

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Go in debt for boats and sports equipment and pore over the catalogs of these with your children, but find no time to read and explain the Scriptures with and to them; have your regular golf days and bowling evenings but no evening for joint study of the Word of God with fellow saints; follow vanity — but do not then be surprised if your children reveal profanity.

See “Vanity and Profanity” — page 11

CONTENTS:

Meditation —	
The Sword of the Spirit	2
Editor's Notes	5
Editorials —	
Plans for Volume 55	5
Christian Timidity and Daring	6
Signs of the Times —	
Signs in Society (2) —	
The Feminist Movement	8
The Day of Shadows —	
Vanity and Profanity	11
Seminary Convocation Address —	
A Prayer for Laborers in God's Harvest	13
The Strength of Youth —	
Be Firm in Truth	16
In His Fear —	
If Ye Love Me Keep My Commandments	18
Letter from Covenant Prot. Ref. Church	
(Wyckoff)	20
Book Reviews	21
News From Our Churches	24

THE STANDARD BEARER

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MEDITATION

The Sword of the Spirit

Rev. H. Veldman

"... and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

Eph. 6:17b

The sword of the Spirit is our only offensive weapon. Strictly speaking, the words, "which is the Word of God," refer not to "Spirit" but to "sword." We know of no passage in Scripture where the Holy Spirit is called the Word of God. But there are

passages where the Word of God is called a sword — see Rev. 1:16, 19:13, 15, 21, Is. 11:4.

Another important question here concerns this "Word of God." Is this Word of God merely the

written Word of God, the Bible? Do we have tautology here, inasmuch as the girdle of truth also refers to the Bible? Is, then, this written Word of God, the Bible, called the sword of the Spirit only because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit?

We repeat: this is the only offensive weapon of the christian soldier. Indeed, it is not our calling to christianize the world, improve it by means of laws and legislation, make it a better place in which to live. Our only hope lies in the Word of the living God.

ITS MEANING

The sword of the Word of God.

The sword in this text refers to a short sword, attached to the belt of the soldier, which could be handled easily by the ancient soldier. This was the weapon used by the ancient Roman soldier.

This sword, now, is called the Word of God. I know of only one other passage in Scripture where the Word of God is called a sword, namely Heb. 4:12. However, we do read repeatedly that out of the mouth of the Lord proceeds a sharp, twoedged sword. Now that which proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord is surely His Word. This sword here is undoubtedly the Word of God.

We also read here of the "sword of the Spirit." This sword of the Holy Spirit is the only offensive weapon in the arsenal of the christian warrior. A common interpretation of this "sword of the Spirit" is that this sword is provided by the Spirit, and that it refers to the gospel, the written Word of God. However, against this view are serious objections. First, this would involve us in tautology, repetition, as far as the girdle of truth is concerned. Secondly, the Word of God is called here a sword. A sword kills. This can hardly be said of the written Word of God as such. Thirdly, throughout the description of the christian soldier's armour in these verses of Eph. 6 the girdle is the truth, the breastplate is righteousness, the shoes are the preparedness of the gospel of peace, the shield is faith, etc. This would surely indicate that this sword is the Spirit. Honesty appears to demand this conclusion.

What is this sword of the Word of God? First, the scriptures are meant here. Fact is, we are exhorted to take this sword. So, this sword must be the scriptures, because what else would we be able to take up and use? Besides, there is no mighty Word of God except through the scriptures, the written Word of God. If we fail to maintain this truth, then we will fall into the error, the abyss, the thick fog of False Mysticism. The Word of God, the mighty, powerful Word of God is always heard through the scriptures. If we despise

the scriptures, neglect them, separate them from the living Christ, we will be hopelessly lost in the mire of False Mysticism, where we will hear all kinds of voices except the voice of the living God and of the Son of God.

The scriptures, therefore, are surely meant here. Of these scriptures Christ is the center. This is extremely important. Christ is the revelation of the living God, God's Party in the midst of the world through whom the living God reveals Himself. As the supreme Servant of Jehovah He glorifies God as the Head of all the elect given Him of the Father; He manifests God in connection with all our sins and trespasses, reveals God's righteousness and justice, but also His unchangeable love and mercy, as He suffers and dies for them that they might live. And it is exactly in connection with that Christ, revealed in the scriptures and set forth in the gospel, that man reveals himself; and it is also through that Christ that God reveals and maintains Himself in all His dealings with the children of men.

However, there is more. This text also refers to the mighty, all-powerful Word of God. Do we not read that the Word of God here is a sword? Does not this sword emphasize the mighty, devastating, killing power of the Word of God? This can hardly be said of the scriptures as such. The written Word of God as such can neither make alive nor kill. It is true, of course, that the contents of the Bible and the contents of the Word preached according to the scriptures always judge and discern the thoughts and intents of the human heart. The scriptures glorify God and always set forth man as he truly is. However, these scriptures as such are no sword that smites with devastating and killing effect. You may read it, hear it proclaimed, criticize it, judge it, listen to it, or refuse to heed it. The Bible itself does nothing. God's Word, however, is always powerful, the word as God Himself speaks it, the word as it proceeds out of His mouth. This word is creative, almighty, irresistible. Of this word this text speaks. The scriptures are a sword exactly because they are this Word of God. And they are this Word of God because the mighty God speaks through them, not only in the elect but also in the reprobate. And in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ God will again cause His Word to be heard, His Word of judgment and doom, when finally, by that Word of His power, all that was hid shall be revealed, the books of our consciences will be opened, and the enemies of Christ who are the enemies of God will be destroyed even forevermore.

ITS POWER

We must bear in mind that the sword power in

Scripture always represents the power of the magistrate. And the power of the magistrate is always two-fold: the magistrate has the power to judge and also to execute that judgment. We must also bear in mind that this sword is wielded here by the christian warrior. He does not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against all the forces of sin and darkness. And this sword is his only offensive weapon whereby he attacks and destroys the enemy.

True, this sword of the Word of God is also such in the elect. It is a sword of the Spirit. This is not merely a sword of man. Through it the living God speaks His own mighty word through the Holy Spirit. Without this powerful, efficacious Word of God the scriptures would be quite powerless. One, then, would be able to hear it preached, even read and study it. One could also form an opinion concerning it, approve or disapprove, agree or disagree. But, these scriptures themselves could never lead out of darkness into His marvellous light, convict of sin. . . . But now the Sword of the Word of God begins to operate. As the scriptures are preached and we hear with our natural ear, God speaks His Word, by His Spirit, His own mighty Word, applying the truth to our hearts and minds, cutting, knifing through, as a sharp two-edged sword, calling and leading us out of darkness into light, leading us in the way everlasting.

This applies, however, particularly to the wicked. First, this sword of the Word of God comes to man with divine authority. Man may not do with it as he pleases. He may not sin, may not refuse to repent and believe, may not reject the living Christ, seek the things that are below, refuse to walk in all the commandments and precepts of the Lord. The scriptures speak to him with divine authority. The preaching of the gospel is not simply an offer; the Lord does not merely plead with the sinner, ask or beg him to believe in Him. But this preaching fastens itself, through the Spirit, upon the minds and consciences of all its hearers. That Word lords it over us; it commands us to forsake sin and to serve the living God, and man may not refuse or reject it. He rejects it, of course, but he is held accountable. And how could he be held accountable and responsible if he were merely asked to turn to and believe in the living God?

Besides, that Word of God also hardens and destroys and kills! That Word of God is always powerful. It never returns to God empty-handed. It always performs its mission. It is never unsuccessful. Of course, the primary purpose of the gospel is always the gathering of the Church. Nevertheless, that gospel also has a purpose with respect to the reprobate. Indeed, on the one hand, the enemy will not be able

to answer you. O, he may rant and rave. He will continue to attack you, persecute, and even kill you. But, if we proclaim the "Thus saith the Lord," he will not be able to refute you. We must not approach him apologetically. We must proclaim the scriptures, and the devil will flee from us, even as Christ silences him in the wilderness. This, however, is not all. That Word of God will also destroy the enemy. It will harden him, cause him to grow in sin and in wickedness, evoke from him an ever increasing hostility, cause him to gather treasures of wrath, always preparing him for his divinely ordained condemnation.

All this will culminate in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then Christ will appear. In that day God will not speak His Word through the scriptures anymore. Then the written word will no longer be necessary. Christ Himself will appear in glory and majesty upon the clouds of heaven. Then God will again speak His Word, and with terrible and everlasting finality! Then all the powers of darkness and the enemies of the cross will be completely exposed and revealed. In that day He will speak and the righteousness of God will be fully revealed in the damnation of the sinner. Then the elect will know themselves as never before, and the enemies of Christ will be crushed forevermore.

ITS USE

This exhortation is, of course, very particular. One does not tell a farmer to perform a delicate operation upon a brain tumor. Only the christian soldier is meant here.

