

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

So we find ourselves in a new year, in another phase of our lives as God has planned our way in sovereign wisdom and measures off our days one by one. The end is not yet. How soon that will be for any one of us we do not know, but that our end is approaching is certain. What manner of persons have we been in the past year? What kind of persons are we now? What should we be?

See "What Ought We To Be?"

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## What Ought We to Be?

C. Hanko

*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*

*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,*

*Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*

II Peter 3:10-13.

Since then . . .

Since the year 1979 has become history that is recorded in the annals of God to be reviewed in the day of Christ's coming, what manner of persons

ought we to be! Another year has swept by and has carried us along, even hastening us toward our death, the grave, and the great Day of the Lord.

For a fleeting moment we paused on new year's



eve to take a hasty glance upon the past year. We thought of the world happenings, the visit of the pope to our country, the unrest in the nations, the constant threats of war which could also affect us, the world-wide economic instability that threatens disaster for the all of us, and the universal, anxious cry for a leader who can deliver us from our dilemma. With all this we enter into the new year. We consider for a moment that this is an election year in our country, a year that will likely bring many changes, possibly even the end of our present life style. We look at the more intimate life in our homes and in our churches. No one can deny that there is a certain dangerous complacency in our churches and a steady disintegration of the family life in our homes, with heresy and worldlimindedness creeping in among us from every side. Each of us individually has experienced joys and sorrows, pleasures mixed with unpleasanties, and undergoing a bit of dying every day.

So we find ourselves in a new year, in another phase of our lives as God has planned our way in sovereign wisdom and measures off our days one by one. The end is not yet. How soon that will be for any one of us we do not know, but that our end is approaching is certain. What manner of persons have we been in the past year? What kind of persons are we now? What should we be?

The answer is given in this text. We should be engaged in holiness and in a godly conversation, looking for and hastening the coming of God's great and eternal Day.

The Day of the Lord is coming.

Mockers there are who scornfully ask: When will that day arrive when Jesus will return? They argue that, since the dawn of history, day and night, summer and winter, seedtime and harvest have succeeded each other uninterruptedly. Today these scoffers will tell us that the earth is billions of years old, and that therefore our present civilization is still only in its infancy. As long as the sun does not burn out, our commodities like gas and oil hold out, and we control the population growth we have nothing to fear for a million or more years to come. There are also those within the church who expect a universal reign of Christ upon the earth before the final consummation of all things takes place. The complaint that the Lord tarries long in His coming is really quite foreign to any of us. All things seem to carry on with amazing regularity. The church grows complacent. The virgins doze and sleep; their vigil lamps burn out.

Scripture reminds us that the events of history have not actually carried on through the centuries without interruption. Our attention is called to the

fact that this world has undergone one massive upheaval, one judgment day already, silencing those who scoffed at the idea of a universal flood. The inhabitants of the earth were surrounded by water, waters above and waters below and all around, yet they mocked at the thought that God could open the windows of heaven and the fountains of the deep to inundate the whole world. Today we are surrounded by fire, evidenced in lightnings, electricity, and atomic and hydrogen energies, yet unbelief still smiles at the teaching of Scripture that God will demolish this present world with fire. Let God's church take note, for as far as these scoffers are concerned our Lord will come when they least expect it, as a thief in the night.

In verse 12 this day is referred to as "the day of God." It is the day when God will vindicate His Name upon the blasphemers in their proud rebellion. The world which will have imagined that it had done away with God and His Christ will see God in Christ appearing with the clouds of heaven. In that day He will justify His elect before the eyes of the whole world. He will establish His kingdom in the heavens, take its citizens unto Himself and unite them under one Head, Christ Jesus, in a new creation to show forth the glorious praises of His matchless Name.

This is also the day of the *Lord Jesus*. It is the culmination of Christ's work as exalted Lord at the Father's right hand. Every eye will see the crucified, yet exalted Jesus as Lord of lords and King of kings exercising all the power of God in heaven and on earth. Nations may rage and peoples may imagine vain things, but God has already exalted Christ as Head of His church and Lord over all. The judgment throne will be set up to pass a just judgment upon the wicked for all their evil deeds and to assign them to their own places in torment. In that day of the Lord the chosen of God will be justified before their own consciences and before the whole world on the merit of Christ's cross, and will be given their appointed places in His kingdom. Every knee must bow and every tongue must confess that Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father.

"The heavens shall pass away. . . ."

The reference here is to the starry heavens. Elsewhere Scripture informs us that the firmament will be folded up as one folds a coat and lays it aside. The stars will fall from their places, the sun will be darkened and the moon will be like blood. In this passage we are told that the heavenly bodies will pass away with a deafening roar, and the elements of which they are composed will melt under intense heat. This present generation has learned to fear the unleashing of the powers of the atom bomb, its resulting mushroom cloud, and its total devastation. What clearer evidence do we need that Almighty God



is able to consume all the millions of heavenly bodies by fire in a matter of minutes?

Immediately following, the earth and the works that are on the earth will likewise be melted away in the furnace of God's judgment. The waters of the sea will be swallowed up in a seething caldron, the rocks and the mountains will melt like wax. Even more significant than that, the works of men's hands, the product of centuries of toil, discovery, invention, and progress will disappear as in a moment. The towering sky scrapers that stood as monuments of man's greatness, the huge factories that poured out the products of man's skill, the many business houses that spoke of man's success, the complicated electronic devices that worked faster and more accurately than the human mind, even all the wonders of antichrist that gave him the proud boast of almighty power, omniscience and omnipresence, before which the nations of the earth bowed in awesome wonder, will be exposed for what they actually are: mere vanity. The Man of sin had stood for a moment at the height of his power as if he had attained the ambitions of the ages and was completely self-sufficient as lord of the universe. He had boasted of his majesty and basked in the adoration of his worshippers who looked to him to be cared for by his hand. For a short time the whole world had revelled in a false prosperity, built upon the vain promises and hopes of mere men. God in heaven had given them over to their own foolishness, and caused their vanity to bring about their own destruction. They corrupted God's soil, polluted His air and His streams and oceans, exhausted His resources in mad waste in striving for success. The vials of God's wrath were poured out upon them until they found themselves headed along a dead-end road. In final desperation they witnessed the sign of the Son of man in the clouds, which filled them with terror for the living God, Who alone is God. They saw Him Whom they crucified and cast out, and they cried to the rocks to cover them and to the mountains to hide them from the face of the living God.

What manner of persons ought we to be!

We have God's sure promises spread out on the pages of the holy scriptures from Genesis to Revelation that He will surely remember His covenant and deliver His people from all their afflictions. These

promises cannot fail. Confidently we await the coming of the day of the Lord and the glory that is laid away for us.

This is our confession. This should also be evident in our lives. We should be living in eager anticipation. When a relative or friend is expected home after a long absence we live in expectation of his coming every day. Our life is focused upon the moment of his arrival, our plans are arranged accordingly, our thoughts and speech reveal our eagerness. As the time approaches we make the necessary preparations for a hearty welcome. We count the weeks, the days, the hours. We grow impatient, wondering why time moves so slowly. We find ourselves looking out and peering down the road, as in our eagerness we try to hasten the glad moment of reunion.

Our text speaks of "looking for and hasting *unto* the coming of the day of God." The margin tells us that a more literal translation would be, "looking for and *hasting* the coming of that day." Not as if we can actually hasten the day of the Lord, since the times and the seasons are in the hands of the Almighty, but we can hasten the day as far as we are concerned by busily engaging ourselves in preparation for Christ's coming. We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto those good works which God has before ordained that we should carry out toward the coming of His kingdom. We are called to labor as faithful stewards in God's House in anticipation of His "well done." Fighting the good fight, keeping the faith we reach out for the goal of eternal life that lies before us.

That hastening is characterized, first of all, by holiness. Negatively, we prepare ourselves for Christ's coming by a daily crucifying of the flesh, suppressing the sin that wars in our members. Positively, we consecrate ourselves to the things of God's kingdom as priests before the face of our God. The second characteristic of watchful waiting is godliness, or God-likeness. Now we are children of God, His imitators, not knowing exactly what we shall be, but this we know that when He appears we shall be fully like Him in His glory. In that confidence we experience that we are held by God's hand, are guided by His counsel, and are being led into His eternal Home. Holiness and godliness serve to increase our longing and cause us to pray ever more fervently, "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly. Amen."

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





## EDITORIAL

## What Gospel?

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Sometimes one rubs his eyes in disbelief at things which appear nowadays in the pages of *The Banner*, especially, though not exclusively, things which are from the pen of James Daane.

The reprobation-issue seems to be bringing things to light concerning the Christian Reformed pulpit — things which we long suspected, but which were not openly admitted. It is well-known that before he ever filed his gravamen, Dr. Harry Boer openly claimed that reprobation was not preached and taught in the Christian Reformed Church and that the doctrine of reprobation inhibited also the preaching of election. Along comes the Rev. Jelle Tuininga (*The Banner*, Aug. 24, 1979), who seemingly opposes Boer's gravamen and wants to keep the doctrine of reprobation in the Canons, although he does "not believe that everything the Canons say about election and reprobation is above reproach." But he also claims that reprobation should not be preached:

Now first of all about the pulpit: Must we "preach" reprobation? Must we "preach" hell? I doubt it very much. We must preach the gospel, the good news of salvation, what the Canons call "the glad tidings concerning the Messiah." Or, in the words of Jesus Himself, we must preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations (Luke 24:47). So we don't "preach" hell and damnation. What we do say, along with the gospel, is that if people do not believe they will perish: the wrath of God remains on them. So the reality of reprobation and hell only serves to increase the *urgency* of the gospel, the only name by which men *must* be saved. Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, says Paul (II Cor. 5:11). That's the function that mention of reprobation serves. But that's something else than "preaching" reprobation.

