

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

A proper commemoration (of Reformation Day) certainly includes a rededication of ourselves to the great truths of the Reformation—the truths of the gospel according to the Scriptures and our Reformed creeds. It includes a rededication to the purpose and the sacred calling to proclaim those truths. And it includes a renewed dedication to strive for reformation in the churches today.

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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

Department Editors: Rev. Wayne Bekkering, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. David J. Engelsma, Rev. Richard Flikkema, Rev. Cornelius Hanks, Prof. Herman Hando, Rev. John A. Heys, Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek, Rev. Kenneth Koole, Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Rodney Miersma, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. James Slopsema, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Ronald Van Overloop, Rev. Herman Veldman.

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

Church News Editor: Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek  
1313 Wilson Ave. S.W.  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504

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

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

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## MEDITATION

## In the Matter of Baal-Peor

Rev. M. Schipper

*"And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. . . ." (For the rest of the text, confer Numbers 25:1-9).*

The preaching of the gospel, according to its divine intention, must prepare a people for the coming of the Lord.

That preaching, shall it reach God's purpose,

must be positive as well as negative. To be sure, it must be positive! It must declare all the truth of God's Word for the instruction in the way of righteousness. No doctrine may be neglected. But it



must also be negative! It must warn against the temptation to forsake the truth. It must show in no uncertain terms the pitfalls Satan and the world will lay on the path of God's people to destroy them.

Therefore from time to time the church must expect that the preaching will sound a warning. Not only will it sound an alarm respecting the evils of our time, but it will also show from sacred history, from history past, examples of departure from the truth into sin and corruption that was meant to be dinned into our ears, upon whom the end of the ages is come.

Such an example from history we have in the words of our text.

Amazing is this history which speaks of the sin of God's people who are about to enter the promised land. You might think that the closer Israel came to Canaan the promised land and the type of heaven, the holier that people would become. But such was evidently not the case, for it was then that they revealed themselves to be most corrupt. You ask, How can this be? And the answer is two-fold. In the first place, it must be remembered that Israel always dwells in the flesh that never wills any good thing, that never wants to go to heaven, and which, of course, will never go to heaven, for flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And, in the second place, it must not be forgotten that as the history of God's covenant in the world develops, the carnal element also increases in number, which number when it becomes a majority causes iniquity to abound.

Amazing, too, is the fact that the history referred to in our text is repeatedly called to our attention in the Scriptures. Hundreds of years after the historic fact the psalmist calls the attention of the church of his day to it (Psalm 106:28-31). "They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions: and the plague broke in upon them. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed..." Still hundreds of years later the prophets Hosea and Micah speak unto apostatizing Israel about to go into captivity, of this historic incident (Hosea 9:10; Micah 6:5). And, lest you and I should conclude that this history had only to do with some miserable Jews in the old dispensation that sinned to their destruction, we point out that this history is repeated in the New Testament more than once. Peter speaks of it in his second epistle (II Pet. 2:15), as does also Jude (verse 11). "Which have forsaken the right way and gone astray following the way of Balaam . . . ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward . . ." And if you are inclined to conclude (falsely, of

course) that Peter and Jude were writing to the church of two thousand years ago, let me point out to you that this history is prophetically set forth in the letter to the Church in Pergamos (Revelation 2:14) where the Lord Jesus is describing the condition of the church as it reaches to the time of His second coming, and therefore most significantly for us. Listen to what He says: "But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication."

Make no mistake about it, the history recorded in our text was written for us, upon whom the end of the ages is come. And when we write concerning the matter of Baal-peor, we are calling attention to history that repeats itself, and is therefore related to us.

To be noticed, first of all, in connection with the matter of Baal-peor, is Israel's sin.