First, we must be christian soldiers. Christian soldiers are not manufactured or produced by training. They are born, born again, not from below but from above, of God. The carnal man cannot use this christian armour; he simply cannot put it on; it just does not fit him. Neither does he will to put it on. And he cannot be trained to use it. So, we must be christian soldiers, called by the grace of God out of sin and darkness into His marvellous light.

Secondly, we must take this sword. Know the scriptures. Not merely a part of them, but all of them. A gospel on a thumbnail will not suffice. We must be thoroughly indoctrinated, thoroughly founded in the inspired Word of God, and in all of it. And, we must know how to use these scriptures. Do not hesitate to quote them and use them, knowing that they are the sword of the Spirit, through which the Lord will speak His own Word, lead you in the way everlasting, and give you the sure and certain victory.

Editor's Notes

Book Club Members. You are reminded that if you have a change of address, you should notify our Business Manager. A notice of change of address for our *Standard Bearer* will not be sufficient, due to the fact that we keep a separate file for Book Club members. Hence, when you send in such a change for the *Standard Bearer*, add a note informing our Business Manager that you are also an RFPA Book Club member. And while we are on the subject, please send in change of address notices, if at all possible, at least three weeks in advance of moving. It will save us money and save you inconvenience. The address is: The Standard Bearer, P.O. Box 6064, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506.

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Bound Volumes. Our September 15 issue marked the end of Volume 54. Those who have a standing order will receive their bound volumes as soon as these can be prepared and shipped. Those who do not have standing orders are invited to place an order for the Volume 54 and to get on the list for bound volumes. The price is \$7.00. We also have available a limited number of past volumes — for those who want to build their libraries. Write the Business Office for

complete information.

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Publication News. With the Christmas season soon upon us, we urge you to take advantage of the book bargains from the RFPA which will be advertised in the next few issues of our *Standard Bearer*. Ordering these package deals (and we will ship them anywhere) is the easiest way to do your Christmas shopping. At the same time you will be helping the cause of the RFPA along. We want to sell books — so that we'll have the cash to print more books. Incidentally, our cash situation has now improved to the point that we have sufficient funds to proceed with the publishing of our next new publication, Herman Hoeksema's *God's Eternal Good Pleasure* (Sermons on Romans 9-11).

* * * * *

Convocation Address. Be sure to read the transcript of Prof. Hanko's Seminary Convocation Address in this issue. It is a piece of necessary instruction. By the way, there was neither collusion nor planned cooperation in the fact that his address and my recent editorial touched on the same subject. This was a matter of happy coincidence.

EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Plans for Volume 55

This is Issue No. 1 of our fifty-fifth volume. We are thankful to God that He has privileged us not only to continue publishing our magazine these many years, but also that He has given us the grace to continue, we firmly believe, in the course which was originally mapped out for our *Standard Bearer* when it was first held aloft in October, 1924.

As we begin this new volume, we wish to call your attention to some of the plans for this volume. Annually the staff meets during the month of June to elect officers and department editors and to decide on various changes and improvements for the coming volume-year. Then, during the summer months, your editor draws up (in accord with the decisions taken

by the staff) a master schedule for the entire volume-year and informs each department editor of his part in the schedule. Meanwhile, we try to leave the schedule sufficiently flexible to allow room for various special articles and reports which may become available during the course of the year. In recent years, due to the fact that our available supply of man-power and talents has become more plentiful, we have been able to make some changes and improvements, to expand the number of departments, and to present a greater variety of writers. This has not always been possible in bygone years; in fact, there were times when it was difficult to find sufficient writers and when it was a real chore to fill the 24

pages of our magazine for a total of 21 issues per year. Remember, too, that the *Standard Bearer* cannot go out and hire writers; we have no paid staff. Our editors have as their only reward the joy of writing and — we hope — of being read. But, as I said, at present we have a larger pool of talents to draw on; and this makes it more readily possible to make some changes once in a while, as well as to divide the labors a bit more widely.

First of all, let me call your attention to the changes in the coming year.

1) We welcome to the ranks of our staff Rev. Arie den Hartog. He has agreed to share the department *In His Fear* with Rev. Meindert Joostens.

2) Rev. Jason Kortering is going to discontinue writing the department *Triumph Through Trials*. Instead he is going to edit a new Bible Study department. I trust he will tell you more about this when he submits his first article. But I can inform you now that this department will be designed especially to be a guide and a help with Scripture reading in family worship.

3) Prof. Robert Decker is going to divide his writing labors this year between his articles on the Belgic Confession and a new Missions rubric. The purpose of this department is not only to give instruction concerning our mission calling and news of our mission labors when possible, but also to call attention to the world missions scene.

4) The staff decided to discontinue the department *Studies in Isaiah* for the time being. We requested Rev. Robert Harbach to join the ranks of those who write guest articles this year. This he consented to do, along with Revs. Wayne Bekkering, Marvin Kamps, and Richard Moore. From all of these you should be hearing a couple of times during the coming volume-year; they write on subjects of their own choice.

5) The Rev. Cornelius Hanks will be in charge of *Question Box* during the coming volume-year. This change is due to another change, namely, that your editor hopes to begin a department on the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches, in addition to his editorial chores. Originally I had requested the staff to replace me as editor, so that I might write one or two departments of more permanent value. To this

the staff did not consent, but they did reduce my editorial quota to approximately two pages per issue and relieve me of *Question Box* and give me leave to edit a new department.

6) Finally, we also decided to have *Signs of the Times* appear more frequently — a total of 16 issues. The editors will continue to be Rev. Mark Hoeksema and Rev. James Slopsema.

In the second place, the following reassignments were made:

1) The *Meditations* will continue to be written by Revs. Cornelius Hanks, Marinus Schipper, and Herman Veldman.

2) Prof. H. Hanks will continue to write for *My Sheep Hear My Voice*.

3) Rev. John A. Heys will continue to write for *The Day of Shadows*.

4) Rev. George C. Lubbers will continue his *From Holy Writ*.

5) Rev. David Engelsma will write his contributions under *Taking Heed To The Doctrine*.

6) Rev. Gise Van Baren will take you on a look *All Around Us*.

7) Revs. Rodney Miersma and Ronald Van Overloop will share the department *The Strength of Youth*.

8) *Translated Treasures* hopes to complete the translation of Abraham Kuyper's *Tract on the Reformation of the Church*.

9) Book notices and reviews will appear from time to time.

10) Mr. Ken Vink will strive to keep you up to date on *News of our Churches*. To do this, however, he needs faithful correspondents in our various churches. Be sure to send him bulletins regularly, as well as special news reports.

So now you know what to expect in the coming volume-year.

Please remember our *Standard Bearer* and its writers and publishers in your prayers. And please continue to support it not only with gifts, which are always welcome, but especially by *reading* what we write.

Christian Timidity and Daring

Some months ago we informed our readers that we intended to write more on the subject of antithetical

living, specifically in relation to the so-called "amusement problem." That is still our intention. And the

present editorial is certainly in the context of a discussion of that subject. It is not, however, directly in the line of what we intended to write on this subject; it is rather occasioned by a current discussion in *The Banner* in connection with a recent review by Prof. Irvin Kroese of the movie entitled "Saturday Night Fever."

In the context of a mild disagreement between himself and the Rev. Jacob Eppinga about a "prohibitive mentality" (favored by Eppinga) and a "permissive mentality" (favored by Kroese), Mr. Kroese recently came across with a commendatory review of a movie which he himself admitted to have attended, but a movie in which the language of the characters is "confined almost entirely to profanity and vulgarity" and in which the activities of the characters are "mainly brawling and copulation." The latter term could, of course, more accurately be made to read "fornication." As an added indication of the gross immorality of this movie, we mention the fact that a newspaper report carried the information that the printed text of this movie was banned in the public schools of Wyoming, Michigan. Prof. Kroese's review evidently precipitated no little amount of unfavorable reaction among readers of *The Banner*, judging from the sample of response in "Voices" in *The Banner* of September 8. In that same issue there also appears a response from Prof. Kroese.

Now it is not my intention to mingle in the discussion in *The Banner*. First of all, I care for neither Mr. Eppinga's prohibitive mind nor Mr. Kroese's permissive (better called "libertine") mind. In the context of the official Christian Reformed stand on what are euphemistically called the "Film Arts" — a decision firmly grounded in the Three Points of Common Grace — there is basically little choice between these two minds. Secondly, a discussion of Christian liberty and an appeal to Christian liberty is hardly germane in that same context of the Film Arts decisions. Christian liberty has been prostituted, principally, into libertinism.

My concern in this editorial is about a phenomenon which I have noticed more and more in certain circles. It is the phenomenon of an appeal to the doctrine of Christian liberty in order to urge Christians, especially young Christians, to be daring rather than timid, bold rather than fearful, about going out into the world and having fellowship with the world and its corruptions.

