

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Indeed, also our hearts are closed to Him. But the Lord speaks in our hearts by His grace and Spirit, and we know our sin by the power of His grace. We see our sin and also His redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And now we sing: Glory to God, because of Him and unto Him are all things, also our salvation, now and forever.

Glory to God in the highest!

May we never sing another song.

See "Christmas Praise" — Page 122

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## Christmas Praise

"Glory to God" — Luke 2:14a

Glory to God *in the highest*. Joseph and Mary had journeyed to Bethlehem because of the decree of Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. There had been no room for them in the inn. They had been led to a cave outside of the city of David, and there Jesus was born. It was at this moment that Heaven's announcement of Christ's birth had come to the shepherds, first by Gabriel and then by a heavenly host who had gathered around these shepherds. And

it is in this song of the angels that we read: Glory to God *in the highest*. The meaning of this expression is not "Glory to God Who is in the highest," but "Glory in the highest to God."

By whom was this song sung? Of course, first of all, this angelic chorus sang this song. Momentarily these angels, who are continuously gathered about God's throne, had appeared here upon earth. However, this song is also sung, in the highest, by all the saints that have gone before. Indeed, how tense had



been the struggle between the church and the world, between the Seed of the woman and that of the serpent. . . ! How these saints had welcomed this heavenly announcement! Yes, these saints had been saved, but why and how? The devil had accused Michael about the body of Moses, and Michael had not been able to answer him — see Jude 9. However, the angels, too, were vitally interested. Had they not lost their head when Satan fell? Indeed, how true it is: Glory in the highest to God!

Remember, however: *Glory to God*. O, we then may speak of the “little baby Jesus,” and “His sweet head,” etc. But let us remember that all this has meaning only as willed and realized intentionally by God. *Glory to God!*

### BEAUTIFULLY FITTING

What a setting for *the* event of the ages, the amazing coming into our flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, the birth of the eternal Son of God in the likeness of sinful flesh! What a contrast!

On the one hand, attend, please, to the announcement of Gabriel and the song of the angels. What an amazing announcement by Gabriel: this day in the city of David is born a Saviour, Christ, the Lord! Can we conceive of a more startling, terrific announcement? Imagine: today is born Christ, the Lord! Christ is the Messiah. He is the Hope of Israel, to Whom the people of God had looked forward throughout the ages, throughout the darkness and the shadows of death all these hundreds and hundreds of years. Besides, these tidings will be of great joy to all people! He is Israel's Saviour and Lord. He is not merely the Saviour. He is not merely the Saviour of these shepherds. He is the Saviour of all people!

Then, there is the song of the angels. “Peace on earth,” we hear them sing, and “good will toward men.” Peace on earth! What an amazing thing! What a magic word this is! Peace? On earth? Where is it? And, “good will to men.” And the reference here is the same as in the expression, “which shall be to all people.”

On the other hand, however, notice how this announcement is made. Indeed, what a setting! Here the Messiah is sung, in the hollow of the night, to a few shepherds upon the outskirts of Jerusalem. Was there no better place or time to make this announcement? Is He not Israel's King and Lord, this Wonder-Child? Why, then, was His birth not announced in Jerusalem? Why this announcement when all people are asleep? Is He not Israel's Hope and Joy Whose birth would be joy to *all* people? Why this announcement to a few shepherds? Indeed, could not a more appreciative audience have been found? Had the announcement been made in Jerusalem, would not all

Jerusalem have hurried to the manger to see the Child? Shall we say, what a shameful waste of time and effort, a shameful lack of publicity?

Indeed, we must be careful here. “Glory to God in the highest.” We must always remember this. This birth of Jesus Christ is no accident, no shameful failure on the part of the Lord to exploit His opportunities to the full. God sent Gabriel and these angels at this very moment, to these shepherds, to this place. This, we must understand, belongs to the essence of this tremendous event of the ages.

O, these angels surely had an audience! To be sure, they were gathered around these shepherds. However, they had an audience, a tremendous audience. First, they sang to God! And, secondly, these angels surely had a vast audience in heaven: the rest of the angels and all the saints that have gone before are “tuned in,” listening with rapt attention.

Besides, this contrast here is so fitting! On the one hand, what was there really to see? All one would see is a man and his wife who came to Bethlehem to be taxed, and she was expecting her firstborn child. What was unusual about that? They are poor and therefore the babe is wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. This is hardly attractive. And was there anything unusual about the Child that one could see? He is like unto us in all things. He surely does not look like a Saviour, like Israel's King and Lord. All earthly power and glory are absent.

So, on the other hand, why should these angels strive for effect? Presuppose that they had sung at noonday, before Jerusalem's mighty and common people. Presuppose, then, that they all had gone to Bethlehem. How utterly vain their coming would have been! Could the sign of God's coming into our flesh and blood (the manger and the swaddling clothes) have possibly satisfied wicked and carnal Jerusalem, and would they not all have returned to Jerusalem bitterly disappointed?

### WELL — GROUNDED

Glory to God! There is, first of all, the fact of Jesus' birth as such. He is Jesus. And Jesus means “Jehovah saves.” This Babe is not God Who became a man, and now is no longer God. God did not change. He is God Who is and remains God, the Infinite, the Eternal, the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, the Child Who is and remains God's Eternal Son. Hence: glory to God. Ascribe this miracle of Bethlehem to Him alone. He alone performed this wondrous thing. This we read in Luke 1:35.

Glory to God! Fact is, salvation is of God alone!

Thus it was at Bethlehem. Was He not wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger? The Lord not only descends into our flesh and blood, but He



also comes into our flesh and blood as He pleases. These signs, too, are of Him. Do these signs not proclaim the truth, not only that we cannot produce the Christ, but also that we are completely unable to receive Him? O, do not misunderstand these signs. The world, too, is fond of them. They love to speak of them, provided that these signs speak of what man is able to do, that, be our birth ever so humble, we can really ascend to the heights if only we apply ourselves to the task. Or, that, inasmuch as there is a place for Him in a manger, although there is no room for Him in the inn, there is nevertheless a place for Him after all, be it ever so humble.

Indeed, glory to God! That there is no room for Him in the inn is surely symbolic of the truth that there is never room for Him in our hearts, that, were it left to us, we would also deprive Him of the manger and the swaddling clothes. God saves, and He alone! There is no room for Him in our hearts. We are full of sin and darkness. God alone makes room.

Is it not ever thus? Thus it was at the cross of Calvary. Was there room for Jesus, I ask you. Yes, there is room for Him as long as the people do not understand Him. The Galileans would crown Him their king. But when Jesus reveals Himself to them, stands before them in all His spiritual and heavenly significance, as the Saviour from sin, then they lay hands upon Him, take from Him the manger and the swaddling clothes, scourge and crucify Him. And remember: we did this. . . . But God made room. Yes, we killed Him. But, through our enmity God prepared room for Himself in our hearts and in His heavenly and everlasting tabernacle, blazing the trail through our darkness and death, reconciling us unto Himself.

And thus it is throughout the ages. Does God offer salvation to us? Does He simply ask us or plead with us to come unto Him, allow Him to come into our hearts? God forbid! How ridiculous and absurd is such an offer! But, glory to God! He, may we say, "blasts" His way into our hearts. Indeed, our hearts are hard as flint. They are solid rock. Well, this is

"blasting," is it not? Powerfully, efficaciously, irresistibly He makes room for Himself, enthrones Himself in our hearts, to live there forever and guide us in the way of peace.

### DIVINELY REVEALED

Did the shepherds know because of what they saw? They saw the Babe, the manger and the swaddling clothes, the abject poverty. Yet, they returned, glorifying God. Did they conclude from the things they saw that the Babe was Jesus, Israel's Lord, King, and Hope? Why and how did they know? They knew because of divine revelation. They knew because an angel of the Lord had come upon them and through him they received the word of God. They knew because the glory of the Lord had shined round about them, and they had been sore afraid. And the reason why they were sore afraid was because, through the grace of God, they saw the glory of the Lord in contrast to their sin. They knew because they had *believed* the word of the angel, and to believe is a gift of God. They knew because God had revealed it to them and within their hearts.

Does not the same truth apply to us? To us the word of God has come, through the apostles, in the Lord's own infallible Word. We could never conclude, either from Bethlehem or from the cross, that God had come into our flesh and blood and had reconciled the world, His world, unto Himself. But God revealed this mystery of salvation to us, through inspiration, in His own infallible, unerring Word. But this is not all. In us the Lord also speaks His word of grace. Indeed, also our hearts are closed to Him. But the Lord speaks in our hearts by His grace and Spirit, and we know our sin by the power of His grace. We see our sin and also His redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ, our Lord. And now we sing: Glory to God, because of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things, also our salvation, now and forever.

Glory to God in the highest!

May we never sing another song.

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## EDITORIALS

Rev. H. Veldman  
Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

## Dancing--Full Circle

Both the Christian Reformed *De Wachter* and *The Outlook*, organ of the Reformed Fellowship, have given attention recently to the fact that the so-called "social dance" has been given approval at Calvin College. Especially the latter magazine has expressed

rather vehement disapproval of the fact that Calvin's Board of Trustees gave approval to such "social dancing" at the college, as well as of the fact that the 1977 Synod refused by an overwhelming vote to disapprove the decision of the Board of Trustees. It



appears, therefore, that in 1978 the new policy which permits dancing will be implemented by the college administration, although admittedly there has been such dancing for some time already.

Editor Vander Ploeg, of *The Outlook*, counts this decision of the 1977 Synod as one of several ominous signals emanating from that synod, signals "so loud and clear that he who runs may read." And he writes further: "When signals are flashing and bells are ringing at a railroad crossing to the danger of an oncoming, speeding train, a motorist or pedestrian must be blind, deaf, drunk, or bent upon suicide if he fails to take warning. CRC constituents are no less to be pitied if they now refuse to pay attention." (*The Outlook*, Sept., 1977, pp. 2, 4) He then goes on to mention several "signals" in connection with the decision to implement social dancing.

