Of Him we read in Micah 5:2 that He is to be ruler in Israel. And in Dan. 7:14 we read: "And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." And does not the angel declare to Mary that He shall be King over the house of Jacob into all eternity, and that of His kingdom there shall be no end?

Besides, did not Jesus always witness of Himself

that He is that King and Messiah? He did this in word. Again and again He proclaimed Himself to be the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Was He not born in Bethlehem, the city of David, out of the seed of David, and had He not been called out of Egypt? Then, we also read of His good testimony before Pontius Pilate. How the governor feared Him! Listen to what we read in John 18:36-37. Here He tells the governor that His kingdom is not of this world. And, in reply to Pilate's question: "Art thou a king then?", the Saviour answers that He is indeed a king, that for this cause He was born, and for this cause He came into the world, that He should bear witness unto the truth.

Moreover, the Lord also bore this witness of Himself in deed. The New Testament Scriptures are full of His miracles. They are surely proofs of His Messianic office. But they are also symbols of His kingship. And how the governor therefore feared Him!

But, what a wonderful contrast we have here in this text! What must one think of this superscription? Does it not contradict His kingship completely? When does a king, to whom the ends of the earth have been given for an inheritance, and who has power over sicknesses, death and the seas, hang upon a cross, nailed to it because He is that King? What an amazing phenomenon! Why does Jesus allow this? In fact, why did *He* write it? Surely, this superscription is of God! We can well understand, can we not, the resentment and mockery of these Roman soldiers. In their conception the cross simply has no place.

Jesus, the King of the Jews, hanging upon a cross! He holds His peace, does not resist. What an apparently amazing contradiction!

A BLESSED REALITY

Indeed, He is the King of the Jews. And it is also true that He was crucified because He is the King of the Jews.

This does not mean, of course, that He is the King of the Jews as the superscription means it. That superscription, humanly speaking, is completely in error.

However, we must understand the nature and character of Jesus' kingdom. Jesus, of course, is king here according to His human nature, God, we know, is King, sovereignly, over all. This kingship, however, refers to His Messianic kingdom, in His human nature. This kingship, now, is purely spiritual. He is indeed the King of the Jews. O, this does not mean that He is their king according to the flesh. He is King of the elect Jews, of them who are really Jews as according to the spirit. Besides, this King of the Jews is also King over all. To Him has been given all power and authority in heaven and on earth.

How wonderful and blessed this superscription now becomes! How wonderful it is, on the one hand, from the viewpoint of those three languages! He is indeed the King of the Jews, but as out of all nations, peoples, lands and tongues. He is this upon the cross, ordained by God to be their head, even from before the foundations of the world. And He is their King throughout the ages. But He is also the King of the Jews in relation to the world. As King of the Jews, His people, He redeems them, purchases them with His precious blood. But King of His people, He also rules over all the powers of sin and darkness.

Finally, how wonderful is this word also and exactly as a superscription! In a superscription the ground of the victim's condemnation and crucifixion was set forth. Pilate, we know, had his own meaning. He would avenge himself upon the hated Jews. God, however, rules over all. The cross of Calvary is also God's cross. The Lord realizes His covenant, and Pilate, be it unwittingly, must serve the living God. Hence, when viewed as God's cross, it is indeed true that Jesus is crucified because He is the King of the Jews. This does not merely mean that Jesus, in the way of the cross, enters into His kingdom, receives all power in heaven and on earth. But He was also really crucified because He is the King of the Jews.

As that King, eternally anointed by God, He must suffer and die for all the sins of His own, as out of every tribe, nation, people, land, and tongue.

And the Lord our God shall receive all glory and honour and praise, now and forevermore.

Editor's Notes

Bound Volume 53. Bound volume 53 is ready, and undoubtedly many of those with standing orders will have received their copy by the time this appears in print. There are some extra copies available for those who wish to order. Our Business Manager asked me to

add a note about the cost. The price per copy is \$7.00; but this year those who receive copies by mail will have to add 50¢ for mailing, due to rising postal costs. By the way, there is also available a limited number of earlier bound volumes; if you are inter-

ested, correspond with our business office.

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RFPA Book Club. The latest report from our Business Manager is that 164 of you have signed up as RFPA Book Club members. That is still only a small fraction of the number of members we need and expect! Have *you* sent in your membership card?

EDITORIAL

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Please do not send announcements, subscriptions, and changes of address to the editorial office. This kind of mail should be sent directly to the Business Office. If sent to the editorial office, it only delays your mail and inconveniences your editor. The business address is: The Standard Bearer, P.O. Box 6064, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506.

Parochiaid Revived--In Disguise

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Recently a colleague gave me a little brochure put out by an organization called Citizens For More Sensible Financing Of Education, with headquarters in Lansing, the state capital of Michigan. I have written for more information concerning both the organization and the proposal which it is promoting. But from the information in this brochure it appears that the proposal set forth in this brochure is nothing more than an attempt to revive parochiaid, or government financial support of private schools. However, this time the proposal is in disguise, the disguise of a tax-reform proposal. And while, perhaps, tax-reform may be attractive to some, even to many — and perhaps this very attractiveness is intended to be the lure — nevertheless, from the information I now have, it appears to me that this is a rather thinly veiled disguise. And, again drawing my conclusion from the information I now possess, it appears to me that the disguise is also deceitful and dishonest.

It is the avowed intent of this editorial to expose this disguise and to militate against the proposal.

Admittedly, this is a proposal which affects Michigan readers directly. Yet the issue of parochiaid in general is broader than that, and is of importance for readers in other states as well. In fact, it may safely be predicted that if the Michigan proposal would be approved by the voters in the proposed referendum, and if then the proposal would also be found to be constitutional, the same type of plan would be attempted in other states.

In the interest of fairness, I will quote *all* of the information furnished in the brochure. Before I do so, however, I must point out that the entire

approach of this material is *oblique*. At no point does it attempt to leave the impression that this is a parochiaid proposal; the opposite is true. In fact, the whole attempt is to leave the impression of being a *tax-reform* proposal. The front cover of the brochure, for example, poses the question in large print, "Isn't there a more sensible way to finance education?" Now who would not be interested, in this day of unreasonable and increasing taxes, in a "more sensible way to finance education"? At the bottom of the front cover is a slogan which has been becoming increasingly popular, at least in Michigan: "Down With Property Tax — Up With Education." That's, of course, like being in favor of motherhood and apple pie! Moreover, the name of the organization itself gives no hint of being a pro-parochiaid organization. Nevertheless, in the course of the information furnished, the proverbial cat comes out of the bag.

This is a proposal for a referendum, that is, to submit to a popular vote the following plan:

This proposal would place a referendum on the 1978 ballot, mandating the following changes:

1. All property taxes previously earmarked for educational operation purposes would be eliminated.
2. A statewide voucher system would be established allowing each child an allocation of state tax dollars to be applied to educating that child at a school of his or her parent's choice.
3. Restrictions relative to support of children in non-public schools would be removed.

Already here, of course, the question arises: what does item No. 3 have to do with the main thrust of

the proposal? Besides, what does a voucher system have to do with more sensible financing? But let us allow the brochure to explain in full. I will quote the brochure in full. The only change I have made is the addition of numerals to the questions and answers, for the sake of reference. Under the heading of "Taxes" the following is presented:

1. Q. How do we currently pay for education?

A. The operational income for public schools is currently gathered from local property taxes in the amount of \$1.8 billion and state taxes amounting to \$1.3 billion.

2. Q. Why remove the property tax?

A. The present system of financing education is inequitable and unfair because property ownership in itself does not represent a true measure of a person's ability to pay. Families in homes of similar value can have widely different incomes, and yet pay the same property tax.

In addition, the archaic formula for state financing of education is based upon the amount of millage levied in each school district, and this has resulted in great disparities of educational opportunity from community to community.

3. Q. What changes will this make in the taxes collected by the state for education?

A. The proposal specifically prohibits the levy of property taxes for financing K-12 educational operations; it eliminates any use of property taxes to pay for school operations. The proposal directs the Legislature to establish a program of general taxation for the support of education.

4. Q. How much of the property tax now goes for the support of education?

A. In 1960 property taxes for public education in Michigan amounted to \$434 million. By 1976, that figure had increased to one billion, eight hundred million dollars!

This figure represents about 65% of all property taxes levied on a statewide average. This means that if your property taxes amounted to \$1,000, using the state average, \$650 of your property tax payment would be used to finance the operation of local public schools.

5. Q. How can these costs skyrocket when local millage requests are turned down repeatedly by the voters?

A. A millage issue is never closed until it passes. If defeated by the voters, the issue simply keeps showing up on the ballot until it is ultimately approved. Also, property tax revenue can be increased, through assessment **without a vote**, merely by re-evaluating

local property. In the last 12 years, state equalized property values have increased 126% and millage levels have jumped 30%.

6. Q. Is the proposal a shift from property tax to income tax?

A. No, the proposal does not mandate a shift. It is likely, though, that the Legislature will proportionately increase the personal income tax and the single business tax within the current constitutional requirements in order to generate the funds necessary to finance schools. The Legislature may also consider other forms of taxation, such as excise tax, sales tax, intangibles tax, etc.

7. Q. Will this proposal hurt business and industry?

A. No. On the contrary, the proposal removes the educational property tax from business and therefore does not penalize a business for owning property. Business taxes which are now contributed to the General State Fund would be expected to increase to the amount of property tax eliminated.