Israel's sin, as described in the text, was occasioned by Balaam, the son of Beor. Balaam, we remember, lived in Mesopotamia. This is the land to which Abram and his family moved after the Lord first called him in Ur of Chaldees. After the Lord called him the second time to go to the land He would show him, the relatives of Abram remained in Mesopotamia. Terah, Abram's father, and Nahor, Abram's brother with his family, these all remained in the land. This most probably accounts for the fact that Balaam knew so much about Jehovah and reckoned so much with the doctrine concerning Jehovah in his prophetic utterances; while we know that Balaam loved not Jehovah, but the wages of iniquity, and used his knowledge for his own advantage.

We recall also how Balak, king of Moab, called for Balaam to curse the people of God, who now appeared a threat to the very life and well-being of his nation. Balaam, with an outward show of piety, replies that he cannot come without Jehovah's permission, nor can he utter anything but what Jehovah shall put in his mouth. Balak entices him with silver, gold, and high honors; and finally Jehovah also permits him to go to Mount Peor, only to pronounce the blessing upon Israel, not the curse. Balaam, however, after his dismissal by the king of Moab, was not satisfied to let the matter rest. As we learn subsequently (Numbers 31:16) he gave instruction to the king of Moab as to how he can bring a curse upon that people Israel. Let Balak cause the fair daughters of Moab to entice the young men of Israel to commit fornication. And because such fornication was related to the worship of Moab's gods, Israel would be brought to worship the gods of the heathen. This advice of Balaam was



followed by the king of Moab. And so, we learn in the text: "they (the daughters of Moab) called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods . . . and Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor."

Israel joined to Baal-peor!

Peor, of course, stands for Mount Peor from which Balaam could only bless Israel with prophetic utterances; but Peor also becomes the place where Israel merits the curse.

Baal was the common Canaanitish male god, the son of El, the father of gods and head of the Canaanite pantheon. Baal was the farm god, reputed to increase the family, the field, the flocks and herds. In one word, Baal was the god of material prosperity. Animal sacrifices, ritualistic meals, and licentious dances accompanied the worship of this heathen god. And close to the temples for worship were constructed houses for prostitution both for males with males, and males with harlots. An attraction it was to the carnal nature of the children of Israel. The urge became magnified when the sin is clothed in religious garb. Then the temptation works that leads to the conclusion: it is good to sin.

That Israel joined himself to Baal-peor meant that what the majority of Israel did according to the lust of the flesh, they did purposely, with evil intent. Not only was Israel enticed as Balaam suggested they would be, but they willingly gave themselves over to this sin. Mind you, this evil is magnified when you consider the fact that Israel sins with better knowledge, and that, too, just when they were about to enter the promised land. Understand well, not all Israel fell for this sin; for as we will see in a moment, some, the remnant according to the election of grace, are found weeping at the door of the tabernacle. But when the majority becomes carnally minded, you witness the awful depravity of which human nature is capable. Such is the description of Israel's sin. But there is more!

We must also pay attention to this sin in its bold defiance. This became evident in the example of that Israelitish man who came into the camp with that Moabitish woman.

That we may never forget them they are mentioned by name. Zimri, the son of Salu, prince of the chief house among the Simeonites; and Cozbi, daughter of Zua, head over a people and of the chief house in Midian. These two were not therefore of the so-called scum of society, but of the elite of both Israel and Midian. Had they been of the so-called scum, one might conclude that they did not know better, or that their environment was largely the cause of their depraved act. But the Scripture makes the point of clearly identifying them to show that they knew what they were doing. What they

did was in open defiance of all that is called holy and refined.

Mind you, the man of Israel brought the Midianitish woman into the camp of Israel. This cannot be interpreted in any other way than that he openly defies the strict mandate Jehovah had imposed upon His people, namely, Israel shall dwell alone. This was the divine intention as Moses had interpreted it when the Lord called him to lead Israel out of Egypt, the house of bondage. "For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth" (Exodus 33:16). Later Moses declares, "Israel then shall dwell in safety alone" (Deut. 33:28a). And even Balaam prophesied: "From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9). But in defiance of all this the young man of Israel brings the heathen woman into the camp of Israel. A devilish attempt to make Israel lose its distinction, its separatistic character. Then he commits fornication with her. Not bad enough was it that the Israelites went into the camp of Moab to commit fornication; here he takes the woman into Israel's camp to commit his sinful act.