Meanwhile, the editor fails to tell his readers what Christian Reformed constituents must do about the situation. That is, he has no advice for his readers as to what to do with respect to their church and its official stand. He admits that their church has changed (or has it?) and that, too, in the wrong direction. He talks about making an agonizing re-appraisal with respect to paying quotas for Calvin College, without overtly advising to withhold such quotas — a form of ecclesiastical rebellion. He warns about other schools and colleges. And he has words about the dangers of this decision for the conscientious student. But what does all this mean? What does it do to solve the problem? What must be done about the fact that as a denomination the Christian Reformed Church has officially decided upon this policy, and that every Christian Reformed constituent is co-responsible for this policy unless he sunders himself from it in no uncertain terms? And what is to be done about the fact that the Christian Reformed constituency can no longer trust and depend upon the official decisions and counsel of their own broadest gathering, but must be warned about ominous signals by a Christian Reformed minister in a (mainly) Christian Reformed magazine? To these questions Editor Vander Ploeg furnishes no answer.

I venture to say: he *can* give no answer, not unless he wants to go back beyond 1977, 1971, 1966, 1951, and even beyond 1928, to that fatal year of 1924 and its common grace decisions.

If I may extend and apply the figure of those ominous signals employed by *The Outlook's* editor for a moment, let me point out the following. First of all, standing on the railroad track — not merely at the crossing gates — was the Christian Reformed Church with its 1928-1951 anti-dancing decision. The lights were flashing and the bells were ringing already for a long time, really ever since

1928. But in 1966, when the so-called "film arts" decision was taken (overthrowing the 1928 anti-movie decision), the ominous signals became still more urgent. One might say that you could hear the loud horn of the approaching and speeding freight train. That freight train was also the Christian Reformed Church, but from a different aspect: the Christian Reformed Church with its common grace decisions of 1924. The train had three powerful diesel engines at its head — the Three Points of common grace. But the Christian Reformed Church of the 1928 anti-dancing decisions was drunk with the intoxicant of world-conformity, and therefore deaf to the bells and horn-blasts and blind for the flashing lights, apparently bent on suicide. For that CRC of the 1928 anti-dancing decision did not get off the track; nor did it make any effort to stop the fast-approaching train, at least until it was far too late. The result was that the heavy Common Grace Diesels struck the CRC-1928 full force, killed it instantly, and mauled and mutilated it until it was scarcely recognizable. An autopsy was not necessary.

To speak literally rather than figuratively, the Christian Reformed Church has come full circle on the matter of the dance. In 1928 the Christian Reformed Church said: no dancing! In 1977 the Christian Reformed Church says: dancing is not only permissible, but it is welcome on the campus of our Christian college!

Not only so, but emphatically the *same* Christian Reformed Church has made these opposite decisions. My application of the figure was not wholly consistent. Close examination of the speeding freight train and the figure standing on the tracks would reveal that principally they represented one and the same Christian Reformed Church, as I intend to show conclusively a bit later. I emphasize this because Editor Vander Ploeg denies it in writing about "signal number one." He states: "Signal number one that should come through loud and clear to those who have long supported Calvin is that 'onze school' and the CRC have changed radically." And again: "To be sure, the signal says that times have changed and the CRC along with it — but definitely in the wrong direction!" I reply: not really! And: not principally! And I will demonstrate it conclusively.

Again, speaking literally rather than figuratively, Editor Vander Ploeg ought not to have been so dismayed and even shocked at this decision. The warnings were all there, and they were clear. Having served on the 1951 committee to study this matter, he of all people should have taken note of the clear warnings.

Certainly, this decision did not come like a thunderbolt out of a blue sky! On the contrary, it was predictable.



For one thing, there were practical indications of its coming. As I mentioned earlier, there was admittedly dancing at Calvin already, though without the *imprimatur* of the church. Besides, already some years ago, I recall, there were reports about observing or participating in — I do not recall which, at the moment — a thing called liturgical dancing. Further, from time to time one would hear reports about dancing on the part of CRC constituents off-campus and apart from any relationship to Calvin College. Now, given the whole background of this problem, even these practical indications might have served as warnings of the fact that sooner or later there would be pressures in the church to justify officially what was already being practiced in fact. Not only do things usually go that way, but they had gone that way with that other “worldly amusement” involved in the decisions of 1928-1951. As movie attendance became more common and more open, a clamor also arose to justify it by official ecclesiastical decision; and eventually precisely this was done in what is rather euphemistically called the “film arts” decision.

But there is more.

Given the “film arts” decision, it followed with unassailable logic that dancing would also have to be approved. Anyone at all acquainted with the so-called worldly amusements problem and its history in the Christian Reformed Church could see that. For not only was it true that the two problems of movie attendance and dancing were closely connected historically and in previous synodical decisions. It was also true that, given the principal basis of the film arts decision, that basis would and could also serve as the principal basis of the social dancing decision. And what was that basis? Common grace and the restraint of sin. It is in the Acts of 1966 for all to read. The *Standard Bearer* called attention to it at the time of its adoption.

Still more: as the decision of the Calvin Board quoted by *The Outlook* plainly declares, the Synod of 1971 specifically declared “the conclusions of the Church and Film Arts study of 1966, particularly ‘with respect to the relationship of the Christian to the world’ and ‘with respect to the exercise of Christian liberty’, to be a guide for the churches in dealing with the matter of dancing.” Hence, the Synod itself gave the cue as to how dancing might be justified, namely, on the same basis as that on which the theater and movie were justified.

How anyone could be shocked at the decision of 1977 is beyond my comprehension. It was bound to follow the decision of 1966 as surely as night follows day. The surprising element to this writer is only the fact that it took as long as eleven years!

But talk about warnings!

The late Herman Hoeksema sounded a clear warning in *The Standard Bearer* of June 1, 1928, before the Report on Worldly Amusements even became a synodical decision. At that time he wrote (I translate from the Dutch): “The report of the Committee is ambivalent, irresolute, and therefore very dangerous. And we predict that, if the Synod adopts this report in this form, it absolutely will not help the churches in the battle against world-conformity. It is an attempt to point the drowning Church to a few blades of grass on the bank of the stream, advising her to cling fast to them, rather than pulling her out of the stream and saving her.”

If only the Christian Reformed Church had listened in 1928!

No, if only the Christian Reformed Church had listened in 1924!

For, as I said, common grace and its denial of the antithesis is the root of the problem. This I shall show by quotation in the next issue.

In conclusion, let me call attention to the significant fact that Herman Hoeksema’s prophecy of 1928 is being fulfilled some fifty years later. From time to time we have been criticized for attributing the present ills of the Christian Reformed Church to the common grace decisions of 1924. Well, brethren, the evidence is there! In 1928 the late Herman Hoeksema criticized the Worldly Amusements Report precisely because it proceeded from the principle of common grace and denied the antithesis. On this basis, he predicted that the churches could not win the battle against world conformity, but would drown in the stream.

Today that prophecy has been fulfilled.

Is this mere coincidence? That explanation is not credible: there have been too many such coincidences.

No, it is a case of principles working through and bearing fruit. The (evil) leaven of common grace is leavening the whole lump!

Face the facts!

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## To My Friend in New Zealand

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Dear Friend and Brother:

This time I thought I would write you in public

and ask the *Standard Bearer* to bear my letter to you. After all, he travels — in part, at least — by air; and



therefore my letter should reach you rather promptly. This public letter has the advantage that since you and I are both rather busy at present, we can, so to speak, kill two birds with one stone. Our American friends can read this letter over my shoulder as I write you, and your and my New Zealand friends can read over your shoulder when you receive my missive. There is no harm in this, for we have no secrets to hide from the rest of our friends; in fact, we have some news which we are happy to share.

It is certainly good that we may share some positive news after a rather lengthy period of disappointment and discouragement. I refer, of course, to the fact that, the Lord willing, Rev. Ronald Van Overloop and his wife and four children will soon be coming to Christchurch, and that he plans to labor in your midst for some eight months. You will recall that our Synod of 1976 heeded the request of your Consistory (you call it "Session," of course) and arranged for you to call one of our Protestant Reformed ministers as your pastor for a period of up to five years. At the same time that Synod decided that should your efforts to obtain a pastor be unsuccessful, our Committee for Contact With Other Churches was empowered to ask one of our Consistories to release their pastor and to send him to Christchurch for up to a year. In the good providence of our God, your calls met with declines. This was disappointing, of course. Then, last spring (your autumn in the Southern Hemisphere) our Contact Committee began working to obtain a minister for you on an interim basis. However, these efforts, too, did not meet with immediate success. For one reason or another, neither Rev. C. Hanko, nor I, nor Rev. M. Joostens could come to you. It was quite understandable, therefore, that you began to be a bit discouraged in Christchurch. After all, you are quite isolated over there, you are a little flock, young in the faith, and you have never yet had a pastor or even a minister on any kind of regular or semi-permanent basis. Besides, when we left you, now more than two years ago, you and we had rather high hopes that this was the Lord's direction for you and that soon you would have help. Well, frankly we of the Contact Committee were also tending to be a bit discouraged. We realized, of course, that this was the Lord's will, as you also did. And we trusted, too, even as we prayed, that the Lord would lead in the right way and that He would provide in His wisdom and His love. He always does, you know; and He never puts His people to shame. But your need was on our hearts,

and we longed to help you and also in this way to strengthen the ties of fellowship between you and us.

Imagine our joy, then, when we received word from the Hope Consistory and from Rev. Van Overloop that he was willing to labor among you for an extended period of eight months! I know something of your joy, too. For I had the privilege of speaking to your Clerk of Session, brother Andrew Young, via telephone; and when I conveyed the good news to him, his reaction was, "That's the answer to many prayers!" And did you know that brother Bill van Rij, that world-traveler, rang me from Tahiti when he found out I had some news? His reaction was, "That is good news indeed!" So now you will have help. I know this is not the same as receiving a pastor. Nevertheless, it is a big step in the right direction. I am convinced that in Rev. Van Overloop you will enjoy soundly Reformed teaching and preaching, as well as warm fellowship and kindly pastoral care in the bonds of the love of Christ. Knowing you somewhat, I feel confident, too, that you will give him a warm reception and take him to your hearts, and that soon he will feel quite at home among you. Meanwhile, remember the Hope Congregation in your prayers; they are generously loaning you their hard-working pastor, whom they love. We of the Contact Committee deeply appreciate their forward-looking attitude and their willingness to sacrifice for the cause of Christ's church in New Zealand. We know you feel the same way.

As of this writing, I am informed that Rev. Van Overloop and family are planning to leave Grand Rapids on the seventeenth of December, provided their visas arrive on time. At that rate, they may even arrive before you receive my letter.

Please give my greetings to all the brethren and sisters in Christchurch, and, if you get the opportunity, greet for me the saints in the rest of the churches. I sincerely hope that your moderator, Rev. Ivo Bishop, is feeling better after his many physical troubles.