8. Q. Won't I lose my one chance to reject school millage at the ballot box if this referendum passes?

A. Yes, school millages would be unnecessary since that large portion of property tax now earmarked for operational educational support would be eliminated from property tax payments. However, you gain a greater opportunity to exercise economic control over your child's education through receipt and use of individual vouchers. Funding and control go hand in hand; this greatly enhances the voucher.

Now we are not interested so much in the tax aspect of the proposal. Yet we must remember that this is intended as an attractive part of the whole proposal. In itself, of course, there is nothing wrong with a proposal to reform the method of taxation. I suppose, too, that property owners can be attracted by a proposal which somehow wants to lift the burden of school taxes from property owners only and to spread that burden around to *all* taxpayers. Yet we must remember that under the terms of this proposal the over-all tax burden will be increased tremendously. Why? The proposal wants to include payment for the education of all present non-public school students. I do not have the statistics at hand on the number of private school students in Michigan; but it is large. And it does not require a tax expert to figure out that if state taxes are going to support the students of private schools at about the same rate as public school students are now supported, this is going to increase the total bill by an enormous amount. In other words, for the general public this

proposal is after all not so very attractive! Besides, in the second place, it is almost an axiom of government that the farther away from the citizens the control of taxes gets, the less voice the citizens have, the higher the taxes go; and, once they are up, it is extremely difficult to get taxes down. The proposal admits (Qu. & A. 8) that we will lose the power of the ballot box on school millage. It foolishly claims greater economic control. The truth is that the control will be with the *legislature*, not with the citizens. And in the legislature the education lobby and the teachers' lobby are some of the most powerful! The conclusion? Taxes for educational purposes will go up, up, up! Some may call this more sensible financing of education. I demur.

The next subject treated in the brochure is "The Voucher System." On this subject there are the following questions and answers:

9. Q. What is a voucher?

- A. A voucher is a certificate representing a sum of money issued by the state to parents for the education of their children.

10. Q. How will a voucher system work?

- A. Under a voucher arrangement each school child, or parent, would be issued an authorization which could be redeemed at any state-approved school. The voucher would be applied toward the cost of the child's education during that school year, with the exact amount determined by a formula which would encompass a wide variety of factors bearing on costs in the district and the needs of the child. When cashed at a school where tuition costs exceed the voucher payment, parents of the child would be required to make up the difference.

11. Q. Will the proposal change school district boundaries?

- A. No. The proposal itself will not change school district boundary lines. The Legislature has determined the current school district boundaries and retains the authority to change these boundaries. It is anticipated that the Legislature will recognize the need to increase the choices available to parents and students among public schools. The freedom to attend non-public schools has never been geographically restricted, since there are no legislatively defined attendance areas for non-public schools.

12. Q. This voucher system of providing funds to each student individually is pretty radical. How do we know it can work?

- A. The feasibility of this type of arrangement was thoroughly tested with great success in the federal government's GI Bill education provision, which provided veterans with the

economic opportunity to select the type of education and school of their choice.

13. Q. Will total state funding result in more state control if this voucher system becomes a reality?

- A. No. The proposal grants no additional power for state regulation of public or non-public schools. The proposal does not change or add any statutory controls by the state. (As an example, acceptance of the GI Bill did not result in added government control of schools, either public or private.)

14. Q. What could be some other beneficial results of the voucher proposal?

- A. 1. Parents and students could freely choose the type of school and type of education they desired.
2. A more equitable and reasonable formula for financing education would be created. (i.e. educational payments to individuals, not to school institutions.)
3. Competition between schools would provide incentive to upgrade standards.
4. Parents will become more actively involved with schools.
5. Schools would be motivated to develop better course offerings.
6. Parents would finally have a voice in the education of their children by exercising their own economic decisions through a voucher.

We have the following comments on the proposed voucher system:

1. First of all, this voucher system is definitely NOT a part of tax-reform, nor can it be justified as being "more sensible financing of education." The fact of the matter is that if this proposal were limited to the present system of public schools, the voucher system would not even be necessary, would, in fact, be unnecessary red tape. The simple fact is that at present the State of Michigan distributes state aid to the public schools on a per-pupil-formula. All that is necessary is that the state be informed of the number of pupils enrolled in a given school or school district, and an equivalent amount of aid is given to that school district on the basis of a certain amount per pupil. No voucher system is needed.

2. Of course, this voucher system is designed with parochialism in view. Notice that Question and Answer 11 already makes mention of non-public schools. Question and Answer 12 speaks of "the type of education and school of their choice." Question and Answer 13 again mentions non-public schools. And Question and Answer 14 suggests that "Parents and students could freely choose the type of school and

type of education they desired." The whole voucher system is designed with parochialism in view. But the strategy is to have the funds go to parents, and, of course, to *all* parents, rather than directly to schools. By this strategy they think to avoid the charge that this aid is unconstitutional because the state is supporting religious education. I am no lawyer, and surely not an expert on constitutional law. But it seems to me the ruse is so transparent that a child can discern it.

3. Can you begin to imagine the endless miles of red tape (and expense) involved in a voucher system? Furnish a voucher to every parent for every school-age child? And in this connection, let no one talk to me about the GI Bill! I and members of the Theological School Committee had abundant experience with its red tape during the late 1940s and again recently. And this is presented as "more sensible" financing of education?

4. The brochure makes the claim that this will not result in more state control. True, the proposal as such grants no more powers of state regulation. But do not forget that already in Q. and A. 8 the brochure itself has argued that "Funding and control go hand in hand." Do not forget that the state will hold the purse strings over both public and non-public schools: for the state has the power to grant or not to grant vouchers. Where does the control lie? With the parents? No, with the state which grants the vouchers. *Funding and control go hand in hand.* Perhaps the proposal itself grants no further powers of control. But the principle of control through funding is implicit in this proposal. And the potential for state control is plainly present. As far as our parental schools are concerned, we must avoid this like the plague!

(to be continued)

TRANSLATED TREASURES

Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

7. Why the church in an earlier time had no need of its own regulations, but has this need now.

Under the dispensation of shadows there was an ordained ministry for the priesthood, but not for the Word. Now, on the other hand, there is no longer an ordained ministry for the priesthood, but there is a regulation for the ministry of the Word. Both these ordinations are not of the same kind. During the priestly ministration, the church was still concealed in the swaddling clothes of Israel and the priestly ministration bore a strong national character. It was entrusted to a single tribe, or, more specifically, to a single family; and not a spiritual preference but a fleshly appurtenance gave to this family or to this tribe the right of ministration. On the other hand, after the death of the apostolate, after the church became a world church, the church laid this restriction aside, displayed her spiritual face more purely than up to this point, and thus could no longer bind her ministry to natural descent and communion of blood.

The impulse of the church towards a certain organization gradually originates from this. There was no need of this in Israel because the organization of the people itself at that time was at the same time the organization of the church. People and church were one, just as a child yet undeveloped and unborn is one with the womb in which it is cherished and in which it rests.

But with the falling away of Israel and the expiration of Israel's own unique significance for the church, all this becomes entirely different. The church is not destined to be a Greek or Egyptian or Roman church, but is destined to grow up as a world church. Therefore, by the loss of the organic power which was hid in Israel's existence as a nation, the church of Christ cannot find fulfillment by clinging to the national bonds of Greece or Syria, Egypt or the Roman empire. Rather she must, to be able to fulfill her calling, be opposed to the danger of such a confinement in an unnatural straight jacket, and must be vigilant for her independence.

This it can do only through organization on its own foundation, independent of the organization of other peoples. Israel was established with a view to the church, created for the church; and out of that principle Israel could produce a fitting form for ecclesiastical life in its preparatory state. But this was unique with Israel. This could not take place with any other nation. There is not another nation established with a view to the church nor created for the church. Each attempt, therefore, to want to force on the church another national organization as if it were destined for her, would be unnatural, not fitting, and opposed to the nature of the situation. The church has no choice but to organize herself. Not in the manner in which Israel was organized, nor as a copy of the model of national organization, but according to her own nature agreeable to the requirement of her own life. Only in this way does the mystery of which the holy apostle Paul spoke come to its own.

8. From whom the fountain of sovereign authority rises for the church.

This separate organization of the church presupposes that there is an authority in her and over her. How would an establishment, an institution, or gathering be thinkable without a power to give commandment and the duty to be obedient to the commandment existing in her sphere. An institution which, without original or granted or conferred authority, would be like a wall without cement, a beam laid in a wall without anchors. Such as authority was also present in the preparatory church: first in Moses' government under Jehovah, then in the judges, and afterwards in Israel's kings. David's house was vested with divine authority from God. That authority however was not only for a period of time, but was continuous, invested in David's royal dynasty.

"I have once sworn by my holiness:

If I should lie to David, my word would deceive;

His seed shall be everlasting, his throne shall shine gloriously,

As continually as the sun, as glorious as her beams."

Therefore, both must be true, namely that Israel's kingdom should fall away and that David's throne should stand forever. This is a seeming contradiction which finds its solution in this that David's house first brought forth kings who only foreshadowed the true king, and after this brought forth that true King Who is called King of kings and Who is to remain King forever. Rome's attempts also in this respect to imitate the Mosaic and Israelite situation in her viceregency becomes an assault on our Lord's honor. The Christ of God and He alone sits as David's Son, Lord and King over His church forever.