As might be expected, when James Daane reflects on "Tuininga and Reprobation" (*The Banner*, Nov. 16, 1979), he seizes on this, for it is grist for Daane's mill. Writes he:

In his discussion of reprobation (8/4/79), the Rev. Jelle Tuininga makes a perceptive and necessary

distinction that many Reformed people fail to make. He distinguishes between what is truly gospel and that judgment which befalls those who reject it. The former he contends can be truly preached, and the latter cannot. Tuininga asks, "Must we 'preach' reprobation? Must we preach hell?" His answer: "I doubt it very much. We must preach the gospel, the good news of salvation, what the Canons call 'the glad tidings concerning the Messiah.'" Thus he recognizes that we preach that in which we summon men to put their faith and trust. He is right. Man cannot have faith and trust in reprobation.

And then Dr. Daane proceeds to capitalize on this concession of Tuininga. Although, of course, this has nothing to do with Boer's gravamen (the issue of which is supposed to be purely *exegetical*), nevertheless Daane's argument from Tuininga's concession is a cogent one:

But if it need not be preached, why does he think reprobation should be a part of our official creed, and why does he think Dr. Harry R. Boer and I err in thinking it ought not? After all, a creed is literally what the church believes, and therefore what a church preaches.

How can Tuininga justify the inclusion in a church's confessional formula what he does not think needs to be preached? Ought not our Confessions reflect our preaching and our preaching our Confessions? What else are Confessions for?

An even larger question is how can the Christian Reformed Church, especially its ministers and elders, justify the inclusion of reprobation in its official Confessions when in fact the vast majority of lifetime members leave this world without any recollection of having ever heard a sermon on reprobation? How can one avoid the question of integrity if a church officially confessionally declares what it in fact does not preach? Or how can one justify putting a man out of the ministry for denying what he is not obliged to preach?

A cogent argument, I say, from Daane's and the Christian Reformed Church's point of view.



But the fundamental premise in this argument is that reprobation and judgment do not belong to the gospel, the good news concerning salvation, concerning the promise.

This is the first item to make one rub his eyes in disbelief.

Do you realize, does the Christian Reformed Church realize what is being said? I'm sure Dr. Daane does. I'm sure Dr. Boer does. I don't know about the Rev. Tuininga, for he seems to waver and halt between two opinions. But do *you* realize that what these men are proposing (and Daane has been doing this for a long time — he says for decades) is a totally different gospel — which is not the gospel? This becomes evident, too, by the way, in that these men increasingly speak about the Reformed view and about Reformed theology in the third person, singular, that is, in such a way that they make plain that Reformed theology is not *their* theology. They will freely admit that the views they are combatting have been the views of our fathers all the way back to John Calvin himself. But they put distance between themselves and those views.

Let us understand this. The issue is not one of blue-pencilling an isolated doctrine out of the creeds. It is the issue of a gospel whose very genius is contrary to our Reformed faith and confession, contrary to the Scriptures.

In Daane's case this will be plain to anyone who has read his *The Freedom of God*. A Reformed man simply cannot find himself in that book. But Daane presents this "other gospel" in condensed form in the same article from which I quoted above. Notice:

A careful reading of his (Tuininga's) article shows that he sometimes believes that there are reprobates, people condemned to hell, not for sin that they have committed but because God is the kind of God who desires and determines that hell no less than heaven have its population (another of Daane's many misrepresentations of the truth, HCH). When Tuininga thinks and writes in this way, he has no reason to think that if God is such a God, reprobation ought not be preached. But a careful reading of his article also shows that his Christian instincts rebel against that theology of reprobation in which he has been trained and he, therefore, says that he does not "think" that reprobation is something that ought to be preached because reprobation, after all, like hell, is not really a part of the gospel.

Tuininga ought not be surprised that many will dissent from his view — and mine — *that reprobation ought not be preached because it is an expression of judgment, not of Good News.* (italics added) One ought not, however, to think ill of him for this. The membership of our churches have far too long been taught to think of the gospel *equally* in terms of election and reprobation, and in terms of a divine

sovereignty that is defined as neutral (neither essentially gracious nor essentially judgmental), as an absolute power which is equally expressed in election and reprobation. Why else did so many people object to Report 44 (On the Nature and Extent of Biblical Authority) because it asserted that Biblical revelation is *redemptive* revelation? The objectors would not have objected had the Report *also* said that Biblical revelation is non-redemptive, judgmental, equally reflective of reprobation as of election.

And it should not escape notice that this *dual* way of defining the nature of Biblical revelation — and the gospel — as no less non-redemptive as redemptive, and no less a matter of reprobation as of election, *stems from decretal theology*. For if election and reprobation, divine redemption and divine judgment (wrath) are revelatory of a decree that is God's essence (God's essence as it expresses itself in God's will), then the Bible and the gospel are indeed *constituted* by this duality; then the nature of Biblical revelation reflects, and the preaching of the gospel should express, this duality. A consistent decretal theologian will never suggest that reprobation ought not be preached. How can he be silent about something he believes is rooted in, and reveals the very nature of God?

Now as far as the last paragraph is concerned, of course, there is only a grain of truth in it. That grain is that a consistent decretal theologian will never suggest that reprobation ought not be preached. The reason adduced by Daane is wrong. However, I refuted that in the last issue, at least as far as Herman Hoeksema's decretal theology is concerned.

Nor will I argue about Report 44, which is not the origin of all these problems. Report 44 is probably more in the nature of a symptom of the underlying problem, in my opinion. Besides — and this may come as a surprise to Daane — I think it is possible to argue in a sound sense of the word (not in the sense of Report 44 and the sense of Daane) that Biblical revelation is indeed *redemptive* revelation.

But that is neither here nor there.

My concern is about the position, often reiterated by Dr. Daane, that judgment and reprobation do not belong to the gospel, the good news concerning salvation, concerning the promise.

What about this?

In the first place, let us remember — and I suspect that here, after all, is the root of the matter — that the gospel is never good news for the reprobate ungodly. There is no good news of God for them. There is good news only for the elect. And do not forget: the gospel has definite addressees, God's people, His beloved elect in Christ Jesus!

In the second place, let us remember that the criterion of the gospel is the Scriptures, and that, too, in their entirety. Where do we find the content of the



gospel? In those Scriptures, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. But those Scriptures are full of judgment. I would almost say that it is impossible to open those Scriptures anywhere without discovering judgment. This can only mean, therefore, that if you insist that judgment is not part of the gospel, you must eviscerate those Scriptures!

In the third place, both Scriptures and our confessions plainly present this element of judgment as good news, gospel. It belongs to the comfort of God's people, the only comfort in life and death. And it is presented as reason for joy and rejoicing on the part of God's people. Let me be specific. The Book of Revelation is full of judgments in connection with the whole scheme of the seals, the trumpets, and the vials. In it there are many passages which speak of rejoicing at the judgments of the Lord upon the enemies of His Christ and His people. Remember! Those enemies are the reprobate ungodly, Babylon, the Antichristian world! Why? The question cannot be downed, and neither can the answer. That judgment is good news! It is gospel! For whom? For Babylon? Of course not! It is good news for God's people, His church, the Lamb's bride! Just a couple of random examples. The first is that of the seventh trumpet, Revelation 11:15, ff.: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail." The second example is from Revelation 18 and 19, immediately following that dreadful description of the judgment and fall of Babylon. Notice verse 20: "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." Or look at 19:1-3: "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his

servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." Why rejoice and sing Alleluias? Because of good news! What good news? The good news of the judgment of the great whore and the avenging of the blood of God's servants!

Examples of this kind can be multiplied.

And what about our confessions on this subject?

Our Heidelberg Catechism finds comfort in the gospel of the coming of Christ to judge the quick and the dead, and it certainly describes that gospel as judgmental in the 52nd Answer: "That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head I look for the very same person, who before offered himself for my sake, to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me, to come as judge from heaven: *who shall cast all his and my enemies into everlasting condemnation*, but shall translate me with all his chosen ones to himself into heavenly joys and glory." (italics added)

And our Belgic Confession, Article 37, speaks the same language. We read there the following: "And therefore the consideration of this judgment is justly terrible and dreadful to the wicked and ungodly, but most desirable and comfortable to the righteous and elect: because then their full deliverance shall be perfected, and there they shall receive the fruits of their labor and trouble which they have borne. Their innocence shall be known to all, *and they shall see the terrible vengeance which God shall execute on the wicked, who must cruelly persecuted, oppressed and tormented them in this world. . . .*" (italics added)

In the fourth place, we must remember that this element of judgment belongs to the very motif of the gospel. Not only does the gospel contain elements of both judgment and salvation. Not only do judgment and salvation occur side by side in history and in the gospel. No, the judgment of the world is the salvation of the church! Zion is always redeemed through judgment. You behold it in the Flood, at the Exodus, at the Conquest of Canaan, at the Return from Babylon. You behold it centrally in the fulness of time at the Cross, and you hear the Savior cry: "Now is the judgment of the world; now is the prince of this world cast out!" And you behold it in its consummation at the end of time: the judgment of Babylon means the salvation of Jerusalem.

To deny this is to deny the gospel.

It is to proclaim another gospel, which is not the gospel.

This is what the current struggle about predestination is all about.



## ALL AROUND US

### "Burns Plays God"

Rev. G. Van Baren

I guess the element of shock has disappeared. One can expect anything and everything within Reformed circles. There are few, it seems, who blush anymore (Jer. 6:15). Yet one can not help but be disappointed and disgusted at the extent of departure from the truths of Scripture and of the confessions of the Reformed churches.