Perhaps, instead of responding privately, you could answer me in your *Gospel Witness*. If you do, I'm quite sure that the *Standard Bearer* would reprint your letter.

May the Lord richly bless you in Christchurch and strengthen and sustain the cause of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches in New Zealand.

Your brother in the Lord,  
H.C. Hoeksema

Know the standard and follow it.  
Read **The Standard Bearer**



## TRANSLATED TREASURES

# A Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church

### Chapter I General Principles

#### 1. What the Reformation of the Churches implies.

Reformation of churches implies first of all that the churches of Christ have a certain form or shape or figure which are uniquely hers as church. It implies, secondly, that this form or shape or figure can become impure by deformation or deformity. And it implies, thirdly, the obligation to restore this deformed or misfashioned or misformed church by reformation or renewal to the original form and good shape and normal figure which flows forth from her essence and is determined by her character.

#### 2. From what the correct form of the churches is known.

The correct form or figure or shape of churches is known from Holy Scripture. This is not in the often supposed sense as if Holy Scripture presents us with regulations for the establishment of a church, or a church order for the management of churches, or even an explanation of principles brought into a system which leads us to this. Holy Scripture does not present us with anything like this. Therefore anyone is in error who either makes a rule of an example in Scripture or who strings together expressions standing by themselves to acquire by his own ingenuity what he fruitlessly sought in Scripture. No, authority and complete authority Holy Scripture exercises in the matter of the church only because it shows us in unmistakable ways how the Triune God brought and brings into this world that which fell into and still lies in evil, operations and powers which (according to immoveable law and in definite ways bring His church into existence and preserve it.)

The world brings forth no church from the womb of her own life which is sunk under the curse. Rather her life is at odds with the essence of the church. It does not tolerate the church and reacts against her as against a power which is set up for the restriction and curbing of the world's sinful nature. The root of the church is not hidden in the world but outside of it in the counsel of God. In the counsel of God is the eternal good pleasure to bring all things finally to the

end of the glory of the Triune God in spite of sin, death, and the devil.<sup>1</sup> Its end is the establishment of a kingdom of glory of which the throne shall eternally stand firm and unshakable. It is the anointing of the Mediator as King in that kingdom, as Prince to sit on that throne, as the ordaining of that King for a people who as a body live under Him and are bound to Him as their Head. And it is finally the election of those certain persons who as subjects of that King are rightly members of that body.

By the working out and fulfillment of that counsel the church now exists in this world in a way which is for us incomprehensible. There proceeds from God to this world words, powers, works, influences, messages. And the fruit of this many-sided work of God is that the church comes into being. As much as the world opposes the church it stays. And in spite of the sin which steals into her own bosom, even sometimes eats into the root of her life, it always grows according to the growth ordained by God for her.

These words, powers, works, influences, and messages which proceed from God to the world continue unbroken from the beginning to the present and shall endure as long as the bride awaits the Bridegroom. If this would cease even for a moment, the church would wither, die, and be no more. No one must limit these words, or works, or messages of God to the time between Adam in Paradise and John on Patmos. Rather they continue unlimited from John to our day and shall continue till Jesus comes.

Only a distinction must be made between those operations of God at that time and now according to their divergent nature and their different dispensation.

It is necessary to pay attention here especially to two differences.

First of all life itself forces us to face two questions. One is: how does life come into existence? And the other is: how is it that life, brought into existence, is now fed, maintained, and continued?

God first creates and forms a child in the womb of its mother, and then it is born to be nourished henceforth first by its mother and then by its own



hand. The blood which enters the embryo before birth is not a nourishing but a forming power, completely distinct in nature and manner of operation from all later, proper nourishment. It is the same distinction which is expressed so strongly in the two sacraments: Holy baptism as the sacrament of life coming into existence, and therefore taking place only once; and the Holy Supper as the sacrament of life which is nourished, and therefore, continually repeated. And so two kinds of operations proceed from God for and to His church: first, an operation whereby He begets His church, bares her secretly, and brings her forth in her true form. And after this, secondly, an entirely different work by which He nourishes the church thus brought to birth first with milk and afterwards with solid food.

And with this, this first distinction flows over of itself into the second which we alluded to above.

The church is not the church of one people, but of the whole world. God has called not one nation, but humanity. The triumph of the Lord must be seen not over one nation, but over humanity. The counsel of the Lord of lords shall appear to be powerful not as a certain circle of pious people call upon Him in the bosom of a certain nation, but above all when He has gathered together His church from the whole world so that the "hallelujah" ascends from all nations and in all languages. This the holy apostle calls again and again the great mystery, the great hidden thing "which was hidden in all ages, but is now revealed."\*

Although the Lord always had His true, essential church on earth from the beginning of the world till now, nevertheless on that account there is an obvious distinction between the church during and after the end of particular revelation.

As long as that particular revelation continued, the church was still brought forth, born in secret, and it remained interwoven with the swaddling clothes of Israel's existence as a nation. It was first with the apostles, and more exactly when the apostolate died away, the hour of her birth striking, that the church stepped out into the light of life and appeared among the nations, manifested in the whole of humanity and of the world. Thus the former is her period of becoming, the history of her coming into existence. And afterwards there comes finally an entirely different period embracing the whole of life by that church in the middle of the nations, loosed from Israel, living throughout humanity as the church. This period continues yet today. If we take both these distinctions together then we find therefore: there is first a series of operations of God whereby the church in Israel was brought to her birth for the world; and there is on the other hand a series of operations of God entirely distinct from this whereby the church thus born for the world is maintained in that world.<sup>1</sup>

Now it lies in the nature of the case, and let us pay close attention to this, that those operations of God in the period of the genesis of the church are normative and binding also for the second period of her existence. Indeed, the potter can make out of the lump of clay a bowl or a jug or a vase according to the free choice of his will just as it pleases him; but when the form of the bowl, e.g., is once chosen and when the form of the bowl is once impressed on the clay, then all further preparation of the bowl is bound to a fixed basic form. And in this way God the Lord could impress on His church at the time of her genesis the form which seemed good to Him; or rather, was good to Him in His eternal counsel. But when that form was once impressed on it and thus the formed church was once born, then God was Himself bound to that first operation, and thus also the entire further development of His church is henceforth subject to the law of that original formation. This law is not arbitrary, but is the impulse of the increased law of life.

It is a fact therefore that the operations which now proceed from God to His church take their cue from the operations with which He formerly brought this church to her birth in the world; and from that principle each person who enters that church, born in this way, confessing, preaching, or acting, is bound to obedience of the law of life which God Almighty Himself gave her in the generation and forming of the church.

And because Holy Scripture is nothing else than the pure and organic display of all the works, influences, words, powers, and messages which proceed from God to the world to bring the church to her birth for the world, therefore the church of Christ is thus durable among the nations, continually and irrevocably bound to that which Holy Scripture tells us in the generation, forming, and bearing of the church of God is her unchangeable form and law of life.

<sup>1</sup>Kuyper reveals in this last phrase his views that salvation comes *in spite of* the work of sin and of the devil. In this respect Kuyper was somewhat dualistic also in his theology. He proposed the idea that God and the devil are at war with each other, and that although God ultimately gains the victory, nevertheless it is in spite of the work of Satan. The Scriptures teach however that under God's sovereign rule which is universal even sin, death and the devil must serve God's purpose in Christ.

\*Romans 16:25, Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 1:26, II Timothy 1:19, Ephesians 1:9, Titus 1:2, I Peter 1:20. It does not militate against this when our catechism confesses that God *has* gathered His church from the beginning of the world and when Jesus in Matthew 16:18 explains that He now *shall* build His church on this rock. By this only conception and birth are distinguished.

<sup>1</sup>This is a rather peculiar distinction which Kuyper here introduces. It would be perhaps better to maintain the distinction of Scripture found in Galatians 3:22-26 and Galatians 4:1-3. In this passage Paul makes the distinction between the Old Testament church as a child still under a schoolmaster and the New Testament church as a child who has come to maturity.



## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

# Without Natural Affection

Rev. J. Slopsema

A very startling and heart-rending article entitled "The Battered Children" appears in the October 10 issue of *Newsweek*.

The article begins by citing three specific cases of child abuse.

"The Baltimore police found Patty Saunders, 9, in the 23-by 52-inch closet where she had been locked for half her life. She weighed only 20 pounds and stood less than 3 feet tall. Smeared with filth, scarred from parental beatings, Patty had become irreparably mentally retarded.

"Gary Ellenburg, 11, was brought to San Francisco General Hospital suffering from severe malnutrition. He weighed 44 pounds, had a temperature of just 84 degrees and was deep in coma. Doctors noticed suspicious marks on his wrists and ankles, and police quickly found the cause: the apartment where Gary lived with his mother and her boyfriend was littered with handcuffs, chains and locks that had apparently been used to immobilize him for hours on end.

"Alyssa Dawn Wilson died at the age of six weeks in a Beauford, S.C., clinic. An autopsy disclosed that the infant had a ruptured liver and spleen, eye injuries, a fractured knee, fourteen broken ribs, bite marks on her cheeks, bruises on her stomach and back and alcohol in her bloodstream. Her father was arrested for murder."

*Newsweek* goes on to say that reports of this kind are rapidly increasing. Five years ago only 60,000 cases of child abuse were brought to official attention in the U.S. In 1976, however, the number of reported cases passed the half-million mark. According to estimates of the National Child Abuse and Neglect Center, this represents only half of the child abuse that goes on in our country. Many cases are never reported or discovered. According to the center's calculations, between 100,000 and 200,000 children are regularly assaulted by their parents with cords, sticks, fists, hot irons, cigarettes, and booted feet; while nearly as many as that are sexually molested. It is further estimated that 700,000 children are denied necessary food, clothing, or shelter. Still according to the estimates of the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, at least 2,000 children a year die because of abuse or neglect. That figure ranks abuse as the number five child-killer in the U.S. behind accidents, cancer, congenital abnormalities, and pneumonia.

Says director of the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, Douglas Besharov, "If you had a disease that affected so many children annually, you would call it an epidemic." In a soon to be published study of "Violence in the American Family" by Richard Gelles and two colleagues, it is concluded that one out of every 33 children runs the risk of abuse or neglect. Researchers also agree that there is no such thing as a "typical" child abuser. They come from both sexes, all economic strata, every race and religion, and fewer than 10 percent are diagnosed as psychotic.