9. How Jesus became King of His church.

Christ does not possess this royal authority of Himself. It is loaned to Him by the Father as the reward for His self-humiliation even unto death. Therefore, because He became obedient even to death, yea, the death of the cross, the apostle Paul says, "God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the father." "To me is given all power," Christ Himself testifies, "in heaven and on earth." Thus originally all authority over the church, even as all power, rests with God triune, i.e., with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It flows forth from the fountain of divine sovereignty, and, in so far as Christ is God's own Son and Himself God, He undoubtedly possesses also that original sovereign power over the church as His divine portion.

But, and here it is necessary to distinguish clearly, Jesus was not appointed King of the church as God's Son, but as our Mediator because only as Mediator does He possess sovereign authority over the church. This is not out of Himself, but He is King by the grace of God, or rather because grace always includes unmerited favor; therefore by God's supreme decree.

The matter is thus: all sovereign authority rests in the Triune God, not only in the state and among the nations, but also in the church. Now it does not please the Lord God to exercise this authority directly, neither over the nations nor over the church. On account of this He places over the nations princes and viceregents, and now in like manner He places over His church the Mediator Christ. Thus, just as the kings of the earth have an authority over the nations which is borrowed from God, Christ as our Mediator is clothed with an authority over the church which also is borrowed from the sovereign God.¹

There is indeed given to the Son, in order that He may be a genuine King over His church, at the same time power over Satan who tempts the church and desires to overpower it; over the angels who are sent out for the sake of those who shall inherit salvation; and thus over princes and nations under whose crowns and in whose midst the church appears and prospers. But this does not alter the serious and undeniable fact that Jesus' kingship over His church is a reward for His inexpressible love. His reward is grounded in His self-sacrifice.

Even on this account His kingship is therefore inseparable from His priesthood; and in like manner, inseparable from His prophetic honor. Golgotha is no dead fact but the everlasting and always living event which is applied hour by hour and moment by moment by Christ actively to the souls of His elect. And because the word without authority can no

longer be a word of God, there cannot be a prophetic witness in His church apart from His kingship. The priest and the prophet are one in the king, and every attempt to establish a priesthood after or apart from Golgotha, to establish a sphere of authority apart from the throne of David's son, or also to establish an untrue word of man apart from the word of the man Jesus Christ, in the organization and formation of the church on earth, must be rejected and resisted as condemned by God's word and as opposing Jesus' honor.

Let it be said with emphasis: this all is true of the *man* Jesus, because only as the Son of Man Jesus is our highest Prophet, our only High Priest and our eternal King. The Triune God is outside the church because He is above it, but the man Jesus Christ is in the church living in our flesh and blood. And just as it has pleased God to rule the nations through princes who are men and to whom He gives might, so it has been thought good to the Lord to rule His church

through a King Who is man and Who by Him is girded with power. The only difference is that the princes are sinners and King Jesus is separated from sinners, and that therefore the authority which is invested in the crown of princes is invested in Jesus Christ as a power which rests in His divine person.

One must not think for a moment as if in truth Jesus is outside the church. Jesus lives in her, always administers in her His sacrifice, does everything through the procession of His high priestly intercession, and rules without interruption over her by His word and Spirit. Only through that constant prophetic, priestly, and kingly action of Christ is the church church, and on earth only so much of the church of God comes to manifestation as that continuous, active working of Christ shines through and is seen in her external form.

¹. From many of Kuyper's other works it is evident that Kuyper does not mean to deny in this paragraph that Christ is also the sovereign Lord over the nations.

TRIUMPH THROUGH TRIALS

Sown in Weakness

Rev. J. Kortering

That's quite a list whereby the Apostle Paul describes the character of our physical bodies: corruption, dishonor, weakness, and natural, see I Cor. 15:42-44.

It's very accurate.

Every time I have to visit the hospital, its accuracy leaps out at me. Press your nose against the glass of the nursery, you are sure to find some little one gasping for breath, sometimes assisted by gigantic machines that enfold them like a second womb. Yes, they have barely arrived upon the scene and weakness is displayed. Try walking quietly through pediatrics. It's quite a learning experience. Here's a little boy with his leg suspended by an iron contraption; he looks awfully uncomfortable. There's another one, face flushed with fever, cuddling his fuzzy toy, crying softly. True, it may not take many days and they will soon be bounding with the zest of life, yet while they are sick they surely are weak. The halls are long, the floors are many, each room tells its own story of weakness. In one we see a once beautiful young girl, her body attacked violently by death, the disease obviously taking its toll. In another we can see a strong young man, hovering between life and death,

the "victim" of a violent accident. Nothing in the hospital is quite like geriatrics. It is sown in weakness. Walk among the aged in the hospital and rest home. What you see, what you hear, what you feel, yes, even what you smell is death! How often I have quietly reflected to myself while visiting among them, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him," Ps. 8:4. Yes, they are at the end of the road, some almost waiting to breathe their last — and for God's people, to be redeemed from the body of this death.

You may well ask, why dwell on these things?

Perhaps you are one who would just as soon look at the bright side of life. You may say that there are more places to visit than hospitals and old people's homes. Think of the homes that echo with the happy sounds of healthy babies and children and grateful parents that care for them. Or visit the schools where teachers are about to pull out their hair knowing how to handle children that have energy to spare. We can step into many homes and see old folks actively engaged in their retirement years and appreciating every one of them.

True.

When Paul, through the work of the Holy Spirit, describes for us the character of our physical body, he does not mean to belittle its amazing quality. It is still a wonderful creation of God. Still more, for each one of us as children of God it is nothing less than the "temple of the Holy Spirit," I Cor. 6:19. Beyond all doubt, our bodies also are wonderfully made.

Let's not whitewash the reality of weakness, however.

We must see that there is a difference between the bodies of Adam and Eve prior to the fall and our bodies as we have them today. Still more, we must also see that there is a difference between our bodies as we now possess them and the bodies of the saints that have already been redeemed. The difference is weakness, corruption, dishonor, and natural.

That weakness is inseparably connected with sin and death.

Because of sin we are weak in our bodies.

Without sin there would be no death. Now, because of the sin of Adam, we all die.

Face that honestly as you see it in others and in yourself. Yes, it is sown in weakness.

Even our bodies tell us we need a Savior! The good news of the gospel is that we have such a Savior. There is deliverance from sin and death in One, the Lord Jesus Christ. He took upon Himself our death in order that He might impart to us His life.

In Christ, we have forgiveness of sin, Acts 5:31.

In Christ, we have the redemption of our body, Rom. 8:23.

Take courage then, dear reader. In the midst of our weakness of body we have everlasting life, John 3:16. Jesus assures us that, "He that liveth and believeth in me shall never die," John 11:26.

We have another list that describes the character of our physical bodies: incorruption, glory, power, and spiritual," I Cor. 15:42-44.

We have a blessed change in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In Him, death is swallowed up in victory.

Believe in Him and enjoy that change.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

March 15, 1978

Dear Timothy,

In our last letter we were discussing the origin of the special offices in the New Testament Church as these offices arose organically out of the life of the Church.

It is that time of the year when new officebearers are once again ordained in our congregations, and it was my privilege also to ordain new officebearers in one of our congregations. As I was reading the form for the ordination of officebearers, I was struck by the fact once again that our Form takes a certain definite position on certain matters which pertain to this very question. I thought perhaps it might be well if I call attention to some of the more interesting features of this Form. You yourself have no doubt read the Form within the last couple of weeks; and you may also have been struck by what the Form says. But to call special attention to a few items will be interesting and helpful.

In the first place, concerning the origin of the word "elder," our Form notes that this word is taken from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, according to the Form, the word connotes "a person who is placed in an honorable office of government over others." The reference is undoubtedly to the incident which took place in the wilderness when Jethro, the

father-in-law of Moses, visited the congregation of the children of Israel. The incident is recorded in Exodus 18:13-26. Jethro witnessed the fact that all the people came to Moses with their problems and Moses passed judgment in the individual cases which were brought to his attention. Jethro talked to Moses about this and told him that if he continued to bear the burden of the rule of the congregation by himself he would wear away. Jethro therefore advised that Moses appoint able and spiritually minded men to hear the problems of the people and to pass judgment in the cases brought to them. If there were any hard cases these could be brought to Moses himself. Moses took this advice and "chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." This was the origin of the Council of Elders in the nation.

Nevertheless, there were elders in the nation already before this time. For example, at the return of Moses from the wilderness of Sinai to Egypt, we read that he consulted with the elders of the people. (See Ex. 4:29, e.g.) These men were probably the older men in the congregation who, because of their age and position, were leaders in their families and clans.

It is striking, however, that, from the days of Jethro's visit, there is constant mention made of elders in Israel's history. This continued through the captivity and into the New Dispensation. The Jews maintained that the Sanhedrin of Jesus' day had its origin in the men who were chosen by Moses on the advice of Jethro.

The two points which interest us here are these: 1) they were always men to whom was entrusted the rule of the nation; and, 2) there is clear continuity between the Old and New Testament Church in this respect.

The second point which the Form makes is that Scripture speaks of two kinds of elders. The text quoted in this connection is I Timothy 5:17: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." The Form points out in this connection that, while both ministers and elders are called ministers, nevertheless the two offices are distinct. "Hence it is evident that there were two sorts of elders in the Apostolic Church, the former whereof did labor in the Word and doctrine, and the latter did not. The first were the ministers of the Word and pastors, who preached the gospel and administered the sacraments; but the others, who did not labor in the Word, and still did serve in the Church, bore a *particular* (underscoring mine) office, namely, they had the oversight of the Church, and ruled the same with the ministers of the Word."