Movie reviews appear regularly and extensively in Calvin College *Chimes*. Not too long ago that was an unheard of thing. But since the C.R.C. has approved the viewing of the "good" movies, the church and religious magazines in those circles increasingly review the movies. One review of a movie was presented in the Nov. 2, 1979 issues of the *Chimes*. The movie was scheduled for showing that same evening in Calvin's Fine Arts Center. The movie? "Oh, God!" *Chimes* explains the contents:

*Oh, God!* deals with the question: "Does it make any sense to believe that God exists in the kind of world in which we live and of which we are a part?" or "What would society's response be to God's contemporary appearance among them?"

This film's use of comedy is perhaps offensive to many viewers, especially among evangelical Christians. However, if the film had used the dramatic medium of tragedy — or any other dramatic medium for that matter — the film would have been a failure.

God (George Burns) makes himself known visibly to Jerry Landers (John Denver), who is a grocery store manager in Tarzana, California. Jerry, at best, is agnostic and, perhaps, atheistic. God is upset about the way things are going on earth. Environmental pollution, war and hate result from people's failure to work together. God brings a message to Jerry and commissions him to share it with the world: if everyone will play his part to remedy the problems with which we people on earth must cope, finally, everything will turn out alright. . . .

In a comedy one can easily miss the important point: the one who, in obedience to God, transmits God's message does not get an enthusiastic hearing

among men. Jerry is treated in a way reminiscent of the treatment given to Old Testament prophets and New Testament evangelists.

The point of the film is that it makes as much sense to believe in God's existence in our world as to disbelieve in God's existence. But the kind of God who is pictured in the film is a far cry from an authentic reflection of that which the Bible portrays. Jesus' identity and role do not differ, according to the film, from the identity and role of Mohammed or Gautama or Moses, or, even, from the identity and role of Jerry Landers. What God thinks is the purpose of life "doesn't count at all." God has no real knowledge of the future. God, in fact, is "only for the big picture" and "doesn't guide our destiny." Our "destiny" is just a matter of luck. The *only* help we are to get is from each other. The question which must be raised is this: What difference does it make to man if he believes or disbelieves in the existence of the kind of God who is pictured in this film?

The film was to be preceded by an introduction and presumably an evaluation and commentary presented by Rev. John Vriend, the pastor of The Church of the Servant Christian Reformed Church. President Diekema of Calvin College, so we read in the same *Chimes*,

. . . commended FAC (Film Arts Committee) on its recent handling of the *Oh God!* issue. He pointed out that FAC's mandate is to show educational, not merely popular films, and that FAC is successfully doing so by putting *Oh God!* in a seminar context. . . .

One is struck by the fact that this film is presented in the largest auditorium on Calvin's campus. Other (presumably better) films are regularly presented in smaller auditoriums. Is this a comment, perhaps, on the spiritual sensitivity of the students?

One wonders, too, about the comments of Vriend before the movie. One would expect of a minister who has signed the "Formula of Subscription" before God and His church ("We declare, moreover, that we



not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine . . . but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors. . . .”) to be outspoken in his condemnation of the godlessness evident. If nothing else, he could be expected to read from the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 35 (to which he firmly expressed agreement in the “Formula”):

Q. 96 What doth God require in the second commandment?

A. That we *in no wise* represent God by images, nor worship him in any other way than he has commanded in his word.

Q. 97. Are images then not at all to be made?

A. God neither can, *nor may be represented* by any means. . . .

The message is clear. If nothing else, there was a terrible violation of the second commandment. This is none other than the sin of the golden calf into which Israel fell at Mt. Sinai — and we all know the consequences of that. Did Vriend point that out? Did he command repentance and return to a proper worship of Jehovah? Did he warn of the sad consequences if such image-worship continues without repentance? Surely that was his calling.

## Evils of Gambling Multiply

The Church has been warned often concerning the evils of gambling. That same Church has warned the state generally with respect to these evils. There is the evil of trying to “get something for nothing”; and there is the evil of playing with the Providence of God — Who directs even the casting of the lot — for our financial or material enhancement. The evils of gambling included too the fact that those who can least afford to gamble are the very ones who do so — in hope of a large return. And much of the tremendous profit from gambling has been channeled into the pockets of criminals.

The State of Michigan, a number of years ago, legalized gambling as a state enterprise. That served a double purpose: supposedly the profits of gambling went to the state (presumably reducing taxes), and kept gambling out of the hands of criminals. However, though gambling is more popular than ever in Michigan, it has hardly served its avowed purpose. Those who can least afford to gamble, many on state aid, are the very ones who gamble the most. And illegal gambling has not been stopped through the sponsorship of official state-controlled gambling. On

the contrary, racketeers have taken advantage of the legal gambling to promote their own illegal activities. The *Grand Rapids Press* states:

Racketeers are using the Michigan lottery “daily” game to reap huge profits from an illegal \$250-million-a-year numbers operation, according to a Michigan State Police expert.

The system began shortly after legal “daily” game began in June, 1977, and has nearly as big a “take” as the daily lottery, according to Det. Sgt. Leroy F. Soeltner, a State Police criminal investigator.

It appears that the illegal lottery makes use of the winning numbers of the state legal lottery. These numbers of the legal game are announced daily on radio, t.v., and the papers.

Rather than putting gambling only in the hands of “legal” operators, Michigan has discovered that it is developing in its citizens a growing taste for gambling — and that illegal and criminal gambling is not eliminated — but rather is increasing. Well, so much for the theory that legalizing sin removes many of the consequences of that sin.

## Oops! A Nine-Billion Year Mistake!

The *Grand Rapids Press*, Nov. 29, 1979, reports:

Math Flaw Halves Age of Universe, Experts Say.

An apparent mistake in a mathematical yardstick means that the universe is only half as old as previously thought and could upset many theories about the evolution of the cosmos, astronomers say.

The three scientists who discovered the discrepancy say the heavens are only 9 billion years old, not 15 billion to 18 billion years, the usually accepted belief.

The rule in question is Hubble’s Constant, the number astronomers use to figure the distance between objects in space.



One astronomer at Harvard and two in Arizona found that the constant, which is the ratio of speed to distance, should be almost twice as large as previously thought.

"If the Hubble Constant is about twice as big as it was thought to be in the past, that means that the age of the universe has dropped down to 9 billion years," said John P. Huchra, a staff member of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

Furthermore, he said, "The distance to the furthest point in the universe is the velocity of light times the age of the universe. Since we have now scaled down the age of the universe by a factor of two, that means that everything is half as distant."

Amazing! The evolutionists were so firm in their insistence that the universe was 15-18 billion years old. Their theories, their measurements, all pre-

sumably were so convincing. The Biblical account could never be considered as accurate. Yet now, all at once, nine billion years can be chopped off the announced age of the universe. Suddenly, it is only half as old as earlier taught. How must one regard a theory that can so quickly and radically change its opinion about the age of the universe? Ought not such scientists begin to question other of their scientific theories as well — even the basic one of evolution? If nine billion years can be dropped, is it possible that there is no real basis for believing that the remaining nine billion years are not either a scientific nor accurate measurement of the universe? Could it not be said that just possibly the Biblical account of creation is true after all? But, of course, man regards the Bible as unreliable — certainly as far as scientific statements and theories are concerned.

## Question Box

*Rev. C. Hanko*

A reader asks:

"A friend of mine believes that Genesis 4:7 proves that God showed *favor* to Cain and therefore grace. If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? He likes to emphasize the word 'accepted.' Looking forward for your views in the Standard Bearer."

The incident to which the above mentioned text refers is the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. There were two reasons why God looked in favor on Abel's sacrifice. First, Abel took "of the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof." The sacrifice itself was pleasing to God, as is evident from the emphasis upon the firstling and the fat of it. Abel realized that he was a sinner and had access to God only through the blood of atonement. Second, as Hebrews 11 tells us, Abel brought a more excellent sacrifice *by faith*. God saw Abel's heart, saw the evidence of God's grace operating there, and God was pleased with the fruit of His own work in Abel. There were, on the other hand, two reasons why Cain's sacrifice was rejected. First, Cain took "of the fruit of the ground," as if he were presenting his own gifts to the Lord. Second, Cain brought a mere formal sacrifice, while his heart was far from God.

Added to Cain's sin was the fact that he "was very wroth" with God. He accused God of injustice. Cain could see no reason whatever why Abel's sacrifice should be accepted and his rejected. It is in answer to Cain's wrath that God vindicates His name and His honor. God assures Cain that He is no respecter of persons. He does not look at the external sacrifice, but He sees the heart. If anyone brings a sacrifice of love to God, giving evidence of his faith, he will certainly be accepted. On the other hand, God warns that anyone who sins becomes a slave to sin. Sin is like a hungry lion lurking at the door of one's heart, ready to pounce in and to destroy if but given the opportunity. Let the sinner beware, for God is just also in His judgments.

It is true that these words are addressed to Cain personally. But that does not change the idea. God assures Cain that "if thou doest well" the Judge of all the earth will declare that "well-done," and will accept that sacrifice. This does not mean that Cain was able to do well. Nor does it imply that God intended that Cain should do well. Certainly it must be granted that God does not give Cain the grace to do well, to believe, and to bring a sacrifice of faith. Also as far as Cain is concerned this is only a statement of



fact, maintaining God's justice. The purpose of God is to warn Cain of his wickedness. For the just and holy God visits sin with sin. If Cain continues in his wicked ways, defying God, he can only expect that sin like a lion will tear him to shreds and devour him. His end will be everlasting torment in hell. Cain must never be able to say that he did not know the justice of God.

Obviously there is no evidence of grace here, nor even of favor. Cain was not accepted, nor was he given the grace to be acceptable in the sight of God.

A reader asks:

"In recent years, the practice of cremation instead of burial upon death seems to be on the increase. Some reasons given for this are the following: It is less expensive; there is a lack of room for burial; the body turns to dust anyway.

"Would you please give some Biblical insight as to how Christians should view this."

The main Scriptural argument against cremation is the fact that the burial of the body of the believer has a rich symbolical significance.