Mr. Kroese's reply to *Voices* in *The Banner* of September 8 furnishes examples of this. But Prof. Kroese is not the only one guilty of this. I have noticed this tendency with increasing frequency. Mr. Kroese presents his thoughts on this subject with an appeal to Calvin. Yes, indeed, he quotes a bit of Calvin on the subject of Christian liberty in order to

promote indulging in a dirty, blasphemous movie such as *Saturday Night Fever*! I am sure that if Calvin were living, he would have for Mr. Kroese a few of the choice epithets such as he had for a man like Pighius. Of course, if you quote a snatch of Calvin out of context, you can very easily make it appear that John Calvin supported almost any errant idea. In this instance, Calvin is quoted as teaching "that without the knowledge of the doctrine of Christian liberty 'the conscience can scarcely attempt anything without hesitation, in many (things) must demur and fluctuate, and in all proceed with fickleness and trepidations' (Institutes, III, xix, 1)."

After this seemingly supportive quotation of Calvin, Prof. Kroese writes:

In a society whose principal deities seem to be Eros and Mammon, the call to permissiveness sounds to many like a cruel joke. But the God of Christians is still the God of Abraham, and the call is really the call to faith. I'm suggesting that we trust God a little more, trust each other, and trust even ourselves, with God's help, to carry on the Lord's work. It is our calling to bring redemption to all spheres of life. And how are we going to do that as we enter what even Christians now call "the post-Christian era"? With asceticism, with withdrawal, with fear?

Mr. Kroese concludes his article on a similar note:

The letter-writers are concerned about the direction of the CRC and the welfare of our covenant youth. So am I. The future of the church lies with the young people who *stay* with the church. Many are leaving it, but not, I can assure you, because it stresses too much the theology of the covenant and justification by faith. They can't stomach what passes sometimes for the church's virtues: its temporizing, its timidity, its desire merely to preserve what it ought to put to use. It is time to allow our young people to be the kind of Christians that the Spirit would have them be.

The above must be read bearing in mind that this is an article in defense of Kroese's recommendation of the movie already mentioned.

This is the kind of boldness and daring that must be displayed in the name of Christian liberty: Christians must be bold to indulge in the fellowship of the world and its evil lusts. The Holy Spirit Himself would have young people be that kind of Christian.

But do you know what Calvin taught about such an attitude of boldness and daring?

In an altogether different connection — I was preparing for a chapel talk at our seminary — I came across some choice remarks of Calvin on the interpretation of Psalm 119:115, "Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God." His comments run altogether contrary to the kind of daring which Mr. Kroese recommends.

Notice:

“Some explain this verse as if David declared that he would devote himself with more alacrity and greater earnestness to the keeping of the law, when the wicked should have desisted from assaulting him. And, unquestionably, when we feel that God has delivered us, we are more than stupid if this experience does not stir up within us an earnest desire to serve him. If godliness does not increase in us in proportion to the sense and experience we have of God’s grace, we betray base ingratitude. This, then, is a true and useful doctrine; but the prophet meant to convey a different sentiment in this place. As he saw how great a hindrance the ungodly are to us, he banishes them to a distance from him; or rather, he testifies that he will beware of entangling himself in their society. Nor has he said this so much for his own sake as to teach us by his example, that if we would hold on in the way of the Lord without stumbling, we must endeavour, above all things, to keep at the greatest possible distance from worldly and wicked men, not in regard to distance of place, but in respect of intercourse and conversation. Pro-

vided we contract an intimate acquaintance with them, it is scarcely possible for us to avoid being speedily corrupted by the contagion of their example. The dangerous influence of fellowship with wicked men is but too evident from observation; and to this it is owing, that few continue in their integrity to the close of life, the world being fraught with corruptions. From the extreme infirmity of our nature, it is the easiest thing in the world to catch infection, and to contract pollution even from the slightest touch. The prophet, then, with good reason, bids the wicked depart from him, that he may advance in the fear of God without obstruction. Whoever entangles himself in their companionship will, in process of time, proceed the length of abandoning himself to a contempt of God, and of leading a dissolute life. . . .”

Christian timidity is timidity of catching infection from the world and of contracting pollution even from the slightest touch.

Christian daring is not daring to walk as close to the fires of hell as possible without being burned, but it is daring to be a spiritually separate people, holy unto the Lord!

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Signs in Society (2) The Feminist Movement

Rev. Mark Hoeksema

In the last article on signs of the times we began a consideration of various signs in the realm of our society. It was pointed out that these signs, while not perhaps as noticeable or spectacular as those in the realm of nature, are nonetheless very significant for us. And just because they are often overlooked, the importance of seeing and understanding them needs emphasis.

On the basis of Scripture, particularly Revelation 13, the point was stressed that the antichristian kingdom will be of such a nature that it will encompass and control all of life throughout the world. In order to bring about this unity, whether political,

religious, philosophical, military, scientific, or any other kind, a certain measure of social unity is necessary. That is, the peoples of the world must be united both internally and as nations to a degree that will make possible a voluntary union under the universal reign of the antichristian forces. This means that the sharp diversities, clashes, differences, and variations that exist among people must be reduced or eliminated altogether in order for unity to be accomplished. Somehow a measure of cooperation must be worked among those of different races, cultures, backgrounds, religions, economic classes, and life-styles. This will be no easy task, and will

require time; but that it will come about is undeniable on the basis of Scripture. (The result, of course, will be that no place will be found for the church on the earth, and the great persecution will come about.) But the question that confronts us as those who live in the end times is this: Can we see now any evidences of this "levelling" effect in our society, so that we can perceive the rise and development of the power of antichrist? If so, what are they? This question we answered in the affirmative last time. Now we turn our attention to the concrete signs in society.

One evidence of the trend toward social unity and equality is the feminist movement, sometimes also termed the women's liberation movement. This movement or social trend is very broad and diverse, including many shades and types of philosophies within its confines, from the very radical to the relatively conservative. It has both its secular and religious sides, and has intruded into American politics, as is evident from the current debate concerning whether the deadline for approval of the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution may be rightfully extended. Indeed, this movement touches most facets of American life today.

Now it is impossible to examine here the pros and cons of this movement, or even to describe it in any kind of detail. Not only has this for the most part been done already, with varying degrees of capability and Scriptural accuracy, but also the subject is far too general for our consideration in *Signs of the Times*. We need not enter the debate with the likes of Letha Scanzoni, Virginia Mollenkott, and Nancy Hardesty, all "evangelical" proponents of this movement, nor identify ourselves with Larry Christianson and Marabel Morgan in their opposition to it. Rather, it is my purpose to chronicle briefly some of the development of the feminist movement, and try to draw a few conclusions from it.

The definition and origin of this trend are as difficult to identify as the movement itself. In general, the women's liberation movement refers to the rejection of the traditional roles and place of women in all of society, and the assumption of new, supposedly freedom-bestowing roles. But, contrary to popular belief, it is not of recent origin. In fact, its roots can be traced all the way back to the abolitionist movement before the Civil War; it continued throughout the last century, surfaced again in the early 20th century in the woman suffrage movement, and now in our time has appeared again, both broader in its scope and more radical in its goals. The feminist movement itself is not something new, then; but what is different is the fact that as manifested today its proponents want nothing less than a total revision of the existing social order. The traditional role,

economic place, and status of women must be altered to give them equality with men.

But what are the causes or forces that have made this movement possible and have given it its impetus in recent years? From a Scriptural perspective, of course, this matter must be viewed in the context of the development of antichrist. In the deepest sense of the word the devil is behind this movement, controlling and influencing those who participate in it, and attempting to use the whole feminist movement as part of his effort to achieve the "levelling" effect necessary for the attainment of social unity and coherence. If the most basic difference among humans, i.e., the sexual difference of male and female can be practically eliminated in most or all of life, then indeed a great stride toward social unity has been taken. This means, then, that the feminist movement is part of the development of sin in the world, and an important part. We must remember that, as sin develops organically in the history of the human race, the measure of iniquity of society on all levels and in all ways must be filled, before the world is ripe for the manifestation of antichrist and the judgment of God in Christ.

But such a development does not take place in a vacuum, in the abstract; it has concrete causes and manifestations, means which the devil (under the sovereign control of God) uses to bring about this development of sin. Some of these may be enumerated and briefly described here. For example, women are joining the work force at ever-increasing rates. In 1940, only 8.6% of all mothers worked outside the home. In 1970, the figure was 38.2% and climbing. It is true that for some of these women such work has been and is a financial necessity, but that is becoming less and less true. It is also true that many have opposed this trend, insisting that the woman's place is in the home; but the trend continues. Reinforcing this trend has been the radical change that has taken place in the role of wife and mother in the home. Families are smaller today than in former years, freeing the mother for other activities. Further, children are born when their mothers are younger than was previously the case; the mean age of the American mother at the birth of her last child is now about 26 years. In addition, the life span has increased considerably, so that by the time that the youngest child enters school, most women have 30 or 40 productive years ahead of them. They often turn to employment outside the home. Still more, because of the advent of effective contraception methods and because children are an economic liability today instead of an asset (they are no longer a necessary labor source), many women are electing not to have children, or at least, to have fewer.