You will recall that a couple of letters earlier, we made mention of the fact that there was a discussion going on among some presbyterians whether there were two or three offices in the Church. Some maintain that there were only two: elders and deacons; others maintain that there are three: elders, deacons, and ministers of the Word. The whole controversy revolves, finally, around an interpretation of this text in Timothy. But it is clear that we are confessionally bound to the position that there are three offices in the Church, not two. And this, I believe, is the correct interpretation of this passage. It is true that both ministers and elders are entrusted with the rule of the Church; and for this reason both are called in Scripture, elders. But it is also true that Scripture makes a distinction between the two offices and separates them. While, therefore, both rule in the Church of Christ, each rules in his own office. And both rule according to the unique idea of the office which they hold. The ministers rule in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments and the elders rule in the government and discipline of the Church. The Form also speaks of this distinction when it begins to sum up the duties of the elders. It states: "... the office of elders is, together with the ministers of the Word, to take the oversight

of the Church, which is committed to them, and diligently to look, whether every one properly deports himself in his confession and conversation; to admonish those who behave themselves disorderly, and to prevent, as much as possible, the sacraments from being profaned; also to act (according to the Christian discipline) against the impenitent, and to receive the penitent again into the bosom of the Church, as doth not only appear from the above mentioned saying of Christ (the reference is to an earlier part of the Form where Mt. 18:17 is quoted), but also from many other places of Holy Writ, as I Cor. chap. 5, and II Cor. chap. 2, that these things are not alone intrusted to one or two persons, but to many who are ordained thereto."

There is, therefore, a certain sharing of this responsibility within the council of the Church. The ministers and elders share in the rule of the Church. This works out this way also in the practical affairs of the Church. Matters of discipline are discussed and decided upon by the minister and the elders. The work of the rule of the Church falls upon both ministers and elders. Both ministers and elders visit those who walk in sin to admonish them and call them to repentance. Both ministers and elders go on family visitation. Scripture gives to both the rule and government of the Church.

Nevertheless, there is also a distinction. Elders may not, ordinarily, engage in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. And problems in the Church which involve specific discipline are usually the responsibility of the elders. Surely the supervision of the preaching and the sacraments belongs to their office.

The question may arise in your mind, however, why the distinction between the two offices is not sharper than this. The answer, I think, is not so hard to find. You will recall that our Church Order even makes provision for the deacons to labor along with the elders in smaller congregations where the number of officebearers is not large. Article 37 reads in part: "Whenever the number of elders is small, the deacons may be added to the consistory by local regulation; this shall invariably be the rule where the number is less than three."

Van Dellen and Monsma, in their "Church Order Commentary," point out that this is possible because of the fact that all the offices in the Church originate in the one office of Jesus Christ and have their unity in this one office of Him Who is alone the Office-bearer in the Church. To this may be added the fact that all three offices really partake of the prophetic office. We have called attention to this more than once; and it is well that we now spell out a bit more the implications of this.

The authority of all the offices in the Church is an

authority which comes only through Jesus Christ. He alone calls and ordains to office. He alone, therefore, gives authority within the Church. But this authority is always the authority of the *Word*. While the authority of an officebearer is given directly by Jesus Christ, nevertheless that authority is the authority of the Word of Christ. That is, only when an officebearer comes with the Word does he have any authority at all. If he should, e.g., come with his own word, whether that be as he attempts to play the role of psychologist, psychiatrist, marriage counselor, youth director, money-manager, or whatever, he has no authority. He may come with some excellent advice which he has gleaned from other sources or learned from some special courses which he took. And he may, in the capacity of giving advice, suggest to those with whom he deals that it is probably the better part of wisdom if such a person should follow this particular course of action which he suggests. But he has no authority. He cannot say: Thus saith the Lord; you are duty-bound to do what I say upon penalty of the wrath of God. He can never say this because he lacks authority. His authority is in the Word and in the Word alone.

This is true of every officebearer. Whether he be minister or elder or deacon, he comes with the Word. This is his only calling, and only when he does this does he truly function in his office.

But that Word which he brings always carries with it a certain ruling and governing power. This is in the nature of the Word itself. It is, in itself, the *rule* for all faith and life. Whenever it is brought, it requires of

us obedience. And it itself has the power to punish the disobedient as well as bless the obedient. Thus the Word rules in our life whether that Word is brought by a minister, elder, or deacon.

It is in this respect that there is a certain unity of the three offices. They must be kept distinct in the Church. And yet they cannot be so separated from each other that they are isolated from each other in their functions in the Church. All draw their work out of the Holy Scriptures, and all manifest the one office of Jesus Christ.

Finally, the Form mentions the fact that elders act as assistants to the ministers. "Thus we see that these sorts of ministers are added to the others who preach the gospel, to aid and assist them, as in the Old Testament the common Levites were to the priests in the service of the tabernacle, in those things which they could not perform alone: notwithstanding the offices always remained distinct one from the other."

We cannot discuss this in detail; nor is that necessary. It is only important to point out that the idea is not that the ministers occupy some superior office. Scripture is very clear on the parity of officebearers. But again the emphasis falls upon the fact that the government of the Church is given to many who labor together for one cause.

But we must end this letter and return again to this subject at a later date, the Lord willing.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

TAKING HEED TO DOCTRINE

The Bible

Rev. David Engelsma

What authority over your life do you acknowledge? What is it that determines what you believe about God, about the world, and about yourself? What regulates your behavior? What standard do you have for your behavior in marriage? What guide do you follow in the rearing of your children; or, if you are a child, what guide do you follow in your relationships with your parents?

There are many people who would reply: "I do not recognize *any* authority over me or over my life. I am free!" In fact, however, these people are saying that they themselves are their own lords. Their own will and their own wishes govern their lives.

There are other people who might reply to our questions with a question of their own: "Is there any authority? Is there any safe and sure and clear guide for human life?" They despair of any such authoritative rule and standard.

The one authority over man's life, the one rule of man's faith and behavior, is the Bible. The Bible has this authority because it is inspired of God. This is what the Bible says of itself in II Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God. . . ." This tells us the origin of the Bible. The Bible did not originate from men, even though God used men to write the Bible. The origin of the Bible is God; God

has breathed forth the Bible. The Bible came into being because God moved men to write down those things that are in the Bible. As they wrote, God worked within them, by the Holy Spirit, so that they wrote exactly what He wanted them to write and exactly how He wanted it written. Because the Bible is inspired of God, the Bible is the Word of God. All of the Bible is the Word of God, for "all scripture is inspired of God." No part of the Bible is man's word. For this reason, verse 15 of II Timothy 3 calls the Bible "holy": "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures." God is holy, and God's Word is also holy. Of no other book is this true.

Since the Bible is the very Word of God, the authority of the Bible is the authority of God Himself. Whoever recognizes and submits to the authority of the Bible is actually bowing to the authority of God. Whoever refuses to acknowledge the authority of the Bible is, by virtue of this fact, denying the right of God to rule over him. Then, he sets up another authority, another god, and that other authority is man, perhaps himself, perhaps some other man.

As the inspired Word of God, the Bible is reliable. It is infallible — it contains no errors. It does not lie or deceive. It records no history that is merely a myth. It makes no promises that go unfulfilled. It gives no direction for human life that is mistaken and that leads one into bitter disappointment. We can safely trust the Bible, as is possible only with the Word of the God Who cannot lie.

The Bible alone is sufficient for man's salvation. Everything that a man needs to know for his salvation, the Bible contains. Everything that a man needs to know so that he may behave himself in a way that pleases God, the Bible teaches. It is complete; it requires no supplement. This is plainly the teaching of the passage quoted before. It says of "holy scriptures" that "they are able to make thee wise unto salvation." The Bible is able to do this, the Bible all by itself. If this were not the case, if the Bible were incomplete, that other thing would be an authority alongside the Bible. But the Bible is the only authority over men, whether that be the Church or the individual. God alone rules over the Church and over the individual child of God by His Word, and both the Church and the child of God must submit themselves to this Word.

None of this would be of any benefit to us if the Bible were not clear. The Bible teaches what we need to believe and how we should live, clearly and plainly. The Bible is not a deep, dark book that only a few, learned theologians and ministers are able to understand. The Bible is understandable for the common, ordinary man. Even a child can easily understand the Bible. This is what the apostle Paul said in II Timothy

3:15 to the young minister, Timothy: "from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures." From the time that Timothy was a very young child, of a few years, he knew the Bible, understood its teachings, and grasped its message.

A young child is able to read and understand Genesis 1 and 2, the simple account of God's creation of the world, and thus that young child knows the great truth of the origin of all things. A young child is able to read and understand Genesis 3, the simple record of the fall of the first man and woman into sin, and thus that young child knows the great truth of the entrance of sin and death into our world. A young child is able to read and understand the gospels, the record of the birth and work and death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, and thus that young child knows the great truth of God's gracious salvation of His people through His Son come into the flesh.

The Bible is clear and bright, as clear and bright as the sun is in the heavens. The trouble is that men's minds are darkened and their spiritual eyes are blinded by sin. Therefore, men do not see that the Bible is God's Word, as it very plainly shows itself to be. Nor do they understand its teachings, although those teachings are plain. The fault is not in the Bible, but in us; just as the reason why a blind man does not see the sun is not some deficiency of the sun but the blindness of the man himself. Therefore, before any man can see the clarity of the Bible, God must work in that man to open the eyes of his heart and to enlighten his mind. Christ must open the Scripture to our understanding and must open our understanding to the Scripture (Luke 24:32, 45). The Holy Spirit must give us faith.