And what accounts for this gruesome spectacle? *Newsweek* speaks of child abuse as a "syndrome." "Syndrome" is a medical term denoting a group of symptoms occurring together that characterize a disease. To speak of child abuse as a syndrome, therefore, is to classify it as a sickness or disease which parents have. *Newsweek* goes on further to attribute child abuse to ignorance on the part of parents and a lack of education in the proper handling of children. In support of this conclusion it is pointed out that, in general, parents who abuse their children were themselves abused or neglected in their childhood. The cause of child abuse then is simply that parents do not know any better.

This, of course, is utter folly. It is a deliberate refusal to recognize sin as sin and to recognize another sign of the times.

We read in II Timothy 3:1ff.: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, WITHOUT NATURAL AFFECTION. . . ." That explains such a grotesque thing as child abuse — a loss even of natural affection.

The word that is translated "without natural affection" literally means "without love of kindred or family." It refers not to a spiritual love which is rooted in the love of God and which is the sole possession of the regenerated child of God. The word rather designates a natural love which even the natural man is able to possess. This "love of kindred" is one of the natural gifts that God has bestowed upon all men in general and which man retains to a degree even after the fall. It can be classified as part of "the glimmerings of natural light" of which our Canons



speaking. It is a gift that God has bestowed even upon the animal world. Even the animals love and care for their young. It is, therefore, this gift of natural affection that explains how even godless, reprobate, unbelieving parents can and will provide and care for their children. It is natural even for the natural man to love and care for his own.

But even this is being lost today in our society. How else can you realistically explain the widespread spectacle of child abuse in our land — even to the point of parents' maiming and murdering their children. The world may call it a disease. They may attribute it to ignorance. But on the basis of the Bible there is only one explanation — a loss even of natural affection. And this only serves to remind us once again that we live in the "last days" and in the "perilous times" that should come.

But how do we explain this, that parents are losing natural affection even for their children?

We find the answer in the first chapter of Romans. There we are told that the loss of natural affection is the result of God's judgment and wrath upon sin. We read in verse 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." The Apostle Paul then goes on to explain. God has made Himself known through the works of His hands, even to the heathen who have not the gospel. "For the invisible things of him (i.e., God) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead (vs. 20). In other words, through the creation God makes known to man that He is, that He is God, and that He must be served and glorified as God. But the natural man, perceiving all this, refuses to worship Him. Instead, he makes and serves an idol, thereby changing "the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four footed beasts, and creeping things" (vs. 23). Through his idolatries, the natural man holds the truth in unrighteousness. And therefore God reveals His wrath from heaven, giving man "up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own sin" (vs. 24). God gives them up to "vile affections" (vs. 26), to a "reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (vs. 28). In other words, God punishes sin with sin. He causes man to grow and develop in sin. He causes man to commit unbelievable sins which are degrading and unnatural even for the fallen sinner. God makes man worse even than the animal. Paul lists the sin of homosexuality in verses 26 and 27 as a case in point. In verse 31 he makes mention of a loss of natural affection. This is God's wrath and judgment upon those who refuse to serve and glorify Him.

And understand that this applies not only to the

idolatrous heathen who refuses to worship God upon apprehending Him in the creation. This applies also to those who fall under the pale of the gospel and Christendom. It principally makes no difference whether one comes to know of God through the creation or the gospel. Neither does it make any difference whether his idol is an idol of stone and wood, or the idol of earthly treasures and pleasures, or the idol of false doctrine. Whenever man refuses to worship God as He has revealed Himself, God visits that man in His wrath, giving him over to further sin that will manifest itself in the most grotesque way. God always punishes sin with sin.

Is it any wonder then that in our society there is such wide-spread child abuse? Is it any wonder that many parents have lost any and all natural affection for their children? We live in a godless, idolatrous society. All that Paul states in Romans 1 concerning the idolatry of Roman society holds equally true for our society today. We live in a society in which men, when they know God glorify Him not as God. We live in a society that changes the truth of God into a lie, that worships the creature (earthly treasures and pleasures) rather than the Creator. The gruesome statistics quoted in *Newsweek* only confirm this fact. They also speak of the terrible wrath of God which gives an idolatrous generation over to sin which staggers the imagination. God in His wrath has taken away from parents even the natural affection for their children so that children by the thousands are being abused, maimed, and slaughtered.

This whole matter of child abuse may seem incredible to us. It may even be sickening. I hope it is! But if we understand the underlying cause of it all, then we will also be awe-struck. For this is the hand of God as He hardens the hearts of men, causing them to grow in sin that they might fill the cup of iniquity and make themselves ripe for final judgment.

Finally, there is in all this also a warning for us. Do not think that we are immune from this. Do not think that the saints of God can never fall into such grotesque sins as child abuse and loss of natural affection. If that is your conclusion, then you do well to be reminded of the words of I Cor. 10:12: "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Remember, God always punishes sin with sin. That is true also in the life of the child of God. The Scriptures are full of examples. You live in and follow the way of sin, then God will lead you into greater sin, even into the sins of which we have spoken. Let us, therefore, flee from the godlessness and idolatry of our present age. Let us turn away from every idol, whether it be the idol of riches, or pleasure, or entertainment, or whatever. And let us with purity and singleness of heart serve the Lord our God.



## STUDIES IN ISAIAH

# Treachery, Aggression and Immanuel's Comfort

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

I. THE CONFOUNDING OF AHAZ (vv. 1-2). 1. *In a dangerous plot against Jerusalem* (1). A conspiracy arose against the kingdom of Judah. Two monarchs were in league plotting Judah's destruction. Ahaz the king was in trouble. But in a strategic place he is met by Isaiah the prophet with a message of assurance that the threatened invasion would not succeed, for God would destroy both enemy nations (1-9).

Yet the king was incredulous. With pretended piety, humility, and confidence in God, he refused to do as commanded — ask a sign of the promised event. In rebuke and exposure of his unbelief, the sign is nevertheless given to the house of David, namely, the wonder of the world in the miraculous conception and virgin birth of God incarnate (10-16).

Ahaz is further rebuked for his ingrained trust in Assyria, rather than in God. His confidence in man shall be disappointed by the Assyrian invasion of his land. Then follow subjection to foreigners, removal into captivity, and occupation of the land by the heathen, until the country of Judah falls into decay (17-25).

"And it came to be in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, (that) Rezin, the king of Aram (Syria), and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up (to) Jerusalem to war against it, but were not able to war against it" (v. 1). Judah had been strong under Uzziah and Jotham, but under that horrible wretch Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:3), it became most evident that he had a passion for everything Assyrian in which the religion of Jehovah was banished from the realm. This in itself emboldened Pekah and Rezin to invade Judah and attack Jerusalem. Pekah, a nobody and a low-born man, was a conspirator and a murderer, who, though he did manage to reign as long as 20 years, providentially, and by divine retribution, was himself assassinated by a conspiratorial murderer.

Evil increased against Ahaz. Judah had lost its only

port when Rezin had taken Elath on the Red Sea. Then the vassal nation of Edom regained its independence and took many Jews captive. The Philistines also had recaptured the towns Uzziah and Jotham had held. So that "Jehovah brought Judah low, because of Ahaz; for he had made Judah naked, and trespassed sore against Jehovah" (2 Chron. 28:19).

2. *In a resulting distress leaving Ahaz shaken.* "And it was told to the house of David, saying, Aram (Syria) (is) resting upon Ephraim (Israel); and his heart shook, also the heart of his people, as the trees of the Thicket from the faces of the wind" (v. 2). The house of David is the monarchy at the very top — the king. He was told, Syria rests on Ephraim. (Syria is confederate with Ephraim. — KJV). Syria rests with Israel's treaty made with it. This news not only shook up Ahaz and his military men, but all the people were filled with dread. Now it would take only a zephyr to make the whole aspen of Judah to quake. Such events will cause all men to freeze with fear. Only, there is a difference between the fear of the ungodly, which is confusion, like a chicken as it runs with its head cut off, and the fear of the godly, which is conversion and turning to God for refuge. The forces of the wicked boast themselves as being as numerous and imposing as the trees of the Big Thicket, yet when the Almighty puffs at them, they shake like reeds in the wind.

## II. THE CERTIFICATION OF JEHOVAH (3-9).

1. *In His sending the prophet to meet Ahaz.* "Then said Jehovah unto Isaiah, Go out now to proclaim to Ahaz, thou and Shearjashub, thy son, to the end of the aqueduct of (from) the upper pool at the highway of the field of the fuller" (the cleaners). (v. 2). Isaiah probably goes to the same spot where in Hezekiah's day his ministers painfully conferred with Rabshakeh (36:2, 12). Ahaz then, likely, was out to reconnoitre, and, so it happened, did preparatory work for Hezekiah and the strategy taken in his day. Isaiah is



commanded to take with him his son Shearjashub, which is significant (8:18), because, himself bearing a significant name, meaning "salvation of Jehovah," Isaiah and his sons walking about before the people are living prophecies. Bringing this son with him, Isaiah is as much as saying to the nation, "I am writing a book entitled, *A Remnant Shall Return*, the preface to which you have already read" (6:13). This son is nowhere else explicitly mentioned in Scripture. But the name has in it the idea of all prophecy, and implicitly runs through this prophecy (1:8-9; 4:3; 6:13; 10:20-23, especially v. 21, where the words "a remnant shall return" appear). Observe, too, how the Lord takes the initiative here (as He always does): it is not Ahaz, running about in all directions (Calvin), who first cries out in fear to Him, or desires the prophet to enquire of the Lord for him, but He first sends to Ahaz with His own Word.

2. *In the words He put in the prophet's mouth.* "And say thou to him, Be on guard and be calm; fear not, and let not thy heart be weakened from the two (butt) ends of these smoking firebrands (wooden pokers) at the mountain of anger of Rezin (Retsin) and (KJV has "with") Aram and the son of Remaliah" (v. 4). A clam prophet approaches the shaken Ahaz. These enemies, who lately seemed like meteors, rockets, or boasted fireballs, are now mere fizzles, butt ends of the wooden pokers of a campfire. So the king is counseled to "be cool" and trust to God's protection. They have done their destructive work. They will never do it again. Their evil designs are at an end, their energies depleted, their wrath and anger all burned out. They can do no more, except to continue smoking for awhile. They are now no more than smoke in the nose — or in the eyes.