Another closely related factor is the development

of technology to the point where the duties of women are greatly eased. Even as recently as 60 years ago, days which some can still remember, the life of a woman was one of back-breaking manual labor and ceaseless, dawn-to-dusk toil in a battle to satisfy only the basic needs of life. One needs only to enter a modern home to see that proportionately very little time need be spent on meeting survival needs with all the modern inventions and gadgets that are available. Small wonder then that women today have ample time and opportunity to turn their attentions and energies elsewhere.

Another factor that contributes to today's liberation emphasis is the increase of education among women. Many women today are highly trained in professional and technical skills. But because males have opposed their equality in many work-related fields, their economic achievements and status have remained inferior. This has led to a rebellion on the part of women against what they consider to be unfair treatment. This, in fact, was one of the major factors behind the Equal Rights Amendment, intended to eliminate such discrimination.

But what do we say about all of this? Perhaps we make jokes about "Rosie the Riveter," about women wearing the pants, etc., at the same time being more than half serious. Or we can attempt to find all sorts of social factors which influence today's developments; and this we must do, too, although never limiting ourselves merely to such a perspective. But from a Scriptural viewpoint, what do we say? First, the movement will undoubtedly continue. It may assume different forms, may recede and reappear, but it will continue. It must, until the necessary degree of social unity is brought about. Second, we as the people of God must not only see and be aware of current trends and tides and movements, but must take our stand and be prepared to suffer the consequences. The church is not immune to the influence of such things as the feminist movement. Abundant proof can be produced of the upheaval concerning the place of women in the church and the radical departures from the Scriptural norms on the part of many. And the cause, more than anything else, is that the church, in an effort to be contemporary, has imitated the world in this. We as the people of God are called not to lose the antithesis between church and world, but to remain faithful to the demands of the Scriptures. Surely this will result in isolation and persecution against the true church, according to the prophecies of Scripture. But our calling is to take an informed and faithful stand nevertheless and never to compromise, as the spirit of the age would dictate.

And finally, we must remember the purpose of all of this. God is in control, though that may not always

be equally apparent to us. He controls both the nature and the pace of the development of signs in society, as well as the end of them, which is the coming of Christ for salvation and judgment. And as we can see the time of the end drawing nearer (and even the increasing pace of social development is a sign of the end), we must more and more look beyond this social order and this world to the city of foundations, remembering that we are citizens of the heavenly order and kingdom. And that kingdom we shall inherit in the way of faithfulness to the command to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

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



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THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Vanity and Profanity

Rev. John A. Heys

Reviewing the life of Isaac as it is made known to us on the pages of Holy Writ we do not get the impression that Isaac was a spiritually strong man. Indeed, he lived in the shadow of his father, Abraham, of whom much is said in Hebrews 11, that chapter wherein the giants (not heroes) of faith are listed for us, the men who in the Old Testament towered above the rest of God's people. In contrast to Abraham, Isaac in this chapter is presented only as by faith blessing his two sons concerning things to come.

True it is that he lived in a time and under circumstances that did not call for the display of faith which we see in Abraham. He had no call to leave his land and trust God to bless him elsewhere. He had not become as good as dead before children were given to him so that he had to walk by faith in the face of such an otherwise hopeless situation. He was not called to offer up his only begotten son whom he loved. And not being led by God into such circumstances he was not given the opportunity to reveal the strength of faith his father manifested.

Yet, one ought to be disturbed to read in Genesis 25:28 that, even though God had clearly spelled it out that He favoured Jacob and would make Esau his servant, Isaac loved Esau "because he did eat of his venison." Or, if you prefer, "because venison was in his mouth."

May God grant that in our families the child with natural talents of music or art, of learning easily and quickly, or of athletic skills and strengths is not loved by parents and grandparents more than those who lack these but who have by God been given faith, obedience, piety, a love for His cause and willingness to serve Him. Sad to say, this is so often the case even

in covenant homes, as it was here in this covenant home. Fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers can be heard boasting, and find themselves gloating, over the earthly achievements of their children and grandchildren, over what high positions they reached in the world, what degrees they have behind their names, what sums of money they cornered during the year, what "celebrities" associate with them, and what they are worth as far as this world's goods are concerned. Not a word or a whisper is spoken about their spiritual abilities and growth. They are proud because of the "venison" they have tasted. And the less talented children — as far as worldly standards are concerned, but not as far as God's judgment is concerned — who have faith, hope, and the love of God, whose treasures are spiritual, who find interest in the things of God's kingdom, who are the meek of the earth, the poor in spirit and who delight in the things of the Church and the Truth are not mentioned. Sadder are those cases where the parents of the latter are ashamed of their children's failures to be big in the world and consider them failures while these children do serve loyally and in a big way in the Church of God.

The less attractive daughter and granddaughter with a meek, quiet spirit, a godly nature and a love for the things spiritual is pushed back. The flashy or more attractive daughter and granddaughter is loved, showered with gifts, given extra privileges; and her beauty is the reason why the parents are proud. Of these, parents want to talk. The subject had better be changed when the other children's names are mentioned. Venison in the mouth has a way not only of leaving its taste there, but of affecting the words that come out of that mouth.

"Vanity of vanities," Solomon would say, "all is vanity." And he would say again to these parents, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The wise father and mother, grandfather and grandmother will be attracted to the child that fears God and for the fear of God to be seen in him, for these are the things that child will take with him into the glories of God's kingdom. All the rest, all the things of this world, all the natural beauty, physical and mental prowess will fade and soon disappear and cannot be taken along. What vanity to attach one's heart to that which is vain! What vanity, what emptiness of spiritual worth it is to let the eye of the flesh — or in this instance the taste of the tongue — determine whereupon the soul will fix itself, whereunto it will be attracted and wherein it will find delight!

We ought to remember that we, as well as Isaac, foster in our children the same vanity that they see in us. We can teach them to have an entirely wrong sense of spiritual values in this life. And when we show far more concern for our children's financial and social progress, more interest in their athletic achievements and activities than their education, so that we are at every baseball and basketball game in which they play — or only sit on the bench — but are never at the PTA meetings, we have taught our children something that they have noticed and do not forget. Let us beware lest we teach them the "delicious" taste of the venison of the world and to esteem the things of the world above the things of God's kingdom. Let us be sure that our children learn that we love them as God's children and not because of their "venison."

Now Isaac had without doubt shown greater love for Esau than for Jacob — and from a purely earthly point of view he was a promising young man, one of which any earthly father could be proud — but also his great interest in venison as fixed by his son. He let Esau know that his material achievements had caught his eye and that he was loved for these. Isaac tasted Esau's venison, and Esau tasted Isaac's delight in the carnal. This only spurred Esau on to greater feats of physical prowess. And we are not to be surprised that Esau, with enthusiasm and fatherly approval, sought the world and its vanities.

Vanity in parents breeds vanity in children. Seeking the world as parents encourages children to seek the world and to go all out for the things of the world. It certainly is true that in the sins in which the parents walk the children will run. If the parents take one step away from the truth they must not be surprised if their children take two steps from the truth, and their children's children take three steps. If they condone one sin, they must expect their children to condone two and their grandchildren to

condone three. If they are weak about one commandment of the law — let us say the fourth one concerning the Sabbath — they must expect their children to be tempted to have a weak approach to two commandments and their grandchildren to be lax concerning three of them. For vanity not only breeds vanity, it so often leads to profanity.

Esau with fatherly approval concentrated on material things and sought the vanities of this world and the pleasures they afford the flesh. And he soon revealed himself as a profane person. That is what he is called in Hebrews 12:16. And, although we usually think of profanity as nothing more than profane language, cursing, swearing and blasphemy, it has a far wider meaning. What is profane is literally "outside of the temple," or, if you will, unholy. And a profane person is one who spends his life outside the things that are holy. He is a person who has no respect for the things that are holy and no use for them.

Some years ago — men hardly dare to say that any more today since they think that they have found a little good in totally depraved man, a little "civic righteousness" which even God can appreciate — men spoke of sacred history and profane history. But who today dares to call the history of the world profane and the history of the Church sacred? What "Christian" school dares to speak the truth today and call all outside the Church, all outside the temple of God, profane? And yet God does that. The Word of God does that. In the Old Testament Scriptures it was either Israel or the *heathen* nations. Today it is either the Church or the world. And the history of the world is history about profane men in profane countries who seek vanity and display profanity. Take a good hard look once at our own country and nation on a Sabbath day — and indeed also and particularly then our political leaders — and tell me once whether their deeds are sacred or profane. Are they in the temple even that one day in the week? Are they moved in their work with considerations of that which is good for the Church, the temple of God, or the things outside of the temple and that even militate against that temple? Prayers to the God of the temple must not be uttered in their schools. Delegates can be sent to an atheistic UN with the agreement that the prayer of the temple — and in fact all prayers — will not be voiced so that the profane, atheistic nations are not offended. And we put our trust in such profane institutions and expect peace to come from it? The Prince of Peace Who dwells in that temple is locked outside the schools and the UN — and then we expect through profane deeds of profane men that peace will come? This too is vanity of vanities, all this is vanity. So much emptiness. So many pipe dreams.