Scripture compares the burial of the believer to the sowing of seed in the soil, awaiting the harvest. Our earthly bodies are the seed that is planted in the grave to break forth into its full power and splendor at the resurrection from the dead, when the entire harvest of the elect will be gathered in.

Thus, for example, Jesus says of His own death and burial, "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:34. Jesus' burial was another step in His state of humiliation. Jesus took His place among the dead of all the ages; His grave lies, as it were, in one line with our graves. Isaiah spoke of the fact that "he made his grave with the wicked." Yet because He had already conquered over the devil and hell, He marched like a mighty Conqueror through our physical death and our grave to complete victory. "He was with the rich in his death." Isaiah 53:11.

The Conqueror was worthy of an honorable burial along His way to glory.

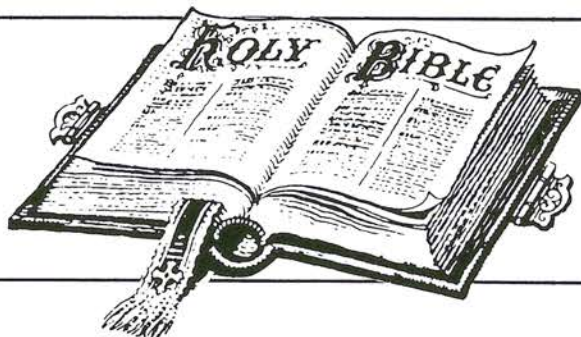
Christ's burial also serves as proof of His resurrection. The vacated tomb is a silent testimony that "he is not here, for He is risen from the dead." Moreover, Christ's burial has its significance for us, for as we are buried with Christ in Baptism, so we also are raised with Him in newness of life. Thus we read in Romans 6:4. "We are buried with him in baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Returning to the figure of the seed sown in the earth, we find that Paul speaks of our earthly body as sown in the grave ready, as it were, to sprout forth in the glorious likeness of the resurrection body of our Lord Jesus Christ. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness: it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." Scripture speaks of the believers' sleeping in their graves even while their souls rejoice before the throne of God, for our bodies will be awakened from death on that great resurrection Morning.

One can well understand that the unbeliever tries his utmost to deny the whole idea of a resurrection from the dead. Already when Christ arose and the tomb was left vacated the unbelieving Jews tried to say that the body of the Lord was stolen. Many prefer to have their bodies cremated, in order to try to prevent anything like a resurrection; or else they want their dust strewn over some favorite spot, in order to cling, as it were, to that spot even in death.

On the other hand, the believer insists on committing his body to the grave, to sleep in the Lord, awaiting the time when he will be awakened to be with the Lord forever. He cherishes the hope of the resurrection of the dead. Therefore he sees the rich symbolism of his grave and wants no part with those who favor cremation.

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## GUEST ARTICLE

## Bear One Another's Burdens

*Rev. R.G. Moore*

The people of God in our day live at a time of growing apostasy and immorality. It is a day of relative ease, on the other hand, in that the church undergoes no strong persecution. It is, therefore, a day of great temptation. There is a very real temptation to go to sleep — to turn our eyes away from our weaknesses and sins, in order to continue the so-called peace that we enjoy. The attitude of the world that everything is okay as long as it does not personally hurt another, is an attitude that the church is tempted to follow.

But those walking in the Spirit, the chosen, redeemed, and quickened in Christ are led by Christ's Spirit to hear anew Christ's admonition which is set forth in Galatians 6:1-3, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

In this article we will consider these words of our Lord given to us through the apostle Paul. Christ admonishes us to bear one another's burdens. At the outset, we must understand that the apostle is not speaking here of the burdens of poverty, sickness, etc., although it is true that God's children will also bear these burdens of one another. But the apostle speaks in particular of the burdens of sin, those burdens which result from sin and weakness.

Hence, we see the apostle speaking of a hypothetical case of a daily reality within the church. God's people are not yet perfect — although they are made new creatures in Christ, and are renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and seek in

hope and trust the promised eternal glory of fellowship with God. God's people in this life yet contend with the flesh and therefore with sin. This is our everyday experience.

Now sin disrupts the walk in the Spirit. It robs one of his hope and comfort. And sin disrupts the manifestation of the life in Christ. Further, sin is abhorrent to God and to His people. In short sin brings into the church of Christ deepest misery. Thus Christ, knowing His Church with a perfect and intimate knowledge, addresses His own as they dwell in the midst of this world. And He does so in order to give them strength in the battle of faith, and to give them the victory. He does so by calling us to bear one another's burdens — this especially in relation to the sin of a brother in the midst of the body of Christ.

Again we point out that Christ knows His church and He knows the devastating effect of sin upon His Church and His people. He bore God's eternal wrath because of it! Thus Christ instructs us that, when a brother or sister is overtaken in a fault, in a certain sin, we must restore him or her. It happens that members of the church do fall beside the way of truth. They walk in sin. And that sin affects other of God's people — the Church. This may be directly, in that the sin is committed against another member of the body of Christ. But it is always true generally that if a member of the body is hurt, the whole body is affected. This is a part of the devastating effect of sin in the Church.

The sin is not spelled out in the text, but because the term for sin speaks of a stepping beside the truth — thus to err, to sin — it can be the departure from doctrinal truth, or the forsaking of the truth in an ungodly walk. It is evident, also, that the sin spoken



of is not either one that is repented of, but is a sin in which one walks for a time impenitently (whether for a long or short time). Such sin disrupts the walk of the child of God in faith and robs him of comfort, confidence, and hope.

Thus it is a burden, a weight, that brings misery to the brother or sister. And this is true whether the one sinning consciously admits it or not. Sin opposes the Spirit, sin is natural, of the flesh, and it prevents a walking in the Spirit. This cuts off from the conscious fellowship of God and from the fellowship in the Lord in the body of Christ. It keeps one from the conscious enjoyment of all the wonders of grace.

Now, to emphasize, this affects not only the man that so walks, but the entire body of Christ. This is literally the case when sin is committed directly against members of the body of Christ, for sin drives a wedge in our fellowship and communion in the Lord. And this is an abomination to our God. But it is also true that a walk in sin by one member does harm to the whole body. For it always dishonors the Christ, Who is the Head of the Church. And it always does great harm to the one sinning.

Thus Christ Who perfectly cares for His people admonishes us to bear one another's burdens. Our text rightly pictures sin as a burden. It is a weight that brings trouble upon one! Hence, another's sin may never be an occasion for lightheartedness on the part of other members of the body of Christ. We may not laugh at or overlook the sin of a brother, and perhaps say, "that is his problem." For sin always brings one in danger of hell-fire. Thus indeed the sin of another brings deep concern for those of like faith in the body of Christ. And we are given by grace to see that the purpose of bearing one another's burdens is a matter of the love of God and the brother in Christ. The purpose is the deliverance of the brother from the terrible weight of sin and its curse.

Jesus imperatively tells us to restore such a one so departing. The term means literally to render sound or complete. Sin tears down the one sinning. It takes away comfort and strength — it leaves one weak. For the consciousness of Christ is removed by an ungodly walk. Peace of mind and soul departs! And this, if not checked, leads to greater distress and trouble. It brings often a breach even in the manifestation of the Church of Christ.

We are, therefore, called to restore such a one. That is, we are told by Christ that we may not leave the brother or sister who walks in sin alone. One may not turn his face away from the sins of others, for this will not restore. Nor may we merely talk about the sin of a brother, for this will not restore, but tends further to tear down! Christ commands us to restore the brother, to seek him out in the love of

Christ, and to care for him and remove his burden. We are to become involved, to restore him to his rightful place in the body of Christ. And our text makes it plain that this is not something that we might choose to do or not to do. Christ gives no choice in the matter to His Church. This His people shall do; anything else is displeasing to our God and His Son Jesus Christ.

But how? How can such as we, who are ourselves sinners, restore a sinning brother? Jesus addresses the spiritual ones. Obvious it is why Christ calls our attention to the fact that it is the spiritual ones that are so admonished (that is, those in whom Christ abides by His Spirit and Word). For naturally we would not, could not, bear one another's burdens. For the natural man stands in enmity against God and also against the neighbor. We are naturally creatures of pride and are filled with hatred. For natural man is totally, utterly depraved. This manifests itself in our natural seeking of *numero uno* alone. One naturally is not concerned with the brother, but delights in the destruction of the brother unto the exaltation of self. Naturally there is only a delight in the troubles of another, a delight in those who sin.

Hence Jesus also instructs His people, who by grace would hear Him. "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." The children of God are thus led by Christ, also when heeding His word in the way of grace — that is, to bear the brother's burden by restoring him that sinned — to confess they are nothing. This is necessity for those who would exhort, instruct, and correct the erring brother. Any other portion will keep us from the walk of love towards the brother. Our pride would prevent us! Only when we are brought by the Word of Christ to a deep understanding of our own nothingness, is it ever possible to go to the sinning brother with admonition. Jesus instructs us to bear the brother's burdens in meekness. Only as the Lord makes us to see our own sin, and the gracious deliverance in His blood, is it possible to speak of that deliverance with the brother walking in sin. And only then, as Christ fills us with the testimony of His Word, so that we rely only on His Word to quicken and correct the brother, are we able to go to him.

#### Only the Spiritual Ones!

And this spirituality comes wholly from without, only as Christ by His Spirit hath revealed unto us our sin by His Word! Only as He hath brought us down to the dust and ashes in contrition for sin! Only as Christ hath poured out upon us the bounties of God's forgiving grace! Only as He hath bound our consciences by His Word! Only as He has shown to us in our inmost depths the way of escape in His precious blood! Only as Our Lord leads us by His



Spirit and Word to know of Father's everlasting covenant faithfulness to save us who are sinners! Only as Christ convicts us and gives to us a contrite heart! Only then does His Church hear this admonition; and only then have they strength to bear the brother's burdens, and then with trembling!