But how is it that a "fear not" of the Bible is directed to a man like Ahaz? Not in the sense of a spiritual "fear not," nor that of the mere external call, without the effectual, saving inner call of God. For Ahaz is no more than commanded not to fear an enemy which has now become about as threatening as a smoking piece of firewood. Still, he should learn from this that it is his responsibility, as it is that of all men everywhere, including the reprobate, to trust in God alone (Ac. 17:31).

3. *In the assurance that the enemy would be defeated.* "Because Aram (Syria), Ephraim (Israel) and(or, in) the son of Remaliah, took (gave) evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us rise up against Judah and terrify her, and let us cause a schism (split) in her for us, and cause to king a king in the midst of her, even (or, to wit) the son of Tabeel. Thus saith, Adonai Jehovah, It shall not stand, and it shall not be!" (vv. 5-7). The Syrian king is not referred to by name, God disdaining to so honor him. Further scorn is shown in omitting the name of the king of Israel,

merely referring to him as the son of an obscure Remaliah. God scorns the scornors. These two plotted against Judah, to terrorize, cause splits in the nation, the divide-and-conquer tactic. That was the counsel of the wicked. The Lord knows and so informs Ahaz through Isaiah exactly what they had in mind. But the counsel of the sovereign God is antithetical to this: It shall never stand; it shall never be! For *His* counsel shall stand, and He will do all His good pleasure (46:10). Revolutionists all over the world, and state powers within this country plot against the church, the family, the Christian school. They keep singing, "We shall overcome" them. But there is another song, already written in the secret counsel of God.

*They who stand  
against Jehovah God  
or without Him,  
Cannot stand long!*

Therefore we must be on guard, hold to the word of God, expect its full accomplishment in all its prophetic scope, commit all our cause and our way to the Lord, nor ever be fainthearted because of any enemies. For without faith it is impossible to please Him, but with faith is the victory which overcomes the world!

4. *In the prospect of the destruction of all His and our enemies.* "For the head of Aram (Syria) is Damascus, and the head of Damascus (is) Rezin, and in sixty and five years Ephraim shall be broken from (being) a people. And the head of Ephraim (is) Samaria, and the head of Samaria (is) the son of Remaliah. If ye will not believe, (it is) because ye are not established!" (vv. 8-9). This was all fulfilled. Neither of these enemies would increase their territories, enjoy further victories, nor be any threat to Judah. Israel, in 65 years, in the reign of Manasseh, was despoiled, first by the invasion of Tiglath-pileser (2 K. 16:9), and then by the defeat of Samaria and the deportation of the ten tribes (2 K. 17:6) and finally by Esarhaddon's replacing the decimated population of the land with people of another race (2 K. 17:24; Ezra 4:2). Judah did not remain, either, but sank into the oblivion of the Babylonian captivity. Yet there remained that motto of hope, *Shear-jashub!* A remnant shall return! Syria and Rezin represent the ungodly world. Samaria and Pekah represent the apostate church in league with the world, with the church not only in the world, but the world in the church. Judah, Jerusalem, and the house of David represent the true church which shall be gathered, defended, preserved, established, and made to stand to the end of the world. Fearful and powerful enemies rise up today in our own land against the kingdom of God. As never before we are being insidiously threatened. For example, there are laws



enabling state prosecutors to take our children from the custody of our homes and from our parents, charging them with child-abuse or child-neglect for sending our children to unlicensed (Christian) schools. We are not so aware of this spreading evil as we ought to be. We believe the day may soon come when our awareness of it will be sharp enough. The tentacles are tightening. The net is being drawn closer. But the plots of the enemy shall not be entirely accomplished because God has decreed that

the antichristian world kingdom of the Beast shall prevail only for a time. Then it shall be destroyed, surprisingly enough, by the heathen forces of the Gog and Magog nations.

Finally, the Lord God, through the prophet Isaiah, in the words, "If ye will not believe, it is because ye are not, will not and cannot be established," condemns all false religion and every religion which does not utterly trust in Jehovah and in His virgin born Son, the incarnate Prince Immanuel.

## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

December 15, 1977

Dear Timothy,

An important part of the work of a minister of the gospel is his work in and with the Consistory. In order to do this work effectively it is necessary to have an understanding of the special offices which Christ has ordained within the Church. I know, of course, that you studied this whole matter during your years in the Seminary, especially in your Church Polity classes. But there are reasons, I think, why some discussion of these offices would be worth our while. One reason is that there is a growing de-emphasis on the office throughout the church world today. This, no doubt, is the result of a lack of understanding of the true idea of the offices. You have noticed, I am sure, that this is even true within the circle of Reformed Churches.

There are many contributing factors to this de-emphasis. I suppose we could mention a few. The office of deacon is increasingly de-emphasized because of the encroachment of government help in all kinds of forms to those who are in need. Another factor, with respect to the office of elder, is the growing hierarchy in the Church. It often happens that the minister in a local congregation is a kind of a pope who pretty much does what he pleases, and the elders have little courage to stand up against him. When it comes to the office of ministers, the decline in the importance of this office goes along with the deterioration of preaching, the lack of true pastoral work in the congregation, the emphasis on liturgy, and such like things. All these things, and many more, have led to a serious decline in the importance of the offices in the Church.

Another reason why this question of the offices is important is that there are serious questions being asked in some circles concerning the nature and work of the offices. Sometimes these questions are being asked within churches who have traditionally been

presbyterian in their church polity. E.g., a controversy is at present going on in some presbyterian circles over whether there are three offices in the church (minister, elder, and deacon), or whether there are but two (elder and deacon). But there are also churches who have not traditionally been presbyterian in their church polity who are taking a new look at this form of church government because they are dissatisfied with the traditional emphasis on congregationalism with which they have long lived and which has proved ineffectual in dealing with problems which arise in the church.

We have a presbyterian form of church government. This has a long tradition within our Churches, dating all the way back to the Reformation under Calvin. It is a Scripturally sound form of church government. It has proved its worth over the centuries. It is, really, in the final analysis, the strength of our churches. It is extremely important that we understand it so that we may maintain it — not only in form, but also in substance and in the actual work of the officebearers.

I have often thought that Consistories would spend their time to good advantage if they would set aside some time for a discussion at their meetings of the importance of the offices in the church. I know how difficult it is for Consistories, especially in busy congregations, to find such time. But officebearers must be thoroughly acquainted with the nature of their offices if they are going to carry on the duties of their offices faithfully and maintain the strength of their offices in the church.

It is not my purpose in these letters to go over again what you yourself learned while in Seminary. I do not think this is necessary. But I am hoping that what we will be discussing will be of advantage to you; and if you think these letters to be of any value for your fellow consistory members, you may give



them to your elders and deacons to read. I do want to discuss some theoretical aspects of the offices in the church which we had no time to explore while we were in Seminary together. I think that an exploration of some of these matters could lead to a better understanding of the office and the work God requires of us in it. And, after examining some of these more theoretical questions, I want to discuss some more practical matters which pertain to the exercise of the office. Again, please respond to these letters, and give me the benefit of your thoughts on these important subjects.

I am of the opinion that, if we are to understand the nature of our offices, it is important that we go back first of all to the Old Testament and take a quick look at the offices as they were exercised in the times of types and shadows.

You recall from your Dogmatics that Adam was already created an officebearer in the garden. He was, in God's house, a prophet, a priest, and a king. When Adam fell, he did not lose this office as such. Because he remained a rational and moral creature, he retained the ability to be prophet, priest, and king. But the fall, which brought about his total spiritual ruin, made him a prophet, priest, and king in the service of Satan.

Now, it is important to remember that, underlying this three-fold office, was the deeper relationship in which Adam stood to God. Adam did not really hold three offices; he held only one. That one office was this: friend-servant of God. He was God's friend because he lived in covenant fellowship with God. He was servant because he represented God's cause in the world and functioned in his office in the service of God. The prophetic, priestly, and kingly functions of Adam were only three aspects of the one deeper relation in which he stood to God. In a way we can say, I think, that this three-fold aspect of the one office of friend-servant was exhaustive of Adam's responsibilities in the garden where God put him. As prophet he was called to speak the Word of God; as priest he was called to dedicate himself and all he possessed to God; as king he was called to rule over all God's house in God's name. This exhausts his responsibilities. All his work can be subsumed under these three aspects of his one office of friend-servant.

I want to emphasize, therefore, that at the bottom of Adam's official calling was a *covenant* relationship. While I cannot go into detail on this whole matter now, this idea of the covenant is carried through in every aspect of the functioning of the offices. We shall have to return to this later.

When Adam fell, in fact he became a friend-servant of the devil. The three different aspects of this one office were still exercised. But now Adam (and his

posterity) spoke the word of Satan (which is the lie), dedicated himself and all he did to the service of sin, and ruled on Satan's behalf. This was the terrible implication of the fall as far as Adam's office was concerned. And so it remains in the world throughout all time.

If we are to put the offices which are present today in the church in their proper perspective, we must remember, however, that God's purpose with respect to this world was not attained in the first Adam. God never intended that it should be. God's purpose was to be fully realized only in Christ, the second Adam. This too we will come to presently.

For the moment, however, the point that needs to be emphasized is this: when, with the fall, God began the work of salvation, he also restored the office to its proper place. But because Christ was not to come for some four thousand years, and because the church was not to be established in its present form until Christ came, God gave to the re-establishment of the office a typical and figurative form. This is the situation which we find in the Old Dispensation.

But it must not escape our attention that the care with which God re-established the offices in the Old Dispensation speaks of the importance God Himself gives to these offices. We can, in other words, learn a lot about our offices from what took place in the Old Dispensation. I want, therefore, to discuss this with you first of all.

There are three major ways in the Old Dispensation in which God re-established the office in the Old Dispensation. The first way was through the patriarchs. From the time of the fall to the establishment of the nation of Israel as the congregation of Jehovah, the offices were concentrated in one person. Adam (after the fall), Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the others who stood in the line of the covenant were themselves friend-servants of God and held all three of the offices of prophet, priest, and king. This was unique. It did not happen again in the Old Testament.

The second way in which God re-established the office in the dispensation of shadows was through that strange and lonely figure of Melchisedec who was priest of the Most High God and King of Salem. He held an office superior to that of Abraham even, and superior to any officebearer in the whole nation of Israel. Christ is a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec, not after the order of Aaron. (See Gen. 14:18-20, Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 5 & 7.)