But to return to profane Esau, it is quite striking that, almost in the same breath, Moses, the author of the account in Genesis 25 that tells us Isaac loved Esau for the venison which he had been in the habit of preparing for him, presents to us the evidence that his vanity produced profanity. The account of Esau's selling of his birthright follows at once upon this statement of Isaac's carnal love for Esau because of his venison. And in Hebrews 12:14-16 the profanity of Esau is depicted as consisting exactly in that deed. We read. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness . . . looking diligently . . . lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright." Indeed, his profanity was his disregard for the things holy and concern for that pottage and the physical life he thought was in peril. But you cannot separate that — for the Word of God does not — from the wrong value that his father taught him by his love for the venison in his mouth.

We can by our own vanity and seeking of the vanities of this earth lead our children into these same pursuits and even drive them to these by our own lack of interest in the things of the temple of God, the things of His Church. Let us go back to that statement in Hebrews 12, "Looking diligently . . ." and let us apply that to our children. Looking diligently for every evidence and hint that we may be setting a poor example and that therefore they think more of sports than education, more of pleasures of

the world than being pleasing in God's sight, have delight in the things outside the temple rather than in the temple of God.

What we do with our leisure time, where we go on our vacations, for what we spend our money, whether we are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, whether we seek vanities and attach high values to them, whether earthly, worldly beauty turns our heads, all influences our children and encourages them to do what their flesh — which is profane by nature — desires. Go away from the church for a week for your vacation and expect your children to do that for a month. Go in debt for boats and sports equipment and pore over the catalogs of these with your children, but find no time to read and explain the Scriptures with and to them; have your regular golf days and bowling evenings but no evening for joint study of the Word of God with fellow saints; follow vanity — but do not then be surprised if your children reveal profanity.

Indeed, "Follow . . . holiness . . . looking diligently lest . . ." we find our children becoming profane persons who sell their birthright for a mess of pottage which is not worth all the trouble, and which they will lose sooner or later. Teach them to seek first the kingdom of God. Teach them to have that as the priority of their lives; and then have the joy of seeing them walk in holiness.

SEMINARY CONVOCATION ADDRESS

A Prayer for Laborers in God's Harvest

Prof. H. Hanko

Text: "Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." (The following is the substance of the speech delivered at the 1978 convocation exercises of the seminary held in Hope

Protestant Reformed Church.)

My reason for speaking on this text is that I detect among us a certain lackadaisical attitude among our people towards the need for students in our seminary. This arises apparently, on the one hand, from the fact

that God has given us a number of students in the seminary — more than we had for several years prior to this. On the other hand, there does not seem to be room now for all the students we presently have attending school. The result is that there is no longer any sense of need to encourage and pray for young men to enter the ministry. While just a few years back we almost always heard from our pulpits a prayer that the Lord would provide us with students, we seldom if ever hear this prayer any longer. This attitude is, however, a serious mistake on our part and the reason is to be found in these words of Jesus.

The context, both before and after these verses, indicates that what Jesus said applied first of all to the circumstances of the Lord's earthly ministry. We read that Jesus had compassion on the multitudes because they were distressed and because they were as sheep without a shepherd. And in the immediately following chapter we read of Jesus sending out the twelve apostles to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

Nevertheless, Jesus is laying down here a fundamental truth which is applicable to every age of the church's history. There never has been a time when this was not true that the harvest is plentiful and the laborers few. And the same truth is applicable to our present age. John Calvin speaks for his time and for ours in his commentary on this passage; he writes: "There never was greater necessity for offering this prayer than during the fearful desolation of the church which we now see everywhere around us."

When Jesus gives, as His reason for admonishing us to make this prayer, the fact that "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers few," what does He mean?

There is here, quite obviously, a figure of speech. The abundant harvest refers, metaphorically, to the many elect of God to whom the gospel must be preached in order that they may be brought into the fellowship of the church. Comparing the gathering of the elect and their separation from the chaff to a harvest is an idea found in many places in the Scriptures. The idea of the figure is clear. The history of this present world from the viewpoint of the realization of the counsel of God is compared with a field in which crops are grown. Just as all that happens in that field is for the purpose of the crop, so is all that happens in history for the purpose of bringing forth the elect. The field is plowed and harrowed; is cultivated and fertilized; is blessed with rain and sunshine. And it is all for the purpose of the harvest when the crop is brought into the granary and the chaff burns in the fire. So all that takes place in all the history of the world is for the purpose of the gathering of the elect whom God has ordained to everlasting life.

This harvest is gathered throughout the New Dispensation and it is always an abundant harvest. The harvest is plentiful however, only from a certain point of view. If our viewpoint is mere numbers as we compare the number of the elect with the number of the reprobate, then we look at the matter wrongly. From this point of view there are only a few who are saved, for the wicked always outnumber the righteous. The elect are, in the words of Isaiah, only a hut in a garden of cucumbers, a besieged city, a very small remnant. But this is not the proper viewpoint. We must remember first of all that the number of those who are saved is very great, for a multitude which no man can number is finally gathered before the throne and the seed of Abraham is as great in number as the stars in the heavens and as the grains of sand by the seashore. Secondly, even though the kernels of wheat which are finally stored in the granary occupy a comparatively small space in relation to the chaff, the harvest is nevertheless very great. A man who visits a farmer who has just completed his harvest and who says to the farmer that his crop was very small because the straw stack is so very large while the amount of wheat which is harvested is relatively speaking small, will be told by the farmer that he looks at the matter wrongly. All the labor that was applied to the field and the chaff itself which finally ended in the straw pile was for the purpose of the harvest. And though the amount of wheat may be small in relationship to the amount of straw, nevertheless the harvest is truly plentiful. Thirdly, Jesus is looking at the matter here from the viewpoint of the amount of work that needs to be done to bring in the harvest.

We therefore face the same situation today which faced Jesus when He uttered these words. Jesus Himself sees to it that this word is always true. There are today many who are distressed and spiritually weary because there are none to lead them. They are also as sheep without a shepherd. And the compassion which moved Jesus ought also to move us. The men who claim to be shepherds are oftentimes not shepherds but wolves who devour and scatter the flock. This is true both in our country and abroad.

The second reason why we are instructed to make this prayer is that the laborers are few. We might be inclined to dispute these words of Jesus. It seems to us as if there are more laborers than we know what to do with. There are, after all, only a few vacant churches and there are many students in our seminary. And so, we might argue, Jesus' words cannot possibly apply to the times in which we live.

But Jesus Himself says differently. As applicable as the Word of God in its entirety is to our time, so also are these words which Christ speaks; and we ought to be careful lest we contradict Him as if we know

better. It is true now too that in comparison with the work of the harvest the laborers are few.

We must look at all this in the proper light. Christ has entrusted us with His Word. And there are but few places in the world today where this truth is maintained in all its purity. If the harvest is to be gathered by the preaching of the truth of God's Word, the laborers must come forth from churches where that truth is confessed in all its purity and preached.

But we must remember also that this is a matter of faith. Perhaps it is impossible to point out specifically the concrete need for more ministers of the Word. Perhaps if you should ask me to cite instances where all the men whom the Lord sends us are going, I would not be able to answer you to your satisfaction. But this is, after all, not the point. The Lord always asks us to live by faith, not by sight. This is the pattern of our entire life here below. And that faith by which we must walk very concretely demands of us that we believe these words which Christ spoke: the harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few.

And so we must pray to the Lord of the harvest. We must pray that He will send laborers into His vineyard.

The Lord of the harvest is God. To use the figure, He is the One Who owns the field. He does all the work in the field. He prepares the soil, plants the seed, nurtures the crops; and the whole harvest belongs only to Him. God does this through Christ. He does this first of all by sending Christ into the world to suffer and die on the cross and to rise again from the grave that all the elect may be saved. He exalts Christ at His right hand so that, under the rule of Christ, all that takes place in the world may be for the purpose of bringing forth the elect. Through Christ God causes His Word to be proclaimed and sends forth His Spirit to work in the elect so that they are brought out of darkness into the light of the kingdom of heaven. They are His elect and He will see to it that not one is lost. It is to God therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that our prayer for laborers must be brought.