But Christ is faithful, and by His Spirit He prepares His elect, and so enables them to care for the brother in his error and sin. Then in humility and by grace alone which abides in them God's children turn to the brother walking in the way of sin. It is only with the Word of Christ that we may turn to the brother. We know that all natural reasoning will not avail. We understand that we could use all of the natural examples in this world (of where his sin will lead him), and still it would be of no avail. Only in the way of confession of our own sin, may we approach the erring brother. And in this way taking the Scriptures in the deep attitude of prayer is one able to instruct and exhort. In the deep consciousness of that great love of God Who has sent His only Son to die for us while we were yet sinners, do we approach the brother in need. And our trust is that God is willing to use such frail means as we are, to save His church. Thus as Christ gives us the grace to so walk before him, the brother will be cared for. For the Word alone has the power to restore as Christ is pleased to apply it unto the heart of His wayward children. And together by grace are we drawn to the cross and salvation. Thus is restored the one walking in sin whom Christ is pleased to restore. May God grant us grace so to bear our brother's burdens.

God does hear this prayer of His saints. Christ gives His body the strength so to labor with the burdens of the brother; and so is fulfilled the law of Christ. This

too is the assurance of our text. The law of Christ is fulfilled. The law of Christ is the law as it is set forth in God's Word. It is God's Word to His church. The essence of the law Jesus set forth as the love of God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and the love of our neighbor as ourselves. The law sets forth the covenant relation between God and His people.

It is called the law of Christ in our text because it is the law which Christ realizes and fulfills. Christ alone, as the Head of the elect Church, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, walked before our God in harmony with the law. He in satisfaction of the law stood in our place before God, serving Him in perfect love as the obedient Son. He suffered in our stead the curse of the law against the disobedience of our sin. And, according to the law, in His self-sacrifice on the cross merited for us eternally a place in God's fellowship. The love required by the law He now works in the hearts of His children. He assuredly calls His body out of darkness into the light. Christ breaks the bondage of sin, and by His Spirit applies the law to the hearts of His people. He causes the word of God to dwell in His body so that they walk in the love of God and of their neighbor.

Thus our text says that by bearing one another's burdens the law of Christ is fulfilled. Not that we add to the obedience of Christ to the law or to its satisfaction. That is impossible! But thus is filled to the brim the law, in the sense that Christ simply accomplishes His purpose in saving the church. Christ's work and word is faithfully accomplished in those given Him. By His Spirit and Word He leads His church, giving us grace to bear one another's burdens, and thus in faithfulness saves His church. And so shall He lead us till the day He comes to bring us to glory when no longer shall there be burdens.

## IN HIS FEAR

# Continuing in the Fear of the Lord in Our Homes

*Rev. Arie den Hartog*

In our last article we discussed the subject of beginning our homes in the fear of the Lord. We emphasized how important it is to establish our homes in the fear of the Lord. It is in a sense, of

course, easy to vow when we begin our homes that we will fear the Lord. We are inclined to be as Israel in the latter days of Joshua when Joshua charged Israel to choose to serve the Lord God. To that



charge Israel could answer rather quickly, "We will serve the Lord." Joshua had to tell Israel, "Ye cannot serve the Lord: for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." Joshua 24:19. We must continue in the fear of the Lord all the days of our life. Especially in our homes we must grow and increase in the fear of the Lord. We shall continue in that fear as we grow in our understanding of the awful, perfect holiness and greatness of God. We shall continue in the fear of the Lord as we more and more understand our holy calling as the people of Jehovah God. We shall continue in that fear only when we understand how corrupt we are and how much we need the grace of God to serve Him and fear before Him. Sad to say, often our good vows and good beginnings are not continued. We can so soon forget the Lord our God and our holy calling before Him.

How often in the history of the children of Israel do we read that Israel forgot the Lord their God and departed from His fear. They forgot the Lord though they daily walked in the presence of His mighty and wonderful revelations, though they experienced daily His wonderful provisions. Israel again and again saw the wonderful, mighty power whereby Jehovah saves and protects His people. Israel lived in the land which God in His sovereign grace had given to them. Yet in spite of all of this they forgot the Lord and did not fear Him. They despised His revelations and trampled underfoot His Holy covenant. And we are so often so much like Israel. We live in great prosperity. We enjoy daily the wonderful benefits which the Lord provides for us. Above all we possess daily the wonderful benefits of salvation in Christ Jesus. We have the infallible Word of God which reveals unto us in a perfect and wonderful way Jehovah our God and our Savior in Christ Jesus. We have a so much more clear and wonderful revelation than Israel of old. God has given to us His Spirit whereby we know spiritually the mysteries of salvation and of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have the wonderful gracious covenant of God. Yet we too often forget the Lord our God. So often God is not in our consciousness, not in our hearts and not in our lives. We forget the awful holiness and righteousness of our God or we take this all so very lightly. We forget the holy calling that God has given to each one of us. We become carnal, our hearts are filled with lusts for material things. We become worldly. Our lives are patterned not by the law of God but according to the wicked world and after ungodly men. We see the way and the prosperity of the wicked. We say in our hearts, let us live like them, let us join with them in their wicked purposes and counsels. Let us do what is right in our own eyes. We think that God has no knowledge, He does not see our lives. Especially we think that God does not see us in the privacy of our homes.

The Lord must come to us again and again in His Word to tell us, "Remember that I am the Lord your God, I am the holy one your King, I am He Who has redeemed you, I am the God Who has formed you for Myself even for Mine own glory. Fear before Me, be holy even as I am holy."

How urgent it is for us to apply ourselves daily in our homes to the fear of the Lord. This is a spiritual activity in which we must constantly be engaged.

If we are to continue in the fear of God we must continue ever to remember Him. We must grow more and more in His knowledge. We must increase ever more in a living, spiritual understanding of the wonderful greatness and holiness of our God. We must ever remember who and what our God is. We must remember His sovereign power and greatness, His wonderful electing love. We must contemplate again and again His wonderful deeds and mighty acts as the God of our salvation. How often the Psalms do this! We must ever remember that, exactly because we are the people of Jehovah God, therefore we must be a holy and peculiar people unto Him.

To continue in the fear of the Lord means that we ever know how grievous our sin and corruption is in the sight of our holy God. This remembrance must daily bring us upon our knees to plead with God for forgiveness and mercy. To continue in the fear of God means that we ever remember the terrible judgments of the Lord upon those who turn away from Him, and the great blessedness of those who walk daily according to His commandments. To continue in the fear of the Lord means that we continue to strive with all our might to walk in a way pleasing to Him.

To remember God and continue in His fear we must continue in the diligent and faithful study of God's Word and in prayer. It is impossible to continue in the fear of the Lord if we do not have each day times when we study the Word of God. How terrible it is when our life becomes so busy that we do not take the time to study the Word of God. We must study the word of God as it is indeed the Word of God. We must not read the Word of God as a mere dead letter or as a book among our other books. We must study the Word of God as it is the living revelation of our God, as it teaches us how great, how wonderful and holy and perfect our God is.

To continue in the fear of the Lord we must continue in prayer. Surely not a day must go by that the Christian does not spend time in prayer. Through prayer we know again and again that our God is the living and true God. Through prayer we have daily fellowship and communion with our God. We must really pray. Our prayers must not be merely the mouthing of words and the repetition of cliches. We



must pray sincerely and earnestly to our God. We must consciously place our life each day in His holy presence. Through prayer we must seek each day anew the grace and the Spirit of God that is so absolutely indispensable if we are to continue in the fear of the Lord.

Absolutely essential for continuing in the fear of the Lord is to continue in the house of the Lord. In another article I would like to consider the whole subject of worshipping the Lord in fear. God commands us to worship each Lord's day in His house and there to learn His fear through the preaching of His word. Those who continue in the fear of the Lord are those who diligently frequent God's house, who understand that the worship of God is central for all of their life.

Through the Word of God and prayer we must learn again and again how we must order our lives in holiness and truth before our great and holy God. Day after day as we continue in our homes questions arise, problems come, decisions must be made, trials and temptations have to be faced. To continue in the fear of the Lord means that we constantly ask what the will of the Lord is for our life. Often before our marriage everything seems to be so easy. But soon conflict and trouble comes. In the world we see marriage after marriage breaking down soon after they are begun. The reason for this is because there is no fear of God with the ungodly. The God-fearing husband and wife constantly are asking, "What is our

calling as husband and as wife before God? How must we live in holiness with one another, in faithfulness and love, forbearing one another's weaknesses, forgiving one another's sins, encouraging one another, supporting one another. This we must do for God's sake."

How many important decisions are made from day to day in our homes. How easy it is for us to make those decisions on our own without regard to God and His Word. To continue in the fear of the Lord means that the Word of God is the infallible rule and guide for all our life. To continue in the fear of God means that God's will is absolutely decisive for our lives. We follow not the desires of the flesh, we are not motivated by carnal considerations but by what is for the glory of God and according to our holy calling before Him. Innumerable areas of our life in the home could of course be mentioned as practical examples. How we live, what we do, and what we do not do all must be determined by the Lord our holy God is we are to continue in His fear. How we conduct our business, how we spend our money, how we support the church and kingdom of God, how we bring up our children, what we do for entertainment, all these things and so many more must continually stand under the scrutiny of and be directed by our God and His Word. As we have said many times, we live in an age when there is so little true fear of God among men. May God give us His grace and Spirit that we might daily continue in His fear.