This already indicates what our answer is to those who challenge us to prove all that we confess about the Bible. "How do you *know* that the Bible is the inspired Word of God? How do you *know* that it is the only authority over man's life? You can *say* all these things, but *prove* it!"

The proof that the Bible is the Word of God and, therefore, the only authority, is the Bible itself. The authority of the Bible does not depend on anything besides itself, not even the testimony of the Church. The Bible proves itself! This does not embarrass us. We must not secretly wish that there were some evidence apart from the Bible that would conclusively prove that the Bible is the Word of God. It stands in the very nature of the case that the Bible is its own conclusive witness. For the Bible is the Word of God, and the Word of God substantiates and bears witness to itself. It no more needs, or allows, something else to prove it than God needs, or allows, something else to prove Himself.

But if the question intends to ask concerning the

possibility of knowing beyond any doubt that the Bible is God's Word, the answer is this: "The Holy Spirit has testified of this in my heart and has given me perfect assurance that the Bible is what it claims to be." One of the creeds in which Reformed people confess their faith, the Belgic Confession, says this: "We receive all these books (of the Bible) and these only, as holy . . . for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts, that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves" (Article V).

The doctrine of the Bible, that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, without errors, reliable in everything it teaches, sufficient, clear, the only authority over the Church and the believer, is absolutely basic for the Christian faith, for the Church, and for the individual child of God. Upon the Word of God, everything depends. The attacks made upon the Bible in our day, the denial of its inspiration, the questioning of its reliability, the obscuring of its clarity, and the challenge to its authority, are attempts of Satan to destroy the very foundation of the Christian faith, the Christian Church, and the Christian life. These attacks represent the height of human pride: Man dares to criticize God's Word.

The consequences of rejecting the authority of the Word of God are disastrous, as is evident on every hand. Without the scriptures no one becomes wise unto salvation through faith in Christ. Men remain foolish — ignorant both of their own desperate plight and of God's Savior. Without the light that the Bible shines on his life, a man wanders blindly in darkness. He does not know whence he has come, why he exists, or where he is going. Neither does he know how to behave himself on the way. This is a wretched

condition, and men feel it. Especially the young people are quick to note that, without any authoritative Word of God, our life is without meaning and purpose. Everything, then, is up for grabs: marriage, government, work, the authority of parents and teachers, concern for the neighbor, even health and physical life. To the question, "How shall a young man, or young woman, regulate his, or her, life?" there is no calm, sure, authoritative answer. Therefore, the youth are exposed to every misery. What a contrast to the upbringing of children and young people according to the standard of the Bible! In the sphere of Holy Scripture, when the question is raised, the vital question,

"How shall the young direct their way?

What light shall be their perfect guide?"

the answer is given:

"Thy Word, O Lord, will safely lead,
If in its wisdom they confide."

The confession of the authority of the Bible as the Word of God, made in faith, will have great and delightful benefits for the congregation and for the child of God. The scriptures will make men wise unto salvation and will prove themselves "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:15-17).

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A question often raised today is: What version of the Bible should I use? We are gravely concerned about the modern versions of the Bible which become so popular, e.g., *The Living Bible*. In a pamphlet called "Modern Bible Versions," we tell why we are concerned, and we give our answer to the question, which version. We invite you to write us for free copies of this pamphlet in care of the business manager of *The Standard Bearer*.

STUDIES IN ISAIAH

The Land (Ours?) Forsaken

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

Isaiah 7:15-17

These verses have been interpreted and understood of a person different from the Immanuel of v. 14, of one naturally born in the days of Isaiah. Some of the rabbins supposed the child to be Hezekiah, others that he was a son of Ahaz, and still others imagined that a pregnant woman was present at the time Isaiah

was speaking and that he pointed to her in illustration of his prediction. Others, yet, said this was a son of Isaiah's. These are assumptions without supporting evidence and all unnecessary to the understanding of the passage. There is no necessity, especially no exegetical necessity, for making the person of vv.

15-16 any other than the same person as in verse 14. It is both ungrammatical and arbitrary to refer v. 16 to a child different from the one of v. 14. C. H. Spurgeon calls this "a strange frittering away of a wonderful passage . . . I, therefore, reject that view of the matter; it is, to my mind, far below the height of this great argument. It does not speak, or allow us to speak one half of the wondrous depth which coucheth beneath this mighty passage."

Others suggest that the problem of the identity of the persons in these verses is to be solved by the idea of a double fulfilment of prophecy. Of this, J. A. Alexander says, "A double sense is not impossible, and must, in certain cases, be assumed, (although) it is unreasonable to assume it when any other explanation is admissible . . . especially if any simpler mode of exposition be at all admissible."

The view here is like that of a photo made with a telescopic lens, showing buildings, cars, telegraph poles, traffic, and people all in one close-up scene, all in one plane. Distance and depth are squeezed out of the picture. The perspective combines objects near and lying far apart in a complex sequence and arrangement. So the prophet, with telescopic eye sees ranges of mountains as though within reach, not seeing the far apart valleys in between. So when "Isaiah speaks of Immanuel as eating thickened milk and honey, like all who survived the Assyrian troubles . . . he evidently looks upon and thinks of the childhood of Immanuel as connected with the time of the Assyrian calamities" (Delitzsch). Everything is viewed in telescopic panorama — close up. The prophet sees to the time when Jesus was born. At that time, Israel was under a Gentile power, in a situation directly traceable to the unbelief of Ahaz.

"Curds and honey he shall eat to (the time of) his knowing, in (the presence of) the evil, to reject, and in (the presence of) the good, to choose" (v. 15, Heb.). The first Adam was a full grown, mature man immediately upon his creation; but the Last Adam was conceived, born, and advanced gradually through the stages of infancy, childhood, and youth to manhood, with increasing ability to discern good and evil. As for the King James Version of this verse, Spurgeon says, "Our translators were certainly very good scholars, and God gave them much wisdom, so that they craned up our language to the majesty of the original, but here they were guilty of very great inconsistency. I do not see how butter and honey can make a child choose good and refuse evil. If it is so, I am sure butter and honey ought to go up greatly in price. For good men are very much required. But it does not say in the original, 'Butter and honey shall He eat that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.'" The text is literally as noted at the beginning of this paragraph.

What is taught here is Christ's real humanity. To prove this to His church, even in His resurrection from the dead in the flesh, He, just as any human being would, ate some broiled fish and a piece of a honeycomb. The heretics known as the Doketites taught that Christ's body was a mere seeming appearance. Then He was not a real man. But He ate butter and honey as other men did. He was nourished with food as other men. He was true man just as really as He was true and eternal God. He also was a holy Child, for He did not choose evil, as did our first parents, and as the natural man can only do. His nature being sinless, He rejects the evil and chooses the good.

Here is also taught that Christ would be born in a time of peace. "The bees may make their hive in the lion's carcase, and there may be honey there; but when the land is disturbed, who shall go to gather the sweetness? How shall the babe eat butter (thickened milk — RCH), when its mother flees away even in the winter time, with the child clinging to her breast? . . . Ere the King of Peace came to the temple of Jerusalem, the horrid mouth of war was stopped . . . Augustus Caesar was emperor of the world; none other ruled it, and therefore wars had ceased, and the earth was still! . . . *then* came the Prince of Peace, who in after days shall break the bow and cut the spear in sunder, and burn the chariot in the fire" (CHS).

"For before the boy shall know in (the presence of) the evil to reject and in (the presence of) the good to choose, the land, before two of her kings, concerning whom thou feelest a sickening dread, shall be forsaken" (v. 16, Heb.). "The *land* here meant is Syria and Israel, spoken of as one because confederate against Judah. The wasting of these kingdoms and the deportation of their people by Tiglath-pileser (2 K. 15:29; 16:9), is here predicted" (J. A. Alexander). The child, the one referred to in v. 14, Immanuel, as to his human nature, learns to distinguish good and evil, but before he does so, something happens. The land gets to be God-forsaken. Isaiah does not expressly say when this will take place, but only that it will before the child has reached the riper age of boyhood. After Syria and Israel were forsaken, "Judah (vv. 17ff) was then next laid waste by the Assyrians as a punishment for having refused the help of Jehovah, and preferring the help of man . . . The very king to whom Ahaz had appealed in his terror would bring Judah to the brink of destruction." (Delitzsch). His hopes were dashed to disappointment. For the two kings, who were no more than two tales of smoking firebrands, but whom Ahaz dreaded, were drawn off and made to forsake the land of Israel, thus relieving Judah of this threat, and leaving Ahaz with nothing more to fear from

them. Yet Ahaz, too, followed not long afterward in their slippery path.