Only God can call laborers — this is the presupposition of the text. We do not recruit men as the United States army does. We cannot bring laborers into the harvest. This does not preclude a responsibility of parents, ministers, and elders who talk to young men and work with them towards the end that they become ministers of the Word. But only God can send forth these laborers. He alone can move the hearts of young men to pursue their studies so that they are prepared for this work. Only He can finally call through His church to the work of gathering the harvest. And so all our prayers must be directed to Him.

The laborers whom the church needs are men to preach. All the emphasis falls upon the fact that they must be men who will work. They are in fact called "workers" in the text. But they must be workers in the true sense of the word. They must be workers who are faithful to the truth of the Scriptures and who will preach it in all faithfulness come what may. They must be men who love God and His cause and who have compassion for the sheep who are distressed. They must be men who possess courage and faith, for the days ahead will not be easy days and the work will be very difficult and dangerous. They must be men who are prepared for that work. Such men we must seek from God.

If you who are students at present in our seminary are inclined to wonder sometimes why so much work is given to you in the years of your study so that your studies seem sometimes to be a burden almost too great to bear, bear in mind that this too is part of your preparation for the ministry. You must learn also in the years of your studies that you are to be *workers* in the harvest of the Lord.

This prayer can arise from the church only when there is a desire to see the work done. It presupposes a willingness and an eagerness to perform the work. If that work must be done in this country or overseas, if it must be done in the way of great financial sacrifice, if it must be done at no little cost to ourselves, it nevertheless must be done and we must go where the Lord directs and walk through doors which He opens. It must be done without holding back and with a deep sense of the mission calling of the church.

Then our prayers will arise in all sincerity, and then God will answer them. He will send us such men and He will use us to gather those whom He has ordained unto everlasting life.



THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Be Firm in Truth

Rev. Rodney Miersma

As each child of God sails across the ocean of this present life he is met by angry waves and all kinds of contrary winds which seek to bring his ship off course to eventual shipwreck on the shoals and reefs. In order to remain on course this ship must have a very strong helm, that mechanism comprising the rudder and the wheel that is used to steer the ship. The apostle Paul uses this figure to describe the church here on the earth. We read in Ephesians 4:14,15: "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." We then, who are the church of Jesus Christ, are kept on course by the Word of God which He has revealed unto us. Jesus Christ as helmsman steers the church to its destination, the eternal haven of rest.

By the time you read this article many of you will have begun another year of schooling, whether that be in high school or in some other institution of higher learning. Others will have settled into the routine of a daily job, whether at home or elsewhere. Whatever you do and wherever you go you will run into contrary winds and angry waves which the apostle properly terms as false doctrine. This is true of the church in history and this is true of that same church today. There is not one doctrine, not one truth, as it is in Jesus Christ, that has not been denied or attacked. These winds of false doctrine are not merely a fair breeze of trade winds, but winds that are whole gales developing into hurricane proportions. This all in accordance with the signs of the times as the cup of iniquity is filling very rapidly and the antichristian power is getting stronger and stronger.

Lest you young people feel that it really is not as bad as all that, let us look at the situation today. For those of you who are in high schools and institutions

of higher learning that are not under the control of your parents or church, there are many winds. Take for example the many subtle ways in which one is taught that the heavens and the earth were not created by God the Father Almighty. Notice how science has elevated reason above faith in all phases of life. The Bible is no longer regarded as the infallible Word of God, God-breathed. No, the Bible is full of mistakes and we have to find the truth as if we were looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack. The Bible then becomes the word of man, each one making it say what he wants it to say, so that everyone is a law unto himself and does that which is right is his own eyes. The Bible has no more authority than a novel. This leads to all kinds of ideas as to how we may live. Suddenly one may engage in theater-going, dancing, etc., because there is some redeeming social value present which we can enjoy and cultivate, thus fulfilling our cultural mandate. The lie is presented as if it were the truth. These false doctrines sooner or later affect not only those in schools but also those who are in the home or at work. We all get the message to do our own thing. This message comes loud and clear through the means of the newspaper, the TV, the radio, and all the other media at the disposal of the world. Overnight we have rights to do anything we please. In direct conflict with the Word of God we are taught that we have a right to murder by taking the life of the yet unborn. We have a right to rebel against one in authority by striking against our employer for higher wages, by refusing to pay income tax, by rioting in the schools, etc. The marriage bond is no longer held to be inviolable and holy; one can change marriage partners as easily as one changes a pair of socks or sports a new hairdo. We are told that we must fraternize with the world because God loves all men and bestows his favor even on the unrighteous. No longer must we think of sin as sin against a righteous and holy God, but as something that is not acceptable to society. As soon as everybody, or at least the majority, favor something,

then it is good no matter whether it agrees with the divine standard of God's Word or not.

Young people, these winds are not blowing by accident, but come to us "by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." By the sleight of men one gambles with the truth. One does not proclaim and profess the truth out of a motive of love for Christ, but for filthy lucre. Instead of the sheep being fed, they are fleeced. Beware of such false prophets for they are not seeking your welfare, but their own carnal ambitions. By cunning craftiness the truth is twisted in such a way that you no longer can recognize it from the lie. One who speaks the truth can do so clearly, unambiguously, so that you do not have any questions as to the truth. Only when you exercise cunning craftiness with the truth do you have to camouflage it. And the purpose of all this, do not forget, is to deceive you. Gambling with the truth they seek their own selfish end, using cunning craftiness as their method in order that you may be led to believe that the lie is the truth. Against this the Word of God warns us: "Be not tossed by every wind of doctrine."

As you perhaps noticed in the text quoted from Eph. 4:14,15, the apostle not only uses the figure of the ship crossing the sea, but also that of a child. What Paul says here, "Be no more children," is not contradictory to what Christ taught when He said that we must become as little children. Christ was referring to our proper attitude toward the kingdom, that we must be humble and docile. Paul is referring to our stand over against false doctrine. Be strong, not as little children that are easily led astray. Over against all false doctrine as taught on radio, TV, in books, and in many other ways, we must loudly proclaim the antithesis and respond with a resounding "NO."

As children of God you and I must grow up into Christ. If we are tossed about by every wind of doctrine, we lose Christ, and without Christ we have nothing. Think of it, all that we have or shall have of the blessings of salvation is in Christ. Our righteousness, knowledge of God, wisdom, holiness, yea, our eternal life is in Christ our head from Whom flows the fulness of grace and salvation into all His people. It is to this end that we are firm with a view to the truth, that we grow up into Christ. As a little tree strikes its roots into the soil, so do we strike our roots into Jesus Christ. If no roots, then no contact with Christ. However, if God in His grace has given us roots so that we are able to strike into Christ, then we seek all our food, all our nourishment, from Christ alone. So doing we strike our roots deeper and deeper into Christ.

It follows, then, that we must not have false doctrine. Simply put, there is no other Christ than the

Christ of the Scriptures. As soon as you depart from the truth of the Scriptures and follow false teachers, you lose Christ and strike your roots into the wrong soil, sucking in poison instead of Christ. And as you grow up into Him, so you will also grow out of Him, that is, become conformable to His image, loving the Lord your God with your whole heart, mind, soul, and strength. When the truth is involved, there can be no compromise. Do not be fooled by the pleasant, ego-inflating idea that Scripture must change to keep pace with our modern society. Any change from the Christ of the Scriptures will mean that we no longer grow up into Him.

As the apostle plainly states, we must do this *in all things*. In other words, our sphere of life is in Christ Jesus, just as the fish's sphere of life is the water. As soon as we go outside of our sphere we lose the very means of our existence, just as the fish that leaves the water must certainly die. Our whole life, both as to the inward aspect and as to the outward aspect, as that inward life comes to manifestation in our daily walk, must be such that we grow spiritually into and out of Christ. Over against the emphasis on man's inherent ability to save himself through his piety, religion, works, or goodness, we must always confess that our hope, love, righteousness, and faith are all out of our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. This firm inward commitment will reveal itself in all that we do. This is revealed when one attends church faithfully, attends and participates in discussion in Young People's Society, and diligently prepares for catechism and confession of faith. At the home this commitment is revealed in an attitude of obedience toward one's parents, for their authority is the authority of Christ. In the field of labor one soon finds out that one cannot go along with all that one is encouraged to do — the office parties where the liquor flows freely and the joking and laughter is all at the expense of someone else, God's commandments, and the holiness in one's life. In addition, there is stealing from the employer that is taken for granted and even considered a right or a fringe benefit. Or how about the padding of expense accounts and the like? No, we cannot do these things even though we are encouraged to do so.

Soon fellow employees will see this example of Christian living and hate you for it. Eventually you may even lose your job because of the pressure by the employees or because your name will be slandered before the employer. But do not be discouraged, for the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. As Moses we learn to forsake the pleasures and treasures of Egypt and to have respect unto the recompense of the reward which is ours in Christ Jesus.