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## *SIGNS OF THE TIMES*

# The Last Time: How Are We Living?

*Rev. R. Flikkema*

The last time: how are we living? Are we living in these last times by partaking of the king's meat? Do we like the king's meat? Do we find that it is desirable and that it tastes delicious? If our answer to those questions is yes, then we, you and I, are simply not living in these last times as we should. To put it bluntly, if our answer to those questions is yes, then

we, you and I, are in deep spiritual trouble. We are in deep spiritual trouble. We are in deep spiritual trouble exactly because the Word of God to us today is that we may not partake of the king's meat. But rather, we along with Daniel of old must purpose in our hearts that we will not defile ourselves with the portion of the king's meat.



Yes, Daniel. Daniel refused to partake of the king's meat. Oh, to be sure, it was offered to him. Daniel, as we noticed last time, had been taken captive to Babylon's land. In Babylon's land he had been separated from his covenant parents and from the covenant education that he had received from his covenant parents. In Babylon's land he had been subjected to the godless learning and education of Nebuchadnezzar's court. In Babylon's land his name had been changed from a name that reminded him of his covenant God and the faithfulness that his covenant God had shown to him, to a name that reminded him solely of heathen gods and their abominable worship. And in Babylon's land he was offered the king's meat — The king's meat that consisted of the finest food in the realm: food that was fit and suitable only for the king's table. It was delicious food. It was food that was pleasing to the taste: food that, so to speak, would make one's mouth water. That food, that king's meat, Daniel was offered. And that word "offered" must be emphasized. Every day the king's servants brought that food. Every day the king's servants placed that food before Daniel. And having done so, they by that very action said to Daniel: Oh, Daniel, doesn't that look delicious! We have prepared for you the finest food in the realm. Doesn't it look delicious! Won't you try some? Just try it! See once if you like it! It won't hurt you! That food was offered to Daniel and offered to Daniel very forcefully. And that word "forcefully" must also be emphasized. It was not the case merely that Daniel could accept or reject that food if he so desired. It was not the case merely that Daniel could say to those servants when they brought him that food: No, I prefer not to eat of it. But rather it was the case, that no matter if he wanted to eat of it or not, he had to eat of it! The king, according to verse 5 of chapter 1, had "appointed" Daniel to eat of his meat. That is, the eating of the king's meat was that which was required of him. From the point of view of the king there was simply no choice in the matter: no ifs, ands, or buts about the matter. Daniel was required to eat of the king's meat, and that was all there was to it.

But Daniel, according to verse 8 of chapter 1, "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat." Daniel refused. Required of him or not, Daniel would not eat of the king's meat. And he told the king's servant so. He came to the king's servant and said to him very forthrightly and very pointedly: I may not eat of the king's meat. I may not. Instead of feeding me with the king's meat, give me pulse to eat and water to drink. And do not be afraid. Do not fear for thy life. I will be alright. My countenance will be just as fair and even more fair than the other youths. Do not fear that I shall look undernourished. Just do as I say and

give me pulse to eat and water to drink. I may not eat of the king's meat! And he did not. The king's servant, into whose favor God had brought Daniel, consented to Daniel's request. For ten days Daniel ate only pulse, and for ten days he drank only water.

Now you may say to yourself: Oh, how ridiculous! How utterly ridiculous! How utterly ridiculous Daniel was in not eating of the king's meat. Surely he could have eaten of the king's meat. There would have been nothing wrong with that. What could be so wrong for Daniel to partake of a good supper? Was not Daniel being just a little bit stubborn, just a little bit ridiculous, in refusing to eat of the king's meat? I say, you may say that to yourself. But I assure you that you, and I with you, will not say that to ourselves when we understand what that king's meat represented. Daniel understood very clearly what that king's meat represented. That king's meat that was served to Daniel was in fact the very same king's meat that was served to idols. It was meat that was served to idols! Meat was sacrificed to the idol gods of Babylon's land. Meat was consecrated and dedicated to the idol gods of Babylon's land. And a portion of that very same meat that was consecrated and dedicated and sacrificed to the idol gods of Babylon's land was the very same meat that Daniel was required to eat. Daniel knew that. He was fully aware of that. And even more, he was fully aware of what it would have meant if he had eaten of that king's meat. If he had not refused to eat of that king's meat, if he had eaten of that king's meat, that would have meant that Daniel recognized those idol gods to be gods, and not Jehovah! It would have meant that Daniel worshipped those gods, and not Jehovah! It would have meant that Daniel loved those idol gods, and not Jehovah! That is what that would have meant. And understanding what that would have meant, Daniel refused to eat of the king's meat.

And that simply means that Daniel, in harmony with his calling, the calling which is given to every single child of God, lived in Babylon's land an antithetical life. And that must be emphasized! Daniel, by refusing to partake of the king's meat, lived in harmony with the antithesis — the antithesis, which is always the battle of light overagainst darkness; the antithesis, which is always the battle of the Church overagainst the world; the antithesis, which is always that battle between God and all that which is not God; the antithesis, which is always the battle between Christ and Belial. That is the antithesis — the antithesis which always, which always, consists in the calling of the child of God to keep oneself unspotted from the world, the calling of the child of God to live one's life as a pilgrim and a stranger, fleeing that which is of darkness and standing firmly upon the side of Christ. That is the antithesis. And



that antithesis, that antithetical calling, Daniel lived when he refused to partake of the king's meat.

Do we? Do we?! Do we stand firmly upon the side of Christ? Do we? Do we live in harmony with our antithetical calling? Do we? Do we refuse to partake of the king's meat? Do we? That is the question. Understand well that the question is not: Do we teach the antithesis? Do we expound the antithesis? Do we emphasize the doctrine of the antithesis? Of course we do. We do teach and expound and emphasize the doctrine of the antithesis. We hear the doctrine of the antithesis taught and expounded and emphasized from our pulpits by faithful ministers of the Word of God Sunday after Sunday. We read about the doctrine of the antithesis from our printed pages, the pages of our *Standard Bearer*. Indeed, our Churches are known for their strong and forceful stand upon the doctrine of the antithesis. And we can only give thanks to God for that. But, you see, that is not the question. The question is not: Do we teach the antithesis? But the question is: Do we live the antithesis? Do we live it? That is the question. And understand well, also, that that is not my question. That is God's question. God says to you and to me: Do you, who are My people in these last times live the antithesis? Do you refuse to partake of the king's meat? Or do you, instead of refusing, partake of the king's meat? What is your answer to God's question?

Well you say: Certainly not! I do not partake of the king's meat. I would never do such a thing. I live in harmony with the antithesis. I keep myself unspotted from the world. I live as a pilgrim and a stranger. Really? I wonder. And the reason I wonder about that is simply because I know my own weaknesses. I look at my life. I ask myself the question: Do I refuse to partake of the king's meat? And much to my utter dismay I discover that very

often, much too often, I do.

The king's meat comes to us in the form of the pleasures and treasures of this life. It comes to us in the form of the godless entertainment of this life — its movies and its drama; its music, its godless music! Parents, have you asked your young people lately if they have attended movies? And I do not mean movies in the theatre either. I mean movies in the home on our very own television sets. Have you asked your young people what kind of music they listen to in their cars? I dare say it is not God-glorifying music, but rather the music of the king's meat. And, by the way, when you ask your young people that question, be sure and ask yourselves that question. Do you watch the same movies, the king's meat, right along with your children? To what kind of music do you listen?

That is serious business. It is serious business because this world, the world of Babylon's land, offers that king's meat to us. It does! As really as it did to Daniel of old, it offers it to us. Its word to us is: Here, partake of my pleasures and treasures! Here, partake of my entertainment and all the rest! It won't hurt you! It's not so bad! Just try a little bit! See once if you like it! It won't hurt you!

Do we? If you do, then you know by experience that just as soon as we try a little bit, we try some more, and some more, and some more, until pretty soon we are filled to overflowing with the king's meat. And the result, the inevitable result, is that we forget all about our calling. And having forgotten all about our calling, we forget all about our God. And that, I say, is serious business.

We may not forget about our God. We may not forget about our calling. We may not partake of the king's meat. Remember, these are the last times. But the question is: how are we living?

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

# Jacob Meets His Equal

*Rev. John A. Heys*

When Jacob appeared at the home of his uncle Laban, he was received in what appeared to be a warm welcome. From a natural point of view this would be natural, that is, the expected thing. Here was a relative whom they had never seen before, and who came from a far country. And indeed, with the means of transportation of that day, it was a far

country. And whereas we find pleasure in a letter from friends and relatives who live so far from us that we seldom if ever see them, certainly in that day, when there was no mail service or long distance telephone calls to make, it was quite a treat to have a close relative, who lived anything but close by, to drop in and pay a visit.



From a spiritual point of view this is even more delightful. Children of God say with the psalmist in Psalm 119:63. "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts." They have something in common. They may not have blood ties, but they have spiritual ties that are precious and cause them to seek one another in the truth. How true that must have been in the days of Jacob and Laban. Just try to imagine the situation with Jacob, he with his father and mother being an isolated little remnant of believers in the land of Canaan and surrounded by the ungodly — even having a profane person in the family in the person of the son and brother, Esau. And so it was also with Laban and his family, forming another little group of believers up in Haran with no connection at all with the believers down in Canaan, of whom they know, but have not heard since the days that Abraham's servant came for a wife for Isaac. It was a sincerely warm welcome we may be sure. It was a happy day when Jacob dropped in among them. And Laban's kiss was sincere.

All this does not mean, however, that there were not even then some thoughts in Laban's mind other than sincere joy of seeing a relative who belonged to his sister Rebekah's family. One does not get a good impression of him when Abraham's servant came for a wife for Isaac. We read in Genesis 24:29-31, "And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man unto the well, And it came to pass, when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man to me; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well. And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels." That earring and those bracelets had power over him, and the passage clearly indicates that Laban could be very friendly to those who displayed the wealth of this world. God Himself links up Laban's enthusiasm and speed to get to Abraham's servant with his observance of that gold and silver, that wealth of Abraham. And one cannot forget this when Laban bubbles over with eagerness to have Jacob stay there at his home.