"The land forsaken!" Why was it so? For the sins of idolatry and image worship! Ahaz was an idolater. His sins brought the land to God-forsakenness. Our land, too, is full of these same sins. The nation falls into these evils only gradually. "After a while, they who professed to worship Christ must needs have *cross* and *crucifix*, picture and image. Of course, they did not worship the cross, or crucifix, or the picture, or the image! No, but they professed to worship Christ by the help of these things. That was the first violation of the simplicity of worship . . . in reality, a departure from the living God. In a very short time they took to the worship of saints, and from that they went to the worship of cast clouts and rotten rags . . . bones . . . decayed teeth and all kinds of rubbish, made the subjects of worship when they have been exposed to the gaze of the deluded people . . . Only three or four hundred years ago, from one end of this island to the other, the land was full of *holy roods* and images and relics . . . the people were utterly given up to idolatry, and the gospel of God was scarcely known" (C. H. Spurgeon). But then the time came when God's people were moved to "revolt against Romanism, and all over England men smashed the 'holy water' basins, and defaced the pictures, and pulled down the images, and treated them with utter contempt, and England was freed from the idolatry under which she had groaned so long. We thought she would always remain free; but, alas! we only dreamed it. By and by there came men in 'the Established Church,' who did not bid us worship saints, nor did they at first go very far in idolatry; but they said that they must have vestments, incense, and I know not what, and now they have boldly set up the crucifix — that calf of Baal, for it is nothing better — that image which they adore, and which we loathe, because it has become the thin end of the wedge, the first return to idolatry. Where is true Protestant feeling (thinking, teaching, and preaching — RCH) in England (in America — RCH)? It seems to me to be almost extinct. All that many care for is an ornate service, something beautiful for the eye to rest upon, flowers more abundant than in a conservatory, music sweet to the ear, and thus, by-and-by, unless God prevent, we shall get back to the old Roman idolatry, and that would be the ruin of this land as it has been the ruin of every land where it has had the sway. Time was

when God covered England with His wing, when Spain's Armada was swept away by the tempest, like chaff before the wind, and God was with our country, and gave her power, and made her to be *the empress of the seas* (ital added); but if she forsakes her God, she will fall from her heights. (God will bring such days as have not come, v. 17. — RCH). If this land becomes full of images and idols again, and there be found none to protest against it, the God that lifted us up will throw us down. He that hath used us for His glory will reckon us to be unfit for His service, and cast us away with the other nations that He hath forsaken because of their defilement through idolatry." (Spurgeon).

"Jehovah will bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon the house of thy father, days which have not come, to, from the time Ephraim departed from upon Judah, by the king of Assyria" (v. 17). Ahaz could not listen to Jehovah speaking either through a special supernatural world-staggering wonder or His own simple word of truth, because he was so indebted to and involved with the King of Assyria. He had committed himself, for certain helps, to be his servant. He had paid him off in gold and silver tribute money. To do this he had impoverished the treasuries of church and state (2 K. 16:7-8). But the king of Assyria would become to him to lean on a broken reed. He would become to him a scourge of thorns, a whip of scorpions. Therefore "Jehovah will bring upon thee," i.e., the hypocritical Ahaz (who was such a lover of everything Assyrian) would find that far from coming to his aid, they would come to destroy him. "Upon thee, upon thy people and upon the house of thy father." The house of David would not be exempt from this severe judgment. The spiritual Israel would be spared and preserved through God's judgments, while the carnal Israel would not escape unpunished but be consumed in His wrath. Saith the Lord, I will bring upon thee days which have not occurred since the schism and revolt of apostate Israel from Judah. That national affliction did more damage to the kingdom than any heathen enemy. Yet by all this destruction, the overthrow of Syria, next the ruin of Samaria, the carrying off of Israel to captivity, and finally the fall of Judah, the Lord would destroy the hypocrite and prove that judgment on the wicked is for the sake of the preservation of His Church.

Know the standard and follow it.
Read the

THE STANDARD BEARER



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Towards a Secular Solution

Rev. Mark Hoeksema

Recently I received a "Hunger Fighter" in the mail. As I suppose most other pastors do, I receive a great deal of "junk mail," unsolicited advertisements for many organizations and causes. Virtually all of these materials go into "File 13" without so much as a second glance. But once in a while there comes a publicity stunt that is just about impossible to ignore; it receives more than cursory attention, and perhaps provides food for more in-depth thought. Such was my "Hunger Fighter."

What is a Hunger Fighter? It consisted of a "Love Loaf," a small plastic box in the shape of a loaf of bread with a slot in the top, and of considerable written material explaining the promotion. Sponsored by World Vision International, this Hunger Fighter kit is meant to be used in one's congregation. The recipient is supposed to order, free of charge, enough Love Loaves for his congregation, which then fills up the loaves with money, and at an appointed time, turns them all in so that the money can be collected, counted, and sent to World Vision to feed the poor of the world. There are detailed instructions as to exactly how the program should be conducted, what it will do, and what its advantages are for the local congregation, as well as for the poor and deprived people who will receive this aid. For example, the church can aid people in Southern Sudan, Africa; Gujarat, India; Irian Jaya, Indonesia; and Maranhao, Brazil, with medicines, sewing machines, water buffaloes, tractors, chicken feed, and apple trees, all for just a few dollars a month. According to the promotional material accompanying the Love Loaf, all of this is a "proven way to increase your church's support of denominational hunger programs," and is also good for families, who can use this Love Loaf in family devotions ("Children love it"). As proof that the program is successful, World Vision points out that more than \$2 million was raised through the Love Loaf program last year, and adds glowing testimonials from pastors of churches which took part in the program. Perhaps more details could be added, but the picture should be sufficiently clear to give a good understanding of the Hunger Fighter.

What must we say about all of this? Or, to back up

a step, should we say anything at all about it? These questions crossed my mind as I scanned the material I had received. Why not just toss the whole package into the wastebasket and forget about it? But then again, should something be said after all? And if so, what?

After pondering the matter for some time, I decided that something should be said. However, I must confess that it is rather difficult to criticize a program such as this. Though my initial reaction was instantly negative, to give content to those negative feelings is much more difficult. Being against fighting hunger is something like being against motherhood and apple pie — it's unAmerican and unChristian in the eyes of most people today. But, on the other hand, such anti-poverty programs sponsored by churches and religious organizations are proliferating today; World Vision is not by any means the only organization so involved, but it is a good representative of the kind of thing that is being done today. And because this issue is one that is connected with the church, and because the appeals of these organizations are directed to Christians, and often to Reformed Christians, some reflection is in order. I want to make it clear in this regard that I attribute no evil motives to those involved, nor am I (or the denomination of which I am a member) opposed to the relief of the poor. Because this matter concerns the church, and because there is here a sign of the times, a few words of evaluation are in order.

The intent of World Vision is obviously to instill in Christians a sense of responsibility or even guilt towards the poor of the world. I do not intend to enter into the whole question of who is one's neighbor, and what is the obligation of Christians towards those less fortunate than those of us in developed countries. But I must confess that I cannot bring myself to feel responsible or guilty for the plight of people in far-off lands, since I do not believe that I am their neighbor, and I resent being asked for money on the basis of a supposed feeling or responsibility. But apart from this, there are many more important things that can be said about this Hunger Fighter. Its underlying assumption is the common

humanity of man, with mutual responsibility, under a universal fatherhood of God, an assumption which all Reformed Christians must reject on the basis of the Scriptures. To put the same thing into different words, there is not even a hint of the truth of the antithesis here, because there is no regard for spiritual matters and principles, which must always govern the lives of God's people. There is an emphasis, sickeningly, upon what man can do and what man should do. The benefits to *you* and your congregation are repeatedly stressed; those who give to this project are exalted for showing their love. Such a man-centered philosophy of do-goodism betrays a basically Arminian and universalistic bias on the part of the sponsors of this and similar projects, as well as a gross ignorance of the Biblical concept of love. Does this sound like Reformed language?

Jesus met every human need. One evening He healed many of the sick who had gathered at the door of Peter's house. On another occasion He overturned the moneytables of those who were cheating the poor. And once He took five loaves and two fishes to feed a hungry crowd. His were acts of love — the expressed love of a God who cares.

That same love can be cultivated in your church through the Love Loaf. It's one way to let Jesus continue, through His Body, to care for the poor as He did while on earth.

If Jesus can feed 5000 people with a small boy's lunch, we can ask Him to do it with a Love Loaf.

Who is this God and this Jesus? For whom does He care — for all people in the world, or for His elect children? Is Jesus so weak a Savior that we have to let Him care for the poor, or is He the exalted Lord over all things in heaven and on earth? Is this a Reformed concept of mission work? Where is the gospel of salvation, of God's sovereign salvation of His people through the work of His grace in Christ? To ask these questions is to answer them.

But more significantly for Reformed Christians, there is an unmistakable sign of the times in this endeavor and others like it. I refer to what might be called a secular religion. This religion is secular in its methods, for it uses the tactics of Madison Avenue, of slick promotions, of glib phrases, of shallow thinking. This commercialization of religion, the dealing with big money, the recitation of impressive results must never characterize the church of Jesus Christ. But apart from the methods involved here, the message that comes through is very secular. Make no mistake, Christianity is equated here with giving of money to the poor. While it is certainly true that the care of God's poor is one of the callings and even one of the marks of a Christian, in no way does Christianity consist of sending Love Loaves to the poor in remote areas of the world. And yet this is exactly the

underlying assumption of those who promote such projects. Apart from the fact that we as Reformed Christians must not allow this to be the test of our Christianity, there is a deeper problem here.

The deeper matter is that here is a sign of the times, for such movements evidence the development of the power of antichrist. As John points out in I John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." In the book of Revelation, especially the 13th chapter, we are instructed in figurative language that the antichrist shall utilize the power of so-called religion to realize his false kingdom at the end of time. All the power of the existing church will become subject to the goals of antichrist and his kingdom. Moreover, we are instructed in the Scriptures that his kingdom shall be glorious in character, so that poverty, disease, and misery, shall be eliminated to a great degree. Therefore he will be acclaimed and worshipped by the whole world as their hero and savior. In the elimination of poverty the church will aid.