We can do this by always speaking the truth in love. Not just truth as in dealing honestly with one another in business, but the truth as it is in Christ. And not the love of man which embraces false doctrine, but the love of God. Then our ship will

remain on its course, for Jesus Christ will be at the helm, and the Word of God will be the strong rudder. In this way we will safely arrive at our eternal destination, the eternal haven of rest where we shall live in blessed fellowship with the Lord our God.

IN HIS FEAR

If Ye Love Me Keep My Commandments

Rev. Arie den Hartog

With these profound, beautiful, and absolute words our Lord Jesus exhorted His disciples shortly before His suffering and death. This is an absolute statement that stands for us as Christians through all time. To love God or to love Jesus is to keep His commandments. The two are inseparably related, they are indistinguishable. It can be said that there is a reciprocal relationship between loving God and keeping His commandments. To love Him is to keep His commandments, and to keep His commandments is to love Him with all our heart and soul and strength and mind. We shall consider especially the first of those relationships. The apostle John, who recorded the above statement of our Lord in his first epistle (although with slightly different words), emphasizes the absolute character of the above proposition. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." I John 2:4

The love of God is the most sublime, the most holy and pure and glorious of all motives that can live in the heart and soul of man. For this very purpose was man made: to love God his creator and Lord and so to glorify Him. According to the summary of the law of God this is really the only motive that must continually and completely fill the heart of man. The love of God is manifest in us only when we keep His commandments. By 'His commandments' reference is made centrally to the law of the ten commandments. But keeping His commandments in the most comprehensive sense of the word means of course

that we keep all things which are contained in His Word: all His judgments, ordinances, and statutes, the whole of that which God requires of man to do.

Many have denied the absolute relationship set forth in the above proposition. They have sought to redefine and to broaden the whole idea of the love of God. So broad have they sought to make it that every man can be said to love God, with very few exceptions. Though men walk in all manner of iniquity, though they worship and serve many other gods after their own fashion, though they blaspheme the name of the only true God, though they desecrate His holy day, though they live in hatred and enmity with their neighbor, though they live in adultery and fornication, in greed and covetousness with their neighbor, yet they claim that they love God. This is possible because of the cheap estimation they have of the love of God. Love is, according to them, nothing more than a feeling, an emotion, an attitude. The love of God is not concerned with a certain standard, a certain perfection which controls and defines it. Men need not be so terribly concerned about the law of God. There are things that stand higher than the law of God. As long as man is concerned with all sorts of humanistic concerns, with social action, with the bringing of the kingdom on earth, promoting peace and justice among men, then it doesn't matter so much if men keep the commandments of God or not.

Others have sought to compromise this absolute statement of our Lord by taking away the absoluteness of the law of God. They make the law of God

something relative, something that changes with time and culture and circumstances. Each age must have a new interpretation of the law of God. We need for each age a new morality. We see this kind of an attempt in many ways today, especially with the seventh commandment. Surely, it is said, we must not today hold to the strict principles of sexual purity that the church held in years gone by. We need to reinterpret the law of God here to conform with our present liberated modern age. We need room for allowing homosexuality, premarital and extramarital relations, divorce and remarriage. Those who are engaged in such abominable acts surely cannot be condemned as not loving God! You see, when the law of God was written by the finger of God on Mount Sinai, there was not yet an understanding of the various aspects of man's sexuality. Now, in our age of enlightenment, we need an enlightened interpretation of the law. Not only do men seek to do this kind of thing with the seventh commandment but with all of the law of God. The fifth commandment, which is the standard for authority and obedience, has to be completely reinterpreted. We live in an age of liberation. There is no such thing as God-ordained authority. All men are free and equal. Men have the right to liberate themselves from all forms of government which do not satisfy and please them. Women have the right to liberate themselves from the God-ordained position of submission unto men. One could easily cite many more examples of the attempt of man to relativize the law of God.

Others have persisted in the age-old heresy that the law of God no longer applies in the new testament day. Christ has fulfilled the law and in such a way that He has entirely done away with it as far as the demands of the law for our lives as Christians is concerned. A more subtle and undoubtedly more common variation of this heresy is the notion that, since Christ has paid for all my transgressions of the law of God anyway, it is not such a serious matter that I keep the law of God. If we sometimes through weakness violate the law of God, this ought not be of such great concern to us since we already have forgiveness in Christ Jesus anyway. As long as I still love God He will be pleased with me in spite of my transgression of His commandments. Have we not all secretly at one time or another held this kind of notion? How boldly men say they love God; but what liars they are found to be in their careless transgression of God's law!

Though we have not consciously held to any of the heresies mentioned above, we have nevertheless often sought to compromise the absolute proposition above. We so easily and boldly claim that we love God, but our careless transgression of His commandments reveals that often the love of God is at best miserably weak in us. How often while walking in

disobedience to the law of God we pride ourselves that we still love God. The word of God clearly teaches us that when we transgress the law of God we reveal that we do not love God.

We neither love God nor keep God's commandments by nature. We are prone by nature to hate God and to transgress all of His commandments. The love of God is the result of the work of regeneration in us, the fruit of the operation of God's grace. Only with that same grace can we keep God's commandments.

But why is there such an absolute relationship between our love of God and the keeping of His commandments? The love of God is in its very nature holy and perfect. The love of God is much more than a human emotion or feeling. It is a spiritual and ethical matter of our hearts. The love of God can only operate in the sphere of spiritual perfection.

God is our sovereign lawgiver. He has the absolute right to demand His law of every creature because He is God. His law is righteous and holy. His law is not merely an arbitrary set of principles that could just as well be substituted for another. His law alone is perfect because it is the revelation of the perfect and holy God. The law of God is unchangeable — not one jot or tittle ever changes through all the ages of time and even unto eternity.

The love of God must begin with submission to His commandments. Love is manifested in obedience, whole-hearted complete obedience. In such obedience we acknowledge that God is God, that He is our Lord, our ruler and law-giver to the glory of His name. He who loves God acknowledges that God is holy and good and His commandments holy and true. When man disregards or seeks to compromise the law of God or change that law, man displays a most horrible arrogance before the holy, true, and sovereign God. He who truly loves God will listen quietly to His will, not seeking to change anything of the word and law of God.

Keeping the commandments of God is the love of God in action in us. True love of God is not merely an attitude toward God. It involves activity, a carrying out of the will and purpose of God. Man loves God when he acts according to the commandments of God. This involves the desire of man's heart, the inclination of his will and all his thoughts, words and deeds. Keeping God's commandments means that our actions are pleasing unto Him. If a man loves God he desires to do that which is pleasing unto the Lord.

To love God is to desire to be like Him. To be like Him is to be righteous and holy as He is. We are holy and righteous when with our whole being and all our actions we are in conformity to the law of God.

If it is indeed true that loving God means keeping His commandments, then surely we as the children of

God ought to have an earnest zeal for those commandments. It is no wonder that David, that great lover of God, spoke so often in his Psalms of the law of God. Think of such Psalms as 19, and 119 which in almost every verse of its 176 verses extols the wonderful law of God. Well may the Christian then meditate upon that law day and night. How profitable it is for him to search out all the profound implications of the law of God. How urgent it is that we strive for those commandments with all our heart and soul and strength and mind. Surely we must take heed unto the exhortation of Deuteronomy 6: "And

thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

To Our Sister Churches Of The Protestant Reformed Churches

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ:

It is our continuing desire to build a house of worship for our small congregation in Wyckoff, New Jersey. Since we have obtained permission from our synod to ask again our sister churches to hold a collection in their midst for our building fund, we considered it proper to report to you on our progress. As we reported in the church news column of the Standard Bearer some time ago, we experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining a building permit for our church building because of the current opposition to the building of churches in Wyckoff. By the grace of God, however, this long struggle that lasted almost two years was brought to a conclusion. We now have the final approval to proceed with our plans.

During the past year we have been busy working on our parsonage performing some necessary repairs. Our parsonage now looks very nice, with new overhangs on the eaves and gables, new aluminum siding, new shingles on the roof, and new windows. The funds for this project were raised through the sale of debentures in our own congregation. Most of the labor was done on a voluntary basis on Saturdays.

We are now at the stage where we are seeking to raise the necessary funds for our church building. The total cost of the whole project, including the purchase price of the property, the repairs to the parsonage, and the estimated cost of the proposed church building will be \$287,000.00. This is a very large sum of money, especially for a congregation as small as ours. We are very thankful to God for the large sums of money that we could raise from our own congregation. A total of \$87,000.00 was raised

through the sale of debentures exclusively to our own members. In addition to this, \$36,000.00 has been pledged toward our church building by our members. We are still in need of \$164,000.00. We appeal to all interested parties to purchase bonds from us to raise this money.

It must be understood that the reason why our church building is going to cost so much is largely due to the fact that we live in a very high cost area and in an area where there are many regulations for building, which tends to drive up the cost. Our proposed church building is a very modest 30' x 51' wood frame structure with a seating capacity of 120.