In the sight of all the congregation!

You must see it with me: this was done purposely, in open defiance. Not with shame would he commit his act in some secluded and secret spot, but openly, before the eyes of all, that all might witness what they were doing.

Before the eyes of Moses, the God-appointed leader and saviour of Israel, as if to say to Moses, See what I think of the law of God which you gave us. You have imposed upon us the stringent rule of Jehovah: "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" but I say unto you that I hate that law of God, and I'm going to violate it now before your very eyes.

Before repentant Israelites, who were humbled before God at the door of the tabernacle. Here, indeed, was the remnant according to the election of grace who had not followed in the sin of Israel to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. When they saw the wickedness of Israel, they fled immediately to the tabernacle to pray for mercy upon Israel. But this defiant young Israelite virtually says to this repentant people: You silly ones! This is what I think of all your fear of God.

Unbelievable wickedness!

One stands amazed at its audacity!

Yet it is not so amazing when you consider that these are the depths of sin into which the carnal seed will fall apart from the grace of salvation.



And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. He orders Moses to behead the leaders. He brings a plague upon Israel whereby twenty and four thousand were slain.

In the midst of this dispensation of God's holy wrath rises up one who was zealous for his God, one who would defend His righteous prerogatives: Phinehas, of the priesthood of Aaron. Taking a javelin in his hand, he followed the wicked pair into the tent and slew them both while they were in the act. We learn later in the chapter that Jehovah exalted him for his righteous deed by giving unto him His covenant of peace forever. So, the plague was stayed.

What must we learn from this history?

In the first place, we learn that the doctrine of Balaam is still with us today, and that it will con-

tinue to the end of history.

In the second place, we learn that apostasy will continue even until the Lord comes in judgment to slay all the wicked, and that apostasy will not only be realized through an enticement to forsake the cardinal truths of the Scriptures, but also through the enticement to fornication, such as Balaam proposed.

And, finally, we learn that there will always be the remnant according to the election of grace. That remnant not only rushes to the door of the tabernacle to confess Israel's sin and to plead for Jehovah's mercies, but, like Phinehas, rises up when the majority falls, to stand zealously to defend the cause of Jehovah in the world. That remnant shall be exalted, and that remnant shall enter the Canaan of rest.

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## EDITORIAL

# Reformation Day, 1980

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

The day previous to the publication of this issue was Reformation Day.

Various bulletin announcements in our churches which came to my attention in the past few weeks made it plain that the day was not passing by unnoticed, but was, in fact, receiving considerable attention. And this is good, provided that our commemoration of this date—connected with the occasion of Luther's nailing his theses to the door of the castle-church at Wittenberg in 1517—is more than a kind of nostalgic remembrance of the great Reformation of the sixteenth century. A proper commemoration certainly includes a rededication of ourselves to the great truths of the Reformation—the truths of the gospel according to the Scriptures and our Reformed creeds. It includes a rededication to the purpose and the sacred calling to proclaim those truths. And it includes a renewed dedication to strive for reformation in the churches today.

And all of these, you understand, are matters not for one day out of the year, when perhaps we remember to pause and give some thought to the matter; but they are matters for constant attention on the part of God's people individually and on the part of the church in the midst of the world. In fact, it is safe to say that unless they are indeed the object of our constant attention and striving, we will

lose our Reformation heritage, the call for reformation will have a hollow sound, the claim to be children of the Reformation will become mockery, and the work of reformation (as far as we are concerned) will be a failure.

If Reformation Day, therefore, may serve as an occasion to remind us of our on-going calling and task, its observance will be salutary. To help it serve as such a reminder these few lines are dedicated.