Now I do not, at this point, want to say too much about all this. I am interested now in the third way in which God re-established the office — in the nation of Israel. During the years of Israel's life as a nation, the offices were to a certain extent, separated. There



were prophets; there were priests; and there were kings. A brief examination of this truth will give us some idea of what the offices were all about, and will show us some significant features of these offices as they relate to the New Dispensation.

I think it best, however, if we wait with beginning this discussion until our next letter. We are almost at

the end of our space and time, and it is better to discuss the whole matter in one letter, rather than to make only a beginning now.

So I bid you farewell for the present.

Fraternally,  
H. Hanko

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## TAKING HEED TO DOCTRINE

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# A Reformed Look at Pentecostalism

*Rev. David Engelsma*

In view of Pentecostalism's criticism of the life, not only of the lax, unfaithful, and disobedient church-member, but also of the faithful Reformed believer (who has not received Pent.'s baptism with the Spirit) and in view of its promise to transport people into a higher level of Christian life and experience, we ask: What is the Christian life and experience? What is the "normal Christian life"?

In answering this question, we pay no attention to the claims and testimonies of men and women; indeed, we shut our ears to all that clamor. The norm for Christian life and experience is not the neighbor's testimony of her wonderful power and ecstatic feeling, but Holy Scripture. Thus, we let God be true, and every man — and woman — a liar. The failure to let Scripture, the reliable Word of God, be the norm for the Christian life, and the dependency upon the thoroughly unreliable words of men and women is the cause of no end of doubt and fear, whether one is spiritually what he, or she, ought to be and even whether one is a regenerated child of God at all. This gives Pent. the opening it wants. For knowledge of the Christian life also, "To the law and to the testimony," shunning the "wizards that peep, and that mutter" (Isaiah 8:19, 20).

According to Scripture, the Christian life is a life that finds its fulness in Jesus Christ, as this Christ is revealed in the Word. It will not go beyond Christ; it will have nothing apart from Christ or in addition to Christ — not circumcision, not new revelations, not a higher knowledge, not some spirit. The reason is that the Christian knows, and has found by experience, that Christ is a complete Savior. In Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and the Christian is complete in Him, i.e., filled up in Him (Colossians

2:9, 10). To be sure, the Christian life is a life of growth, but that growth is a growing up *into Christ*, not a going beyond Christ: "That we . . . may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:14, 15). Just as is the case with the physical growth to maturity, this spiritual growth is a gradual, often imperceptible development, not an instantaneous, overnight transformation. It is life-long. And it takes place by the Word and prayer.

The Christian life is: Christ alone and Scripture alone. One who objects that this leaves the Spirit out is mistaken, for this is how the Spirit works — He gives us Christ in the truth of the Word.

The Christian life is a life of walking in the Spirit Whom we all received when we were born again, of which rebirth and reception of the Spirit our baptism is a sign and seal. The believer does not look for, or seek, or tarry for a second baptism, whether this is viewed as a second work of grace — the typical Pent. view — or as a flowing out of one's spirit into all of one's life — the view of such Pentecostals as Dennis Bennett. Rather, the child of God strives all of his life to walk in the Spirit Who was given him when he was saved. This is the apostle's instruction concerning the Christian life in Galatians 5. There were problems in Galatia, serious problems regarding the Christian life. There was the threat of the saints' biting and devouring each other — a pathetic lack of love (vss. 13-15). There were the real temptations of the flesh and its lusts: adultery; idolatry; strife; drunkenness; and the like (vss. 19-21). There were evidences of vain glory, of provocation of one another, and of envying one another (vs. 26). But the solution was not that they seek a new baptism. On the contrary, they must *walk* in that Holy Spirit in Whom they lived: "This I say



then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (vs. 16); "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (vs. 25).

The Christian life is active. The activity of the Christian life is, first, a battle, a fierce, unrelenting, life-long battle. The battle-ground is oneself. The foe is sin. Pent. knows nothing of this battle; the Pent. has already won the victory in his baptism with the Spirit. Not only do you hear little or nothing of the forgiveness of sins in Pent., but you also hear little or nothing of the daily struggle of the saint against indwelling sin. In fact, it is not unheard of that the Pent. preacher will ridicule those who are always groaning over their sins, those, that is to say, whose testimony all their lives is, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Nothing more clearly than this exposes Pent. as a religion totally alien to the Reformed faith. A Reformed Pent. is an impossibility, a contradiction in terms. A Pent. cannot confess the first part of the Heidelberg Catechism. At best, he can only say that he *used* to know the misery of sin, both guilt and depravity. Ignorant of his misery, neither can he know redemption or the living gratitude that wells up daily from a forgiven heart.

Scripture, however, presents the Christian life as a striving against indwelling sin. This is the teaching of Galatians 5:17: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

This is the powerful doctrine of Romans 7. The Christian man or woman, is carnal, sold under sin; the apostle Paul at the very end of his life was carnal, sold under sin (vs. 14). He was this, not because he was unregenerated, not because Christ had not baptized him with the Holy Spirit and fire, not because sin reigned in his life, not because Paul was a careless Christian, but because, even though he was born again, evil was present with him — he retained his sinful, totally depraved flesh. As a new man in Christ — and we may safely suppose, as one of the holiest of saints, he delighted in the law of God after the inward man (vs. 22); had a hatred of sin (vs. 15); and possessed a will to do the good (vs. 18). But such was the power of sin in him, as long as he lived, that "the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (vs. 19). Therefore, the apostle — and every Christian — knows his misery; he expresses it in the anguished cry, "O wretched man that I am" — the New Testament equivalent of the "Out of the depths" of Psalm 130. Yet, he neither gives up in the spiritual battle, nor is he ever without the solace of the Savior, Jesus Christ his Lord. Verse 23 insists on the warfare; verse 25, on the comfort of Christ.

Not only is this warfare with sin the activity of the

Christian life as regards one's personal life, but it is also the activity of the Christian life in the family and in the congregation.

This is a painful, bitter struggle.

For this reason, the Christian can be enticed by the sweet promise that suddenly the battle is over. A pastor can be tempted similarly by such a promise for the congregation. But with the shield of Scripture, he can — and must — resist the temptation.

Do you find this bitter struggle against sin in yourself?

Do not despair!

Do not think that you are not saved, or that you are insufficiently saved!

This is it: the "normal Christian life"!

The result is that we long ardently and wait, not for a second work of grace, but for the second coming of Jesus Christ: "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly."

The activity of the Christian life, secondly, is the doing of good works. But it is not the production of spectacular deeds and glamorous accomplishments, as Pent. would have us believe. Rather, it is the doing of unnoticed, insignificant works. It is the activity of sanctification of life, walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit: not practising adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like (Galatians 5:19-21); but living in love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and the like (Galatians 5:22, 23).

It is the activity of the unnoticed works of keeping the law of God: right worship of God; confessing the truth; keeping the Sabbath; obedience of parents and all in authority; faithfulness to wife or husband; Godly rearing of children; diligent labor at one's earthly vocation; payment to Caesar of his taxes; speaking well of one's neighbor, especially the brother in the church; and contentment with one's lot, without coveting.

In short, the activity of the Christian life is: Love! Love the Lord your God! And love your neighbor as yourself!

As you do this, do not blow a trumpet before your piety; do it secretly, so that God will reward you.

This is possible by the grace of God, but, even then, sin will defile our best works, so that there is only a small beginning of the new obedience and so that there is constant need of pardon.

But does not the Christian life have its experience?

As an alternative or addition to faith, experience



must be renounced, root and branch. Christ does not call us to experience, or feel, but to believe. The way of salvation is faith, not feeling; by faith we are saved, not by experience.

Nevertheless, faith has its experience; there is a genuine experience in the Christian life. It is three-fold: I know the greatness of my sins and misery; I know my gracious redemption in Jesus the Christ; and I know thankfulness for this redemption.

Do you have this experience? Then, you have the normal Christian experience. This is all there is. Whoever lusts for more is an ingrate and aggravates God; he says to God Who gives him Christ and His fulness, "But isn't there something more, something better?"

To put it differently, faith has the peace and joy that come from justification. "Therefore being jus-

tified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1, 2).

The confession of the Reformed Church and the Reformed believer is radically different from that of Pent. Our confession is not that we are powerful, capable of doing great things, far advanced in might and glory. This is the boast of Pent., always advertising itself in lofty terms, always exalting its life, its power, its revelations, and its accomplishments. The Reformed Church and the Reformed believer are humble, confessing their sins, their weaknesses, and their unworthiness. Rather than proclaiming herself, the Reformed Church glories in and confesses Jesus Christ. Hers is the confession of the Church in all ages: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### I Will Go

*Rev. John A. Heys*

When one of our young people begins to speak about marrying one whom he or she has known for only a few months, we frown and speak our disapproval. We counsel them to wait and not to rush into that which is for life.

We do not brush aside the words of Paul in Romans 7:1, 2: "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." Nor do we tear out of our Bible or obliterate the words of the same apostle in I Corinthians 7:39: "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."

The "I do" spoken then in the marriage ceremony we understand to mean, "I promise to do this until I die, or the God, before Whose face I make this vow, takes my husband (wife) away from me by death." And for that reason we warn against getting into situations and against establishing relationships out of which our young people cannot extricate themselves.

Our chief concern as covenant parents and faithful officebearers in the church of God is that our covenant seed, as Paul states in the verse quoted

above, marry "in the Lord." And that means that the parents give no approval of marriage for any other kind of marriage and warn their sons and daughters against even thinking of marrying any but those who are in the Lord and who manifest this by works of faith. It means that the one uniting in the bonds of matrimony must be convinced that he is serving to join together two who marry in the Lord. And therefore our young people ought not bypass him and go to the Justice of the Peace who has no such scruples and will marry for the fee he might get or demands for it. They should want the counsel of one who cares for their souls.

All this causes us to stand amazed when we read of the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac took Rebekah the day he first saw her! Rebekah, when asked if she would marry Isaac, said, "I will go." And, mind you, she said this less than twenty four hours after being presented with the thought of marrying Isaac, and after hearing for the first time that there was an Isaac in the world whom she could marry. She was not even courted by him. His father's servant, an aged man whom she never saw before, did the courting, if you can call it that. And, if you please, not much more than twelve hours had passed — if that much — from the moment that the idea of marrying Isaac had been made known to her to the



moment that she gave her unequivocal answer, "I will go."