You will find our bonds advertised in this same Standard Bearer. We realize that the interest we offer is very low and that the maturity of the bonds is unusually long. Because of our circumstances, should we offer higher interest or shorter maturity for our bonds we would make this whole project financially impossible for us. In offering our bonds, therefore, we are asking people to make considerable sacrifice of investment. If we were merely a business corporation, we know that it would be utter folly to think that there would be buyers for bonds such as we offer. Because of the cause that we represent and the purpose for which we desire a building, we humbly ask you to consider helping us.

We have drawn up a prospectus which gives all the details concerning our bonds. We invite you to write for it.

Covenant Prot. Ref. Church,
Wyckoff, New Jersey
(by Rev. Arie den Hartog)

Book Reviews

CHRIST AND THE MEDIA, by Malcolm Muggeridge; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; 127 pp., \$5.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

Malcolm Muggeridge was formerly editor of *Punch*, a British satirical paper which had an international circulation. For over forty years he was active in work with the media: newspapers, radio, and television. In the course of his life he has converted to Christianity and has spoken often in evangelical circles. In 1976 he was invited to give three lectures at the London Lectures in Contemporary Christianity. This book contains those lectures as well as the script of the question and answer session held at the end of each lecture. The author examines the role of the media (especially television) in Christianity and the propagation of the Christian faith. He is a skilled, witty, and articulate writer and speaker — somewhat on the order of C. S. Lewis.

The basic theme of this book is that the media (and particularly television) have an extremely evil influence on our civilization. This influence will, in the author's opinion, grow worse with the passing of the years. Nor is there any hope that this can be improved because the media, being what they are, are not neutral and therefore capable of being used for good or evil; they are rather always tending towards evil and geared to promote evil. "The technical complexities, necessity of editing, and the demands of the public make the television producer turn reality into fantasy."

Reality for Muggeridge is the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The media can do nothing else but create a world of fantasy which drives people away from the true reality of the kingdom. It is for this reason that the media will only serve the deterioration of society as we have known it.

The book is a very powerful analysis and condemnation of all the media, but especially of television. If I had a television set in my house, the book would have persuaded me to get rid of it as quickly as possible. In fact, the book makes one really wonder whether it is good to have newspapers and news magazines come into the house. Muggeridge speaks from a long association with the media and knows whereof he speaks. While we do not know very much about the author's Christianity, we can recommend

this book to our readers. In fact, it is almost "must reading" for all who have a television set and who make use of it daily. If this book is not sufficient to frighten ardent TV watchers, there is nothing really that will. We urge those who make abundant use of television to purchase the book and read it. It will be worth the time and money.

Treasury of the World's Great Sermons, compiled by Warren W. Wiersbe; Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Mich. 662 pp., \$12.95 (hard cover) (Reviewed by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema)

This is a large volume, finely printed, and containing a massive amount of material. The sermons in this volume range from the period of the church fathers to the present. Among these 123 sermons a very wide variety of preachers is represented.

A certain amount of attentive reading of worthwhile sermons by other preachers is a very good thing both for ministers of the gospel and students who are preparing for the ministry. This volume offers ample opportunity for such reading.

Which sermons belong among the world's great sermons is, of course, a matter of subjective judgment. My judgment and choice would certainly not in every instance agree with that of the compiler of this volume, Warren W. Wiersbe. While there are surely several very worthwhile sermons by notable preachers in this volume, there are also sermons which I would not classify as being great; and there are preachers represented in this volume whom I would not classify as great preachers. Besides, the principle of choice in these sermons did not become evident to this reviewer. Moreover, there appears to this reviewer to be a lack of proper balance with respect to various periods in the history of preaching. I made no exact count, but it appears to me as though overwhelming attention was paid to sermons from the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, one could certainly do worse than to spend \$12.95 for a book of this kind. Recommended with reservations.

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NOTICE!

The combined Men's and Ladies' League Mass Meeting for the Fall season will take place at the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI, on October 10, 1978, at 8:00 P.M. Rev. C. Hanko will be the speaker. His topic — "GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN 1953 AND OUR CALLING TO INSTRUCT OUR CHILDREN."

David Harbach, Sec'y.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 16, 1978, the Lord willing, our beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon J. Terpstra will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We, with them, are grateful to our Heavenly Father for bringing them together and blessing them through these years as Covenant parents and grandparents.

We pray for God's continued guidance and blessing upon them in the years to come.

Their children and grandchildren,

David and Suzanne Looyenga
Lisabeth

Tom and Luanne Schipper
Jason

Charles and Verna Terpstra
Todd
Jeffrey

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 8, 1978, our parents, MR. AND MRS. PETER KNOTT will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their children, are thankful to God and to them for our covenant home and upbringing. We pray that God will grant them many more years together and guide them in all they do.

Their children

Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Brummel
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Offringa
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Knott

and grandchildren

Shelly
Kristi
Julie
Dennis
Melonie
Windi
Jennifer

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SEMINARY PUBLICATIONS

The Seminary Bookstore announces that Prof. Hoeksema's *Syllabi on Old Testament History* are now complete from Creation through the Conquest of Canaan. These syllabi are highly readable and in non-technical style and language, and will be helpful to Bible teachers, Sunday School teachers, and for Bible Study in societies. The titles and prices are as follows:

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Order any or all of the above (please enclose payment) by writing to:

Prot. Ref. Seminary Bookstore
4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W.,
Grandville, Michigan 49418

News From Our Churches

Candidate Wilbur Bruinsma has accepted the call he received from our Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan, to become their pastor. We can probably assume that Candidate Bruinsma has declined the call he received from Southeast Church. The trio of Southwest Church consisting of Candidate Bruinsma, Rev. Arie den Hartog and Candidate Michael De Vries has now been reduced to a duo.

The editor of this column was looking forward to some help in filling this page in the form of a Classis Report. Classis West has been postponed until October 18 due to a light agenda and in the expectation that a classical exam will have to be administered. Classis East was scheduled to meet on September 13. Classis East will have to meet again soon in order to examine Candidate Bruinsma before he can be installed as pastor of Faith Church. With three of our churches still without a minister it may well be that more special classical meetings may have to be called in order to administer classical exams to our candidates.

The following rather interesting note was received from our Home Missionary, Rev. Robert Harbach, now laboring in Victoria, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. "Seldom, if ever, is it that there is any really earthshaking news to report. But now that is literally the case. Earlier in the summer, during one of our worship services, there was an earth tremor which shook the building (reminiscent of Acts 4:31), to some, quite noticeably. However, the preacher himself was oblivious to the event, filled as he was, with the sermonic seismic activity of his own mind and heart. Then, just a few weeks back, another earthquake occurred, unknown to us, but felt by some of our people a few miles north of us. The latest, this week, was, for us, quite a startling tremor. Shaking the whole apartment building, it caused a sound like a muffled explosion internal to the premises. All this serves to comfort us, in the most practical reality, with our Lord's long-prophesied and now occurring signs of His sure, quick coming. In this Blessed Hope, we continue to preach the glorious soul-stirring Gospel!"

The following report concerning Rev. Harbach's work was printed in our Hope Church Bulletin. "It is wonderful to still be busy preaching and teaching the

Protestant Reformed Truth! Now past is a catechetical season in Old Testament History in which we taught 8 children with an occasional visit of 4 other children. These catechumens studied and learned enthusiastically, and parents are most thankful for the instruction, some benefits of which became apparent in the children's increased knowledge.

"Also completed was a class of 5 adults and 2 young people in a very detailed study in 'Essentials of Reformed Doctrine.' This Thursday Bible study class was always lively with the asking and answering of a continual flow of pertinent questions and spontaneous discussions which often continued for two hours and more.

"In Clearbrook, B.C., not far from Lynden, Washington, we taught a class in Reformed Essentials. This class consisted of 4 to 8 people in the Reformed Community and 2 or 3 couples of the Lynden P.R.C. This class met every other Monday, closing for the season with a lecture on "Keys Given the Church."

"In 32 sermons we went through I Timothy, verse by verse. In 37 Lord's Days we have gone to that point in the Heidelberg Catechism bringing truth such as the little group never heard before.

"We try to publish a two-page *Calvinist Contender* about every other month, which goes out to a few in the area and elsewhere across the land."

In response to various requests from the congregation, the consistory of our church in Loveland, Colorado, has decided to change the doxology sung at the close of the Sunday evening service with the singing of 'May the grace of Christ the Saviour.' This doxology is also used by other of our churches.

The Sunday School teachers in the Michigan area planned to gather for their annual Fall Mass Meeting at Hudsonville Church on September 19. Rev. C. Hanko was the scheduled speaker.

A Thought For Contemplation from the South Holland bulletin — from the pen of John Calvin:

"...the first part of prayer is consent to the will of the Lord, who is by no means bound to follow our desires. We must, therefore, pray to God to regulate our prayers according to His will, if we would have them accepted by Him."

K.G.V.