When these briefly stated truths are remembered, then we are able to gain a perspective on many of the movements we see in the church world today. Never should we forget that the signs of the times take place not only in the world, but also concern that which is called church. Some of those signs are clearly evident already. Hand in hand with the current apostasy from the faith goes the pseudo-religion exemplified in such movements as World Vision. After all, when the gospel is lost or taken away from the church, something must be substituted for it. And what is substituted is a secular religion, according to which the doing of a general kind of good works in the civil realm is made to be the same as the service of Christ. Further, such efforts are increasingly effective as tools to unite world Christianity, which is a prerequisite for the realization of the kingdom of antichrist.

The calling of all Reformed Christians, then, is not to participate in efforts to eliminate world hunger and poverty; we must remember that the enemy of the gospel and the church and Christ is not poverty, but sin and the power of antichrist. If we unthinkingly go along with and support such efforts, then we become part of the spirit and power of antichrist, and we lose the gospel and faith of Jesus Christ. Rather, in an age of many antichrists which are in the world, we must remain faithful to the truth of the Scriptures, and be busy with the work of preaching the gospel of Christ, that we may be instrumental in the gathering of the church while it is day, before the night comes.

GUEST ARTICLE

Dooyeweerd's Passing--An Evaluation

(1)

Bernie Postma

(Editor's Note: This article was submitted for possible placement in the *Standard Bearer* by Mr. Bernie Postma, member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa. Because of the importance of the subject of the Dooyeweerdian Philosophy and the related AACCS, or "Toronto," Movement, we are placing it in two installments. As is always the case, placement does not imply endorsement by the *Standard Bearer* or its editor.)

The *Banner* of April 22, 1977 carried a rather long article written by Dr. H. Evan Runner, of Calvin College, entitled, "Dooyeweerd's Passing — An Appreciation."

Although I am not a professional philosopher, I shall nevertheless attempt to set forth clearly my reactions to some of his statements, along with reiterating what I have always believed to be the Reformed position over against the Dooyeweerdian view of the Scriptures.

In the light of the Bible, God's Word, the Holy Scriptures, which all mean exactly the same, I intend to present my reactions in the following order with respect to:

- I. Runner's view;
- II. Dooyeweerd's view of the Bible;
- III. How the Bible is viewed by some of Dooyeweerd's pupils.

I. Runner's article

The more I reread his article the more I cannot escape the basic concept Runner seems to convey, namely, that fundamental to the deep underlying problems related to the various sciences are other problems of a deep philosophical nature. For, talking about a rabid proliferation of the special sciences in the nineteenth century, he writes: "At first the view had prevailed (positivism) that the special sciences were self-sufficient, that is, that they could make it on their own, were structurally unrelated to *philosophy*" (italics added). And further: "But it gradually became clear to a great many investigators that

every special science was running up against foundational problems of a *philosophic* sort" (italics added). And, finally, in the same context he writes: "By the end of the first World War what philosophy itself needed, if it was to develop soundly in this new situation was men whose general philosophical abilities were related to an informed awareness of these *philosophical questions* that lie at the foundation of each of the special sciences" (italics added).

A little later, in a different context, referring to the historical background of Dooyeweerd's rise and his emerging Christian perspective, Runner says: "Thus, Dooyeweerd came to general philosophical questions by way of a study of the philosophical questions that lie at the foundation of the law sciences."

Now, really, with all due respect for the person of Dr. Runner, does not all of this sound very much like going around in circles? We know, do we not, that by going around in circles we never get to the point, always ending up where we started from. We may take several people with us, walking or even running as fast in a circle as we like; but we are not getting anywhere, although we "Christians" might think or feel that as a "community" we are really "on the way," according to Runner. However, it should be rather obvious that all this "running around" is nothing but self-deception. For, it is simply not true that the "deep problems" which lie at the bottom of the special sciences would be of a philosophical nature, including even the science of philosophy. If this were true, this would elevate philosophy to a level above all other sciences, including theology; and it would mean that all problems would be solved as soon as we have found the philosophic answers. Then, philosophically speaking, we might conclude, for instance, that at the bottom of the philosophic problems of the science of philosophy lie problems of a deep philosophical nature which can or must be solved in the philosophical way, including those philosophical problems which lie at the bottom of theology. Well, if this is not going around and around

on the philosophical merry-go-round, I don't know what else this is. Is it any wonder that a well-known minister in the Christian Reformed Church made the remark, "The study of philosophy is a waste of time; I'd rather study the Bible"?

Fact is, that basic to the deep problems many "investigators" of the many special sciences run up against is a spiritual problem, relating to the true knowledge and childlike fear of Jehovah, and to the everyday worship of Him in spirit and in truth according to God's Word, the Bible. This is what the Bible clearly teaches us in Colossians 1:16,17: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." "Whom we preach," so the holy apostle Paul continues in vs. 28, "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." And now, spiritually speaking — we are talking about "deep problems," are we not? — what has the unbelieving investigator-philosopher in common with Christ Jesus? Nothing at all! No wonder he has problems! What has the unbelieving theologian in common with Christ Jesus? Nothing at all! And, consequently, he does encounter foundational problems, too! The general church world, even the churches which are called or call themselves Reformed, are pregnant with theological nonsense, because the pure wisdom of God in Christ Jesus has been replaced on many pulpits with philosophical hullabaloo!

And so we could continue. Every unbeliever pursuing any kind of science — he might even have acquired one or more doctor's titles! — apart from true faith in God, that is, apart from a heartfelt reliance upon and a sincere and humble subjection to the Bible, indeed runs up against all sorts of insurmountable problems, because he fails to see the unity of all the sciences, special or non-special, in Christ Jesus. Consequently, these problems are of a deep spiritual nature, and are not of a philosophic sort, as Runner wants us to believe.

Two prominent Reformed men, the late Dr. Abraham Kuyper and the late Dr. Klaas Schilder, of the Netherlands — to mention only two of several — had the courage of their heartfelt conviction by the grace of God to state emphatically that all *true* science, that is, the true study of the various sciences in accordance with and in humble subjection to the Bible will invariably lead to God, our Creator, of Whom, through Whom, and unto Whom are all things.

There is no conflict between the true study of any science, which obviously can only be performed by the true child of God, and the Word of God, the

Bible. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in Whom all things consist, and Who upholds all things by the power of His might — He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and the Supreme Wisdom, also when it pertains to the study of any science, special or non-special.

But, so the reader might ask, what is the argument? Did not both men, Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd, want to establish a Christian philosophy distinct from all the secular philosophies so prevalent in an unbelieving world? And, therefore, this philosophy is based upon the Bible, is it not? And so, again, what is the argument?

In spite of a sincere desire on the part of both Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd to establish a Christian philosophy (I have no reason to doubt their integrity and sincerity), it is my heartfelt belief and conviction that their starting point was wrong. Runner himself indicates this when he says, "Thus they (Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd, B.P.) came to see the urgent need for a general Christian philosophical theory." A few remarks about this statement should suffice. The words *general* and *Christian* are mutually exclusive. The word *Christian* implies separation, antithesis, unique, very special, all referring to God's sovereign grace in the Lord Jesus Christ whereby He elects some to eternal bliss and reprobates others to eternal damnation in hell. What is so general about being Christian? The Bible and our Reformed Confessions are unmistakably clear when it comes to these matters pertaining to election and reprobation. The expression "general Christian" is therefore a contradiction in terms.

From the very start, though perhaps not in so pronounced a form as came to manifestation later on, this philosophy was fundamentally an effort to unite all Christians of all kinds of "colors" from all denominations under one roof. This is an unbiblical "ecumenical" spirit so prevalent in our age, a strife for unity at the expense of the truth of the Bible. And it simply won't work. Think, for instance, of "Key 73," which was at best a religionistic flop.

Wanting to deny the existence of such an "ecumenical" spirit in the Dooyeweerdian philosophy would mean to assume a position contrary to plain fact, but above all contrary to Scripture and Confession, which we might illustrate with the following historical example.

When the late Dr. Dooyeweerd came to Canada in October, 1961 to meet with the board of the A.R.S.S., the Association for Reformed Scientific Studies, headquartered in Toronto, and the forerunner of the present day A.A.C.S., he urged the Board as follows: "to seek for a basis for the Association which would not bind him to the creeds of the Church, but would set forth clearly the

Scriptural demands for a reformation of theoretical thought."

The adoption by the Board of the A.R.S.S. of this ill-conceived suggestion caused an ever increasing polarization and confusion within the Reformed Churches. And, by the way, in 1967 the name of the Association was changed to A.A.C.S., the Association for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship — whatever is meant by the word "Christian" — right after the Institute for Christian Studies (I.C.S.) was established in Toronto.

What Dooyeweerd suggested, based upon and in harmony with his personal philosophically oriented thought patterns, is a contradiction in terms, and a very serious one indeed. We must well remember that what God has joined together throughout the history of His church no man can or has a right to put asunder without provoking His righteous wrath. If the creeds of the church are considered not good enough, not broad enough, inferior, or even if they are considered an obstacle in the way for true church unity, it follows irrevocably that the Bible is also under attack. The creeds, sealed with the blood of the martyrs — being the seed of the church! — are the expression of an heartfelt conviction of the church of God with respect to the eternal truths of the Word of God, the Bible, and the God of that Bible. To try to separate the two, Scripture and Confession, either in practice or theory, does not only lead to absurdities, but is downright wicked. Such separation results in a situation wherein ultimately we have nothing left, neither Scripture nor Confession: for God Himself, bestowing His sovereign grace in the history of His church, joined those two together! Do we not see all around us an ever increasing ignorance, coupled with an ever growing indifference and disdain for the creeds of the church? And must not the same conclusion be drawn with respect to the Bible, God's Holy Word?