We read in Genesis 24:11 that at eventide, when the day was well spent, this servant of Abraham sat down by a well and waited for a damsel to come and give him drink and his camels. A beautiful young virgin by the name of Rebekah came first and did exactly what he had prayed to God the woman of His choice would do. They went home. The servant made known his presence in that land as being for the purpose of getting a wife for his master Abraham's son. Then we read in verse 54 that this servant and his men tarried there all night and rose up in the morning — around twelve hours after meeting Rebekah at the well — and spoke those startling words, "Send me away that I may go to my master." All understood that this meant, "Send me *with Rebekah* to my master." We likewise can understand the words of Rebekah's brother and mother, "Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go." Mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, put yourselves in their places. And, if you can, put yourself in Rebekah's place; and examine your soul as to whether you would say (and indeed still today do say), "I will go."

Before we give answer let us consider once what it means and costs. This was not the only offer of marriage that Rebekah could expect. She had not been passed by in her own land by its young men. She was not a choosey, fickle woman whose tastes were so finely drawn and exacting that she rejected this one and that one and played the field so that now, because all those of her own age in her own land were already married, she was left behind. She showed at the well that she was not a woman with a hard, troublesome nature with whom it was hard to get along, so that, in spite of her beauty — which we may believe from the account was in its degree so great that she stood out among all the young women in the area — she was passed by for the hope of a more peaceful and comfortable life. It was not a case with her that she should grab this "chance" to have a meal ticket for life, a home and social security. The Word of God gives not the slightest suggestion even of anything like that, but by mentioning her beauty indicates that she had more opportunities for marriage than the rest of the young women in the land. She was attractive. And that means that she attracted young men to her.

Then, too, she says, "I will go and be the wife of a husband who has shown an interest in me." It could not be the personality of Isaac that attracted her. She could not and did not say, "I will go because there are such romantic overtones in this thing you suggest, Abraham's servant." It is a simple, "I will go." She goes to *learn* to love this man and not because she

already loves him. She goes because she loves God and has learned to love Him more richly and deeply because of the "sermon" she heard this servant of Abraham "preach" in her father's house.

But before we get into this, let us also consider the fact that even if she loved Isaac with all her heart, even if this was the only opportunity for marriage she could expect, even if it did present a solution to the social-security-question of that day (when an unmarried woman had it hard financially) it was a costly proposition. It might seem too costly for one as kind and considerate as Rebekah, who did not hesitate to draw all that water even for his camels with their vast capacity to take in water. "I will go" means that she will leave father, mother, brother, and all her kin for good, as far as this life is concerned. There will be no going home for Thanksgiving Day or for the Christmas-New Years Day week of celebration between families. There will be no loading the kids into the camper or trailer and going back for a week or two in the summer. There will be no swift jet flight to be with a dying loved one back in Haran when the phone call or telegram reports a critical condition as far as the health of a loved one is concerned. There will be no phone call, no telegram, not even mail service. I will go, she said, and leave all this behind *without any assurance of ever seeing any of you again on this earth!*

She was aware of the difficult, wearisome journey. It is not a first class ticket on a modern jet with luxurious dining in the sky, attended by smiling stewardesses, who, whether they mean it or not, are paid to make you feel comfortable and happy. She goes with *men*, men she had seen and known less than twenty four hours! She rides on a camel through hot, dusty country over hill and mountain. And there will be no Holiday Inn to stay in at night and get a bit refreshed in a heated pool, on posturepedic mattresses in an air-conditioned room. It will be a hard, wearisome trip.

Should not her parents warn her against going with strangers? Is it really safe to travel that way, even though she has a few maids with her? Was not that exactly the way a *man* does things? Abraham, you meant well, but you were so crude, so unfeeling, so lacking in the finer touches of life. Why did you not send a woman servant along with this eldest servant? You do not go for a wife for your son like you go for an ox or another camel or two. Would you blame Rebekah if she had said, "I will not go under these conditions, and I am surprised that you, my brother, and you, my mother, dare even to suggest such a thing"? On second thought she could have said, "Since you have so little feeling for me, and apparently want to get rid of me, I might just as well go!"



No, none of this is true. It would have been and we would have a right to raise all these arguments and objections if it were not for that one important fact that the Word of God had been preached. And were it not for the fact that Rebekah is responding to that Word preached. There are covenant considerations here that must not be overlooked. It makes a nice story. It makes for interesting reading. But we must also hear the Word of God that Rebekah heard.

There was carnality here as well. Laban, Rebekah's brother, saw the gold, the wealth, and wanted the servant to stay so he could get more of it. But this did not move Rebekah. She was a believing child of God, as is evident somewhat later when she expressed to Isaac her grief over her son Esau's marrying women of the Hittites. And her "I will go" is an answer to a call she heard from God Who called and said, "Go to Isaac and become a mother in Israel." And although Rebekah could not understand this as we do today it meant, "Go and serve to bring forth the promised Seed which is Christ."

Laban and Rebekah's mother blessed her with the prayer that she would be the mother "of thousands of millions." They understood, and Rebekah understood, that to go to be the wife of Isaac she was going to be the mother of his children, that marriage has to do with bringing forth children. And when the servant of Abraham told how God had prospered his way she heard the Word of God in regard to His covenant, and proof of the fact that Isaac's God was her God and that He is a covenant God Who fulfills all His promises and works in wondrous ways to bless His Church.

"I will go" is then the response that God wrought in her soul to His call to go. "I will go" is the life of Christ that God had given her, speaking what He always spoke. It is the speech of obedience before God. It is the speech of a firm conviction but also of resolute purpose. "I will go" is equal to, "Let's go in obedience to God."

Yes, Rebekah, you are safe to go with these men. And you need have no fear of this man whom you never saw but whose faith you know and whose God you also serve. If you love God — and you do — and he loves God as you have heard, and His God and yours has arranged all these things so wonderfully, you can, but also must, say, "I will go." And your sacrifices and hardships, your seeking first the kingdom of God and its righteousness will not be forgotten. You will serve in the coming of the Messiah, but you will also receive the blessings of His coming. His life is in you; and it is because He said to the Father, "I will go," and went even to the cross and the bottom of hell for you that you could receive the grace to speak your unequivocal and blessed, "I will go."

And you, my reader, will you go? You who have so much more revelation and hear God's Word preached so much more clearly in the details of the coming of His Son in our flesh, will you go and be His bride? Will you forsake the world and every former friend to be dedicated and consecrated unto Him? He calls to His own. His own say, "I will go." And they do so because He draws them with irresistible power and with cords of tender love. In His great love for us He makes us love Him. John says it so beautifully in I John 4:19: "We love Him because He first loved us."

## ALL AROUND US

### "Happy Halloween"

Rev. G. Van Baren

The time for Halloween celebration is long gone by now. Yet something came to my attention which may be instructive and also serve as warning with respect to our own observance of this day. We have come to accept "halloween" as a legitimate fun day for our children. "Trick or treat" is represented as an innocent method of obtaining many goodies on this day. Some concern has been expressed within cities because of harmful items inserted into the food or candy. But little concern is heard about the very pagan origin of this celebration. Perhaps, then, we as parents ought to give careful thought to an article

appearing in *Christianity Today*, Oct. 21, 1977, by John W. Howe. Among other things, he writes about the origin of Halloween:

... It's such an extraordinary time. We do some bizarre things on Halloween, don't we? Dressing up as spooks, goblins, and witches. Calling on people and demanding goodies. I wonder if we know why we do these things. Why do we go along with it? Because it's tradition? That isn't enough of a reason.

Let me put it this way. The Passover celebration in a Jewish home begins when the youngest son asks his father, "Daddy, why is this night different from all



other nights?" Then the father tells him of the mighty works of God surrounding the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. But what would you say if your son or daughter were to ask about Halloween, "Why is *this* night different from all other nights?" How would you explain the shenanigans of Halloween?

Most people know that the word itself comes from All Hallows Eve, the evening before All Hallows. Therefore it has something to do with All Saints and the Christian Church. But what?

It comes as quite a surprise to discover that this celebration predates the Christian Church by several centuries. In fact, it goes back to a practice of the ancient Druids in Britain, France, Germany, and the Celtic countries, who lived hundreds of years before Christ was born. This celebration honored one of their deities, Samhain, Lord of the dead. Samhain called together all the wicked souls who had died within the past twelve months and had been condemned to inhabit the bodies of animals. The date for this celebration was the last day of October, the eve of the Celtic new year. It was a time of falling leaves and general seasonal decay, and it seemed appropriate to celebrate death. That's what it was — a celebration of death. It honored the god of the dead and the wicked spirits of the dead. The Druids believed that on this particular night the souls of the dead returned to their former homes to be entertained by the living. If acceptable food and shelter were not provided these evil spirits would cast spells, cause havoc and terror, and haunt and torment the living. They demanded to be placated. Look closely. Here is the beginning of "trick-or-treat." Evil spirits demanding a "treat." If they didn't get it, you got a "trick."

James Napier writing in *Folklore* says that these beliefs and practices were not confined to northern Britain, but were widespread and — with some variations — practiced the world over by pagan peoples. . . .

But how did all this become associated with Christianity? There's another part of the story that

goes back to Rome. The Roman Pantheon was built by the Emperor Hadrian in about A.D. 100 as a temple to the goddess Cybele' and various other Roman deities. It became a principal place of worship where Roman pagans prayed for their dead. Then, Rome was sacked, the barbarians came in, and they took over the Pantheon, along with everything else. After several centuries it fell into disrepair. In A.D. 607, it was recaptured by the Emperor Phocas and he turned it over as a gift to Pope Boniface IV.

Boniface reconsecrated it to the Virgin Mary. This was part of a general policy that wherever pagan celebrations were well established, they would be continued and incorporated into Christian worship. (Only the names were changed to protect the innocent.) . . . Now the Roman Catholics were gathering to pray to the goddess Mary for their dead. And they did so in the same temples.

For two centuries the major celebration in the Pantheon took place in May and was called "All Saints Day." Then in A.D. 834 it was deliberately moved to the first of November. Why? To coincide with those ancient Druidic and pagan practices that had been going on for centuries. The Church wanted to accommodate the recently conquered German Saxons and the Norsemen of Scandinavia; it baptized yet another celebration.

That's the wedding of All Saints Day to Halloween. Thoroughly, utterly, totally pagan: the worship of the dead, the placating of evil spirits, the honoring of the Lord of the Dead, the transferring to Mary of pagan esteem that was previously given to Cybele'. Where does this leave us?