What is missing is that Laban asks Jacob nothing about why he came, and that Jacob says not a word about his reason for leaving home. It is difficult to determine what it means when we read that, "And he told Laban all these things," Genesis 29:13, the last part. But when we do read in the next verse that, "Laban said unto him, Surely thou art bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh," it means that Jacob confirmed, by giving details of the family back home, that he was indeed a relative and a son of Laban's

sister. That he had to flee from the face of his own brother for his life, that he had deceived his blind father, and that he intended to stay a long time until his brother's wrath was gone, of these things Jacob breathed not one word. And Laban did not press him or even try to get out of Jacob the truth. He undoubtedly had his own opinion and a measure of curiosity as well. But he never asked Jacob, even after he had made an extended stay of a whole month. The closest he came to it was to suggest to Jacob that he work for his room and board. In the polite language of that day he says, "Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? Tell me, what shall thy wages be?" No doubt Jacob had helped a bit with the work. We may not assume that he was a lazy man, even though he lived such a sheltered life with his mother and was not a hunter such as his brother Esau. But Laban wants something definite. How long will this nephew stay? We had better get some kind of understanding before more time passes by. And it cannot be assumed that Laban knew nothing of Jacob's great love for his daughter Rachel. Jacob could not hide such an intense, deep love. He had deceptive ways about him and was a crafty man according to his old nature; but this love was deep and powerful, as is evident from the fact that he will work seven years for Rachel. Let it be noted also that Jacob made that proposition. Crafty and greedy Laban did not take advantage of Jacob in that respect that he made a deal with Jacob to give Rachel for seven years of work. Jacob set the span of seven years. It may well be that Laban would have been satisfied with less, since he intended to give Leah to Jacob. This was no last minute switch, thought up by Laban as the wedding day approached. No, remember how his eyes opened up when he saw the earring and bracelets that Abraham's servant had given to Rebekah? He was looking out for his own good and striving to take advantage of Jacob, whom he must have surmised was in some difficulty at home. And we must not be led astray by his polite, friendly making mention of the fact that Jacob is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. He was buttering Jacob up because he was, as Jacob took advantage of Esau's hunger and his father's blindness, ready to take advantage of Jacob.

But how amazing the ways of God! Jacob is now himself given to taste his own medicine. God is not mocked. One can get away with sin and deception before men, but never before God. And Jacob is given to experience what he in sin caused others to experience. God has sent Jacob to a man his own equal in cunning, striving to get the material possessions of another.

And how faithful God is to His promises. Jacob meets his equal, but in His grace, and not because of



any merit in Jacob, God is on his side; and that spells all the difference. God, Who had appeared to Jacob on the way to Laban's home, had promised to be with him and not to leave him. Genesis 28:15. As a result Jacob triumphed over Laban. "For by Thee have I run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall." Psalm 18:29. Laban will try more tricks, and the most despicable is that of substituting Leah for Rachel after the seven years were up. But God was with Jacob; and he increased in cattle and possessions to the hurt of Laban. Not by his cleverness, not by his tricks which did not work, namely the placing of rods from which he had peeled off some of the bark to make a variegated appearance before the flocks, with the idea that then they would conceive sheep that were speckled and spotted. It was an old wives' fable. It was a work of superstition because of Jacob's old man of sin, Most of the goats and sheep brought forth spotted and streaked or speckled offspring because God was with Jacob and did not forsake him, though he deserved it and more, that is, to be forsaken and cast off from being the one in whom the covenant line would be continued.

But as we said, that deed of letting Jacob think all these seven years that he would get Rachel, and then palming off Leah on him instead, was a most despicable thing to do; and in it Jacob met his equal, one equal in deceptiveness and tricky ways. Suppose it was the custom of the day to marry off the older daughter first, the question is not what is custom, but what is the Word of God? What is honest! Was it the custom of the land to promise one thing and to let a man work for seven years for what is promised and then not tell him till after the seven years are passed that this promise cannot be carried out? Away with the customs of the country, and let us bring forth the law of God, the law of honesty and love.

Why, even that arrangement to work for a daughter's hand was base and displeasing in God's sight. He does not give us daughters to sell! He gives us daughters to raise up covenant seed, and so we may have that blessing of which the Psalmist speaks, "Thou shalt see thy children's children" *in the new Jerusalem!*

It is true, very true that Jacob said that he would work for Rachel. It is also true that a father had invested a great deal in the bringing up of his daughter. Today the cost of having a child born in the hospital is staggeringly high; and Christian education is not for pennies. Clothing, food, and all that it takes to care for the physical and spiritual needs of a child is skyrocketing. And our only hope in it all is that "By Thee have I run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall." But was there not something in this for Laban as well? Was it a bargain that was one-sided so that Laban gets paid for feeding

and clothing Rachel; and now Jacob must pay him back so that he can have her as his wife? Would Laban not be gaining a son? Would he not have the joy of twelve grandchildren whom he could call grandsons, and one whom he would receive as a granddaughter? And since it is true that Jacob is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, should he take this kind of advantage of him? Is there not what the world calls the "Golden Rule" and Jesus presents as the law of God: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men do unto you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets"? Never mind the custom of your country, Laban; What saith the law of God?

And what must we say about Rachel at this point in the incident? Was she so silent and submissive to her conniving father — because she did not love Jacob? Was she quite content to let her older sister take this man who adored her so deeply and openly? Did Laban have to tie her down somewhere lest she rush into the tent and call to Jacob and warn him that it was Leah? We can only wonder — Scripture says nothing about it — but did Jacob have the same experience here that he caused his father to have? Did he at any moment say, in the darkness of the night in that tent, "The voice indeed is Leah's, but your father promised me Rachel; and I worked for her."

Was God using Rachel also to chastise Jacob for his deceit before his father? He has indeed met his equal in Laban, and by the grace of God could see himself as the sinner he was in God's eyes. And why not? Jacob and Laban came from the same corrupt root of Adam. And so did we. Is there any other kind of work that, in the light of Scripture's testimony, we could expect in Jacob? In Laban? In ourselves and in our children?

The truth strikes us here again with force, (and for that reason God included all this in the Scriptures) that there is no material in the human race out of which He can make and gather a church. He is not waiting to see whether we will let Him use us as bricks in that church. There is *nothing* in us that He can use as we are found in this world. No, we must and do become *new* creatures in Christ. We must be and are by God's grace born *again*. We must be and are clothed with Christ's righteousness. The cross must come, and on its basis Christ must return in the Spirit to put something spiritual in us that can be a part of God's church and that He will use to create a beautiful and perfect Bride for Christ. "Not of works, lest any man boast. (Ephesians 2:9,10) For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Salvation is by grace. Every bit of it, including our faith in God, comes from Him as a free gift.



*MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE*

## Letter to Timothy

January 1, 1980

Dear Timothy,

It is indeed true what the Psalmist says in Psalm 139: "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The more we ponder our own creation as we have come, by the hand of God, from the parents whom God has used to bring us into the world, the more we stand amazed at the complexity and wonder of our own nature.

We talked a little bit in our last letter about the unity of body and soul as God created us. We must still mention a few other things which belong to this general subject.

All the knowledge which we possess comes into our souls by means of our bodies. Our minds and our wills appropriate this knowledge because, through our senses, our sensory nervous system, our brain and the power of our souls, this knowledge of God's revelation is given to us. But the soul has other powers also. For one thing, the soul has what we could perhaps call an inner sensory system. I mean to say that we not only come to know, through the senses, the things in the world about us, but we have an inner sensory system which makes us aware of what goes on within us. This too is very complex and mysterious, but a very real fact of our life.

We can, by some mysterious and inner sense know about ourselves. We can, e.g., know that we are hungry and that we have need of food. We can know that we have pain somewhere and that something is not functioning properly in our bodies or that some sickness has taken hold of us. There is a very real condition which exists in our bodies, but through some sensory ability we can sense this and know that this is true.

But even more than this, we can know certain things about our soul. We can, e.g., know our moods and feelings. We are not only angry about something, but we can know that we are angry. We are not only disturbed in our souls about something that has happened, but we have the power within us to sense this disturbance and know that this is how we feel at the moment. We are always busy thinking and willing, but we can be aware of this thinking that is going on. We are aware and have knowledge of ourselves.

This is often called self-awareness or self-consciousness. This self-awareness is something which develops in a person in the early years of his life. He does not have it immediately when he is born. A little child, e.g., has little, if any, consciousness of himself. We even talk about the fact that a child is completely unself-conscious. We see him or her perform in a Christmas program in Church and his actions up on the platform are completely without any awareness of himself or that others see him. You have probably noticed that children often speak of themselves in the third person. Instead of saying, "I would like to go outside to play," they say instead, "Jimmy would like to go outside to play." This use of the third person is so common because they do not really know themselves yet as individual persons. A baby which looks at itself in the mirror does not have any idea that that image in the mirror is a reflection of itself. There comes, oftentimes, a moment when suddenly that child begins to understand that the image in the mirror is doing exactly the same thing which the child itself is doing. As the child ponders this and begins even to experiment a bit by performing different actions and watching what the image in the mirror does, the child suddenly begins to realize that that image is indeed a reflection of itself, and there comes the dawning awareness of the fact



that the child is a person in its own right. He (or she) suddenly realizes that he himself is a distinct and individual person. With this comes the beginning of self-awareness.

This is indeed a marvelous and wonderful power. The fact is that we are so used to it and it has become so much a commonplace part of our life that we scarcely realize it as one of the powers which our souls possess. But a little thought about it will soon remind us of how intricate and complex even this part of our life is. A tree does not have this kind of self-consciousness — although it is a living creature. Even animals do not have this — at least in a very large measure. God created the animals also in an ascending scale. Certainly the lower forms of animal life such as one finds in worms and mosquitos do not have, so far as we know, this kind of self-awareness. When one comes to higher forms of animal life such as is found in dogs and cats, there may be some dim reflection of what is found in man, for animals were created in the image of man just as men were created in the image of God. But the reflection is very dim and very imperfect.