A second remark concerns the reality of sin. It is my conviction that this philosophy, known as *De Wyssbegeerte der Wets-idee*, which means "The Philosophy of the Law Idea," does not take into account sufficiently the tremendous and horrible reality of sin and the salvation from sin through the unimaginable sufferings and agonies of Jesus Christ on the cross. This is why we must be careful with human theories, regardless of how Christian-like they might sound. Every theory originates in the thoughts of man. God tells us through His prophet Jeremiah, 17:9, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Furthermore, we read in Genesis 6:5: "... every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." These words and many more passages from Holy Writ which deal with the corruptness of man in all his

thoughts, words, and deeds, should warn us to be constantly on our guard for any man-made theory. No wonder that God instructs us to test the spirits whether they are of God! This implies (and the practice of our daily lives demonstrates this very clearly) that instead of establishing a Christian philosophical theory, the outcome of such an endeavor, in spite of serious intentions, is a philosophically oriented or dominated man-made theory covered with a layer of "Christian" veneer. To contradict this would not only mean a headlong rushing up against the plain facts of life, but would also mean taking a position contrary to the clear teachings of the Bible. God says to His apostle Paul in Colossians 2:8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of man, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

Fundamentally speaking, this "Philosophy of the Law-Idea" wants to be synthetical, rather than Biblically antithetical. Let us well remember that it is God Himself Who established the antithesis! Let me quote in this regard another one of Runner's statements: "During these years (up to World War II, B.P.) intense discussions began with Roman Catholic philosophers and theologians, which have profoundly effected Roman Catholic thought in the Netherlands. In other words, what the Holy Spirit apparently was not able, or rather, not willing to do, namely, to bring about a unity between Roman Catholics and the posterity of the Reformation, the "Christian" philosophy was considered able to accomplish? I am sure that Prof. Runner does not mean to blaspheme the Holy Spirit; but such a statement is not only contrary to plain facts as God made them to happen in and through His church, but also contrary to God's Word. Fundamentally, Roman Catholicism has not changed; with its Mary cult and other blasphemous anti-Biblical dogmas it has grown worse over the years and it does not apologize for what it stood for in the past and what it stands for today. But the fact is that the children of the Reformation have changed drastically. Of course, the principles of the sixteenth century Reformation, whereby God in His infinite mercy by His sovereign grace delivered His church from the horrible grip of the spiritual darkness of the Middle Ages, are still the same. These principles will not change, but will forever remain the same: for they are in full agreement with, are solidly founded upon, and are established in heart-felt subjection to the eternal Word of God, the Bible. Consequently, between the system of Roman Catholicism and the principles of the Reformation stood the Bible, and still today stands the Bible. To make philosophy, even Christian philosophy, the binding force of all religions is an effort not worthy of Biblical consideration.

Book Reviews

OUR REASONABLE FAITH, by Herman Bavinck (translated by Henry Zylstra); Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 568 pages, \$6.95 (paperback). (Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema)

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD, by Herman Bavinck (translated by William Hendriksen); Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 407 pages, \$5.95 (paperback). (Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema)

Both of these books are reprints in Baker's "Twin Brooks Series." The original publications were hardbacks, published by Eerdmans.

Our Reasonable Faith is a survey of Christian doctrine intended not for the theological student but for the general reading public. It is an excellent translation by that English language perfectionist, the late Henry Zylstra. The Dutch work had the imposing title *Magnalia Dei*. For those interested in the study of Christian doctrine and in enrichment in the thinking of other Reformed thinkers, this is an excellent book. Do not expect easy, relaxing reading, however; you will have to put on your thinking-cap. Nevertheless, Herman Bavinck was a Reformed scholar, an interesting writer, and a penetrating thinker. An excellent addition to anyone's library.

The Doctrine of God is a translation of that part of

Volume II of Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* which deals with the first locus of Dogmatics. This work is of a more technical nature; but Dr. Hendriksen has furnished an excellent translation on the whole and has made the work easier reading by translating into English all the German, Latin, Hebrew, and Greek quotations and expressions. It is always better to read a work of this kind in its original language; and at the seminary we expect our students to be able to read Bavinck in the Dutch. Nevertheless, it is good that this part of Bavinck's *Dogmatics* has been made available in the English language for those unable to handle the Dutch. Besides, with a little effort and use of the thinking-cap, the run-of-the-mill Christian reader who is interested in growth and enrichment in Reformed doctrine can very well read this book. For example, Bavinck's discussion of supra- and infralapsarianism is very interesting and instructive. One does far better to wade through books of this kind than to float through much of the trash on today's religious book market.

One minor criticism: for theological students the value of the book would have been enhanced if all of the references to other writers had been included.

Highly recommended.

SOUTHWEST PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

Southwest Protestant Reformed Church of Wyoming, Michigan, is still in need of \$35,000.00 to finance the construction of their Phase I building project. Those interested in loaning \$1,000.00 or more for periods of five years, ten years or fifteen years at interest rates of 7%, 7½% and 8% respectively are requested to contact Mr. John Vander Woude, 7085 Sunset Dr., Jenison, Michigan, 49428 (Phone 616-457-0553) for particulars.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan, expresses their Christian sympathy to Rev. and Mrs. John A. Heys in the loss of his brother, JAMES HEYS.

May our God strengthen them by His Spirit and Word. "For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." (Psalm 48:14).

Mr. H. Vander Kolk (Vice Pres.)
Mr. Terry Elzinga (Clerk)

NOTICE!!!!

The Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed School, Doon, Iowa, will be in need of three (3) teachers for the School term of 1978-1979. Teachers needed are for the Lower Room — Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd grades, Middle Room — 3rd, 4th and 5th grades, Upper Room — 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Application can be made by writing to: — The Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed School, Doon, Iowa 51235 (c/o Mrs. Ed Van Egdom) or to: — Henry Bleyenburgh, 909 - 12th St., Rock Valley, Iowa 51247.

News From Our Churches

Rev. Meindert Joostens, pastor of our Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan has accepted a call from First Church in Grand Rapids to serve as their pastor.

The consistory of our church in Edgerton, Minnesota, has granted the request of the Foreign Mission Committee of our churches that their pastor, Rev. James Slopsema, be released for a period of one to two months in order that he might labor in Singapore. The Mission Committee has received a plea for help from a group of about one hundred young adults there to organize them into a church and to instruct them in God's Word. Rev. Slopsema and Mr. Dewey Engelsma of our Hope Church in Walker, Michigan, plan to leave sometime near the middle of March, depending on how quickly things can be arranged. The purpose of this visit is to investigate the situation in Singapore first-hand with a view toward sending a missionary to labor in Singapore. The Edgerton consistory has asked the congregation "to remember this very important work in their prayers and also to patiently bear with any inconvenience the absence of the pastor may cause."

Rev. John Heys, pastor of our church in Holland, Michigan, had open heart surgery on February 22. According to reports in the Southwest and Hudsonville bulletins Rev. Heys is coming along very well.

According to another report in the Hudsonville bulletin, Rev. Van Overloop, who is working and preaching in Christchurch, New Zealand, for about nine months, is enjoying the fruits and vegetables he and his family are gathering from their garden. To those of us in the Midwest, this gardening activity comes as a bit of a shock. We can hardly find our gardens which are buried under two or more feet of snow!

The latest new church building news from our Southwest Church is as follows: "The building is closed in, the roof is on, the windows are in and it looks like a church building now. You can walk inside and when you do you will see that it is BIG. (We suggest that you wear boots on the site.)" The need for boots may mean that there is a bit of mud and snow on the building site.

The following appeared in the February 19 edition of the Hudsonville bulletin: "Attention Senior Citizens! Come to the coffeeklets on Tuesday morn-

ing between 9:30 and 11:00. Wij hopen een gezellig uurtje met elkander door te brengen." The meaning of the last sentence is left to those readers who can master the appropriate foreign language.

The requirement of the Church Order that each local congregation receive an annual visit by 'church visitors' appointed by the Classis means quite a bit of travel for the church visitors in Classis West. Rev. Kortering of Redlands, California, and Rev. Engelsma of South Holland, Illinois, planned to visit the churches in Isabel, South Dakota, Loveland, Colorado, Houston, Texas, Randolph, Wisconsin, and South Holland, Illinois, between February 20 and the meeting of Classis West in South Holland on March 1.

News of the work of church extension committees in various of our churches have appeared in the bulletins of late. The committee in our church in Loveland recently mailed out 550 copies of the pamphlet entitled "The Necessity of Scripture." Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan, has been placing articles in the local 'Shopper' paper. Our church in Edmonton, Alberta, has purchased a new tape machine, the primary purpose of which is to produce high quality tapes for a local church radio program which the church has plans to set up. The congregation in Isabel, South Dakota, pays for one-half the cost of the Reformed Witness Hour radio program broadcast on a station in their area. This amounts to \$5.95 per family per month.

The young people of our South Holland congregation are quite busy with fund raising projects for the '78 Young People's Convention which they are hosting this summer. The project list includes a pizza sale, a roller skating party, a talent program, a work day, a salad luncheon, a paper drive, a garage sale, an ice cream social, a sub sandwich sale and more. And, the Redlands young people are already busy with projects to benefit the '79 convention. They were planning a special-talent-request program for Sunday evening, March 5.

A quiet thought from the Hudsonville bulletin, "Use of the Bible, like the practice of prayer, is an accurate spiritual barometer. Love of God and His Word go together. —Clowney"

K.G.V.