So, when your children ask, "Dad, why do we celebrate Halloween?", you'll know. You can tell them that we are simply joining with all of the idolaters of old to commemorate heathen fantasies in order to have some "innocent" fun. Or perhaps we ought just to keep silent — and allow our children to have their fun while they are still young?

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## "Liturgical Prizes or Surprises"

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The *Outlook* of Nov. 1977, contains an article with the above title by Rev. Jelle Tuininga. Once more, the author decries the proliferation of new forms within the Christian Reformed Church. At one point the author states:

I wish I could trust the Liturgical Committee itself on this score (presenting Reformed theology in the new liturgies — G.V.B.). Rather, I see evidence that the Committee itself at times tends (intentionally or unintentionally) to undermine our Reformed theology in some of the newer proposed forms. Indeed, in my worst moments I ask, after the fashion of Nathanael, Can anything Reformed come from the Liturgical Committee?"

The writer continues by criticizing the new marriage form recently presented to the churches. The point made is very valid and suggests the un-reformed and unscriptural approach taken.

Look only at the fact that there is no reference at all to the husband being the head of the wife, and thus the vows spoken by both bride and groom are completely identical. In the Preface to the proposed form the Committee says that "there should be a clear and concise statement on what the Bible teaches about the meaning and purpose of marriage. But here a very important part of that teaching is simply ignored. And in the face of a lot of unbiblical ideas nowadays as propagated by the Women's Liberation



movement, such an omission is so much the more inexcusable. It does not show a great deal of biblical sensitivity to the spirit of the age. And surely that is what we may expect of the church.

Without a doubt this omission is itself influenced by the Women's Lib movement. But instead of capitulating to the secular spirit of the age, we ought to throw up a bulwark against it.

It won't do to say that in the past the headship role was often misinterpreted or misused. That may be true, but to fall into the opposite error is equally bad. It won't do either to stress the concept of

"mutuality" in subjection to each other. That concept itself is biblical enough, and Paul mentions it in Ephesians 5:21. But right after that he admonishes wives to be subject to their husbands, and not the other way around. Mutual subjection holds for parents and children too, and for servants and masters also. But that does not do away with the unique role or function that each party has to the other. One cannot say that because we all must be subject to one another, children need not obey their parents. Nor does it follow that therefore wives need not be subject to their husbands. . . .

## "Homiletic decay"

One hears often today that the preaching as done in the past by notable ministers is not acceptable today. It does not hold the young. One must present something striking and different if we are to hold the church together. It is said that the young demand this and will not even listen to "old fashioned" preaching. A striking comment is made by an associate editor of *Chimes*, the student newspaper of Calvin College. In the issue of Oct. 21, 1977 we read this:

During the last few decades, there has been a declining emphasis on theology among the members of the Christian Reformed Church. Whereas many of our grandfathers could defend the articles of the faith with skill and conviction, many of us do not even seem to care whether or not the Canons of Dordt or the Belgic Confession actually represent our faith. Some might argue that such a decreasing emphasis on theological matters minimizes conflict and eliminates meaningless abstraction. Nevertheless, it is evident that this state of affairs has its harmful effects as well. The quality of the sermons that we often hear in the Christian Reformed churches bears witness to this fact. For example, many sermons display the following characteristics.

First, sermons often seem to have been produced in an unorthodox fashion. A minister is inspired by an interesting idea. After developing this idea somewhat, he searches the scriptures for an appropriate text. This text is then bent and twisted until it more or less fits the already formulated message. No careful exegesis is undertaken.

A sermon of this sort simply does not have the power and authority of a sermon founded on a

thorough, theologically guided exegesis. Rather, such a sermon often displays shallowness, weakness, and little power to edify.

Secondly, the sermons that we hear are often moralistic. Many of us are familiar with this phenomenon, but lately a new version is being expounded from some of our pulpits. It can be appropriately christened "Enlightened Moralism." People of this persuasion correctly stress all of the concerns our churches have just recently become aware of — industrialism, technocracy, world hunger, ecology and the problems of the Third World. However, all too often action in these areas is demanded without making any mention of the grace of God and the redemptive power of Christ, through which such action is made possible. Such sermons lose their Christ-centeredness; without Christ, our efforts, no matter how enlightened, are fruitless.

It seems likely that instances of the above two cases are not the result of faithlessness, but rather of unclear theological thinking. Moreover, many more instances can be found in which our collective lack of interest in theological matters is evident. We should attempt to change this state of affairs. For surely, if we do not continuously strive to deepen our insight into the Word of God, both our proclamation and our action will suffer.

The brother is not far from the old and tried position of the Reformers. His comments in *Chimes* stand out as an oasis in the midst of a desert. May God use such remarks to remind many others of our old Reformed heritage!

Wishing You and Yours  
a Blessed Christmas.





**NOTICE!!!!**

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 11, 1978, at Southeast Church. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk no later than ten days prior to the convening of the session.

Jon J. Huisken  
Stated Clerk

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Ladies Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church hereby expresses its sincere sympathy to our dear member, Mrs. Irene Holstege, in the death of her husband, MR. BEN HOLSTEGE, whom the Lord called home November 20, 1977, at the age of 54 years. We also extend our sympathy to his sister, Mrs. Arnold Haveman.

May our God supply them with abundant peace, knowing that He doeth all things well.

Rev. G. Van Baren, Pres.  
Mrs. Hib Kuiper, Sec'y.

**RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Men's Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church extends its sincerest sympathy to two of its members, Mr. Gerrit Holstege and Mr. Arnold Haveman in the loss of their brother and brother-in-law, MR. BEN HOLSTEGE.

May the God of all grace be their only comfort in this bereavement.

Rev. C. Hanko, President  
G. Bouwkamp, Secretary

**EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY**

The entire congregation of the Pella Protestant Reformed Church was deeply saddened on November 17, 1977, by the sudden death of their beloved brother and deacon, FRANK VANDER WIEL. They hereby express their sympathy with their dear sister, Catherine Vander Wiel, wife of the deceased brother. We rejoice with our sister in the hope of the blessed resurrection of her husband and of all the saints. May the Lord Himself pour the balm of His love in her heart, causing her to look for the removal of all tears from the eyes of all the saints. (Rev. 7:17).

Rev. George Lubbers, Pastor  
Elder B. Menninga, Clerk

**EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY**

The Pella Bible Class expresses sincere and heartfelt sympathy with their fellowmember, Catherine Vander Wiel in the recent sudden death of her dear husband

FRANK VANDER WIEL

Our prayer to the God of all comfort is that He sustain her by His grace which is ever sufficient, in the knowledge that God shall also bring her husband from the grave with Jesus in His coming. I Thes. 4:13-18.

May the resurrection of Christ be for her the sure pledge of the resurrection of all His redeemed ones.

Bernie Menninga, Vice-President

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## News From Our Churches

This is the time of year when churches schedule their annual congregational meetings to elect office bearers, approve a budget for the coming year, and address various other issues put before the meeting by the consistory. First Church in Grand Rapids met in their annual meeting on November 28. In addition to

the normal business before the meeting, a pastor elect was chosen. From a trio of Rev. David Engelsma, Rev. Meindert Joostens, and Rev. James Slopsema, Rev. Engelsma was extended a call to "come over and help us."

Rev. and Mrs. Harbach report that all legal matters



pertaining to their relation to the Canadian government have been resolved. A work permit was not required. Rev. Harbach has the freedom to labor in religious duties for up to a year with the possibility of extension. The Harbachs do like to hear from our people. Their address is: 55 Bay St. # 325, Victoria, B.C., Canada V9A 6X9. Rev. Harbach is laboring as home missionary from our churches in Victoria. Rev. Harbach sent in a copy of a little paper he is presently publishing as part of his work called the *Calvinist Contender*. Rev. Harbach addresses a number of issues in the Reformed church world in a rather clear, direct way. Such things are covered as the covenant, creed revision, women voters, man's responsibility, true conversion, and a couple of biographical sketches of Guido de Bres and Ursinus, authors of the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism respectively.

The Ladies Guild in Hull, Iowa sponsored a hostess supper for the benefit of their Christian School there. Rev. Mark Hoeksema spoke on "Our Unchanging Purpose in a Changing World."

The Ladies' Circle in our church in Loveland, Colorado, is a very active group. They scheduled their Annual Bazaar for December 9 and a bake sale on November 19. Both of these were open to the public. The Ladies' Circle recently purchased a mimeograph machine for the church with the proceeds from their activities. The bulletin reports that "The printing of the bulletin has been much enhanced through this gift."

Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan, has adopted a new schedule for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper will now be celebrated on the 3rd Sundays of the months of February, May, August and November.

Under the caption PROGRESS REPORT ON THE NEW BUILDING, The Southwest Church bulletin reported as follows: "The land has been cleared for the new church building on Ivanrest Ave., and the footings have been laid. We urge you to stop out and walk around the site. You will notice the corner

stakes denoting the size of the building. You will also notice the parking lot layout. We will try to keep you informed of the progress on the building." Two weeks later, on November 27, the following appeared under the same caption, "Have you stopped out to the site? Are the walls up yet? Are they ready to lay blocks? The answers to these and many other questions will be answered when you drive out to Ivanrest Ave. and have a look around." Since the undersigned was not able to drive out and 'take a look around,' these questions will have to remain unanswered until he does or the answers appear in the next bulletin.

Recently, a rather large packet of bulletins arrived from Rev. Moore in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Rev. Moore reports that his small congregation has rejoiced in some growth during the past few months, both from within (three baptisms) and from without. He also reports that a goodly number of visitors regularly attend services. Edmonton also scheduled a Reformation Day Lecture with their pastor speaking. Thanksgiving was celebrated on October 10 in Edmonton, as the National Day of Thanksgiving in Canada is celebrated in October, and not in November as we in the states are accustomed to. After their evening Thanksgiving service, Miss Marjorie Martin from Australia showed some slides of her homeland and gave a short talk about church life in Australia. Miss Martin's name has popped up in church bulletins from California to the East as she completed her tour of our churches on the North American continent. On Sunday, September 24, the entire Edmonton congregation was invited to the home of one of the member families to celebrate the 2nd anniversary of the congregation in psaltry and fellowship. In mid-September, Rev. Engelsma lectured in Edmonton on the topic "Reprobation - Is It Reformed?" This was done in conjunction with classical church visitation conducted by Rev. Engelsma and Rev. Kortering.

A Thought For Contemplation from the South Holland bulletin: "God has not called His people to 'win the world to Christ': rather does He require them, by their lives, to witness against it." - Pink

K.G.V.