But in man, this is a very great power. What do I mean, e.g., when I say that I am hungry? That is a rather simple statement, and yet it has many implications. If I am truly hungry then this simple statement means that my body does not have sufficient nourishment in order to continue to supply the energy which is needed to function in the tasks which God gives me to do. Certainly that is true, first of all. But it also means that some kind of sensation is created in my body — perhaps a sensation which is one of discomfort. And, without any doubt, it is a sensation which is unpleasant. But that sensation is something (perhaps those who study the body can pinpoint it more exactly) which exists objectively in my body in the same way in which the color of a rose exists objectively in the rose. Yet, just as I have eyes which can *see* the color of the rose, so I also possess some inner sense which can *sense* in some way this discomfort which arises from a lack of food. And, having sensed this feeling of discomfort, that feeling is transmitted to my soul so that my mind and will come to know about it. And, not only do my mind and will come to know about it, but my mind and will come to know and understand that I am the one who is hungry. With my eyes I can see hunger in other people, especially when it is evident in real starvation. But in this case I do not mistake what I see with my eyes concerning others with what is true of me. I know, not only that someone somewhere is hungry, but I know I am that one. And, coming to this conclusion, I can set about doing something about it.

Now all this is wonderfully complex. But there are

other aspects to this matter which we need to touch upon here.

I think the best way to get at what needs to be said is to point out to you that Scripture requires of us, in a certain measure, that we live lives which are characterized by self-forgetfulness. This is most clearly evident from the command of Scripture to love God with all our hearts and minds and souls and strength. And Scripture teaches clearly that the manifestation of love is always characterized by a certain forgetting of one's self. This is eminently true of God's love for us. When Scripture says that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16), then Scripture means, among other things, to say that God's love for the world was so great that He did not think of Himself or the great suffering which would be required of Him to give for us the gift of His Son to die on the cross for the sins of the elect. The price needed to redeem us was a very great price which God had to pay to secure our redemption. It was the price of the suffering of God's own dear and beloved Son. But because He loved us, He did not stop at the price. Love did not think of the tremendous price. Love went ahead and gave Christ for us.

When this love for us is shed abroad within our hearts and we are, by the gift of that love, enabled to love in turn, that love which becomes manifest in our lives must take on the same characteristic — though, of course, in a human and earthly way. Our love can never equal God's love. But the characteristic must be the same. When we love God, this love must be characterized by a certain abandon, a complete self-forgetfulness which reveals itself in obedience to God, whatever the personal cost. It must be a love which so completely absorbs us that we do not think of ourselves at all. If God commands, love impels. When, e.g., God commands a man not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, and obedience to this command requires that he leave a job, without any promise of another, because of entanglements with an ungodly worldly labor union, then if the individual ponders the matter because to leave his job will involve the possibility of insufficient money to provide for the needs of his family and finally refuses to leave his job because he is fearful of losing his income, then he has no love. He has thought about himself and his personal problems and has allowed these, rather than his love for God, to determine the course of his action. Abraham loved God so completely that he was obedient even when the command came to him to sacrifice his only son, the son of his old age. Love required nothing less. And to accomplish this there had to be this self-forgetfulness.

The same is true of our love for one another. Love



expresses itself in such a way that love forgets completely about one's own personal comfort, one's own desires, one's own inclinations. Love is so wrapped up in the good of the object of that love that, with this self-forgetfulness, one does all he can for the other. This must be true between husband and wife when they love each other in the Lord. This must be true of parents and children in the bonds of the covenant. This must be true of the saints mutually. And, ultimately, this must characterize our love for our neighbor always — whoever that neighbor may be.

Now, while all this is true, it also is true that Scripture calls us, in another sense, to be concerned about ourselves. We must love our neighbor *as ourselves*. We must take heed to ourselves — this is a very common injunction of Scripture. We must

engage in continuous self-examination, and we are called to engage in this spiritual exercise especially when we prepare to go to the table of the Lord.

So we have here a rather strange situation: we are called to a life of self-forgetfulness, and we are admonished in various ways to be busily engaged in thinking about ourselves, examining ourselves, and even loving ourselves. How can we harmonize these two?

There are some profound spiritual truths that are at stake here, and we must call attention to them. But we ought, I think, to wait until another letter for that.

Farewell.

Fraternally, in Christ,  
H. Hanko

## Book Review

**HET SCHARLAKEN KOORD**, by Cornelius Lambragtse. Uitgeverij T. Wever, R.V.; Franeker, Nederland.

This is the second religious novel from the hand of Cornelius Lambregtse, which was published in 1975 and enjoyed a reprint in 1976. Religious novels in America usually prove disappointing, but that is not the case with the two written by Lambregtse. Both carry a sound religious note.

Anyone who has read his first book, "In Zijn Armen de Lammeren," will want to read this one also, which deals with the same province in the Netherlands, the same village, and the same family. While in the first novel the dialect of the province at times made reading difficult for the Dutch American, this is remedied in the second. The first book dealt mainly with Fransie Westrate, his home training, and his early spirituality and death, especially as this death affected his mother and the rest of the family. This second book centers our attention on a daughter of the Westrates, Wantje, relating her happy and bitter experiences as she advances toward womanhood. Again the influence of her godly parents upon her spiritual life, particularly the influence of her father, stands out in bold relief.

Lambragtse's descriptions of the life of the community, the countryside with its birds and flowers, and other points of interest remain intriguing throughout. One enjoys God's handiwork, tastes the peculiar culture of the people, and is moved by the experiences of the family as he lives along with them. It is most saddening to follow the bitter trials of Wantje as she agonizes through an attempted rape, later suffers from a jilted love, and, worst of all, finds herself in the bitter straits of expecting a child out of wedlock. Yet the wonder of grace experienced by Rahab the harlot of Jericho, and expressed in the Scarlet Cord, enables Wantje to confess her sin publicly before the church, to stand alone as she presents her child for baptism, and comforts her in the assurance of God's forgiving mercies. This redeeming grace gives the babe an accepted place in the family. At the end Wantje marries a kind husband who becomes a devoted father in the newly established family.

I have one criticism, and that is that there is a graphic and rather crass description of the sex elements in the book. This actually adds nothing to the story, but rather detracts by being offensive at times.



## News From Our Churches

At the time this issue was 'locked up' for publication, no news had been received concerning Rev. James Slopsema's call from our Lynden, Washington church to serve as home missionary in the Northwest Washington area or concerning the call extended to Rev. Dale Kuiper to serve as pastor of our Hope Church in Walker, Michigan.

The consistory of our church in Redlands, California submitted the trio of Professor Robert Decker, Rev. John Heys, and Rev. James Slopsema for consideration at their congregational meeting scheduled for December 10. Since the original announcement of this trio, it has been changed twice. Rev. George Lanting replaced Professor Decker on the trio as Professor Decker would not be able to take a call until June of 1980 when his tenure as Seminary Professor comes before the 1980 Synod. A week later it was learned that Rev. Heys plans to retire. Rev. Heys was replaced on the trio by Professor Herman Hanko.

Our church in Hudsonville, Michigan has extended a call to Professor Homer Hoeksema to serve as 'minister-on-loan' in Christchurch, New Zealand. Professor Hoeksema is no stranger to the congregation in Christchurch, as he has had correspondence with them for some years. In addition, Professor Hoeksema and Rev. C. Hanko visited New Zealand on their far-eastern tour in 1975. It is interesting to note that Singapore was also a stop on that 1975 trip. Rev. den Hartog is now awaiting a work permit in order that he may begin his new labors as missionary in Singapore.

On November 11, First Church in Grand Rapids resumed church extension work in Bradenton, Florida. Rev. Bruinsma conducted Sunday worship services in the Manatee Hotel for four weeks. Attendance at the November 11 service was rather sparse, numbering ten souls. However, by the fourth week, December 2, forty-five people attended the Sunday morning service. Rev. Bruinsma was followed by Rev. G. Van Baren and Professor H. Hanko for two Sundays each. Rev. C. Hanko plans to spend January and February in Bradenton and Rev. Joostens the month of March. In addition to the Sunday worship services, a Wednesday evening Bible study class is held. Attendance at this class was

fourteen the last two weeks of Rev. Bruinsma's stay. The Church Extension Committee of First Church plans to sponsor two or three public lectures in Bradenton this winter.

Concerning the work in Florida, the Church Extension Committee had this to say in a newsletter to the congregation at First Church: "Our sister churches and their pastors have, for the most part, been most cooperative with us in this our church extension venture in Florida. At the present time we have commitments for supply some eight or nine months down the road. For this we are very thankful — for we believe that the availability of ministers for the work is already an indication of the Lord's blessing on this field of labor. Already last spring we were quite convinced that we had a place in Florida. Encouragement came in the form of letters — like the one from which we quote the following: 'This year we were privileged to attend church services under your sponsorship. We enjoyed every one of them and were sorry they came to an end. . . . We surely hope you will continue this program and hopefully establish a church in this community should you deem this possible after further consideration.'"

The consistories in our churches in Hull, Iowa, and Redlands, California have decided to add an additional elder to their bodies. This action was taken because of the size of the church and amount of work to be done by the elders in their respective congregations. The elders in Redlands also face additional work as their congregation is without a pastor at this time.

The Mr. and Mrs. Society in our Hull church has dissolved and formed a new society called "Christian Fellowship." Membership is made up of couples with a combined age of up to 70 years and single persons 35 and younger. The society is studying Professor Hanko's book "Mysteries of the Kingdom."

The Men's Society in our Loveland, Colorado church had two after-recess discussions on the topic, "What do the uprisings in Iran mean for the church today?"

K.G.V.