Certain, first of all, no one who has his eyes open to the ecclesiastical situation today can doubt the need of Reformation. Whether one looks at the Reformed community or the Presbyterian circle, let alone looking at the ecclesiastical scene at large, whether one looks at the North American scene or looks across the sea to the countries where the Reformation had its origin, the picture is not encouraging. It is not a picture of return to the fundamental truths to which the Reformers were used of God to call the church back to the old paths. The opposite is true. Turn where you will, whether in the immediate Reformed community or outside of it, the picture is one of DE-formation, of decline in both doctrine and life. Anyone who reads the religious magazines and journals of today will have to testify to that fact. There is little love of the Re-



formed faith, still less knowledge of it, and still less adherence to it, as well as almost no willingness to fight for it and to sacrifice for it. Even among so-called "concerned" people and forces within various denominations, most often the battle lines—if they are drawn up at all—are drawn up not over specifically Reformed truths, but about rather vaguely evangelical and fundamentalist issues. In most instances one has to "search with a candle" for the Reformed truth.

Occasionally there may be some half-hearted and half-way measures toward reformation. There may be here and there an attempt to emphasize the so-called Five Points of Calvinism without embracing the whole of the Reformed faith. And even the latter attempt is frequently weak, and often compromised by a hedging with respect to particular atonement or by an adherence to the principally Arminian notion of a well-meant and general offer.

And there are those who are even sometimes optimistic that eventually the truth of the gospel will triumph and that there will be a great revival and return to the faith. But this is whistling in the dark.

What is our calling as Protestant Reformed people and churches in that situation? What is the calling of any truly Reformed church?

Shall we give up? Shall we say, "What's the use? The situation is hopeless"?

God forbid! For then we are not true sons and daughters of the Reformation. Did a Luther or a Calvin give up, even in the face of overwhelming odds?

No, we shall labor wherever the Lord opens a

door, to the end that the ever-abiding remnant may be gathered.

But to do that we must be constantly vigilant that we ourselves remain Reformed, in the first place. The temptation is always present to compromise with respect to the truth, to file down the sharp points and edges for the sake of being more popular, more palatable, for the sake of getting a reception. But we must remember that to the extent that we give up and lose our Reformed distinctiveness, to that same extent we lose both the right and the ability to call people and churches to reformation. We must by all means and at all costs keep our distinctive Protestant Reformed heritage.

In the second place, we may well remind ourselves of our calling to maintain that heritage *antithetically*, that is, with rejection of all heresies repugnant thereto. Is it not striking that in the Formula of Subscription, which all officebearers must sign, you find not only the positive vow "diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine," but also a solemn promise to militate against error? It reads as follows: "We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine, and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned synod (the Synod of Dordt), *but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the Church free from such errors.*"

These notes must be heard constantly in the preaching on the Lord's day and in the catechism room where the children and young people of the church are instructed.

Otherwise we cannot remain "Reformed, and always reforming."

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## CONVOCATION ADDRESS

# Getting the Principal Thing

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

Mr. Chairman, Theological School Committee, colleagues of the faculty, students, and fellow saints in Christ, God calls us together tonight to begin another session of our seminary. Frankly I am rather excited about this year. We have new students this year in both the seminary and pre-seminary departments. Among them is a student from our friend and neighbor the Free Reformed

Church in North America. We trust that he will find his study with us profitable and blessed. Unless I am mistaken, for the first time in our history we have a foreign student, Mr. Lau Chin Kwee, from Singapore. This means that our usefulness and influence are expanding beyond the sphere of our own Protestant Reformed Churches. God is giving us work to do that will have effect not



only for our churches but for churches and saints on the other side of the world. For this we are and ought to be very grateful to God.

But this makes our calling at the seminary that much more serious. This is true especially in view of the theological environment in which we work. Liberalism, modernism, neo-orthodoxy, it makes little essential difference what one calls it, has won the day. That's true even of Reformed churches and seminaries both in this country and abroad, especially in the land of our fathers. It grieves us to have to say it but it is true and we have to work with that. Many seminaries at best have become schools for the training of scholars and professional theologians. The result of this is that a new hierarchy or priesthood has arisen in protestantism, the professional theologians who place themselves between the Scriptures and the people of God. The result is expressed in lament of the Prophet Hosea, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Our calling is crucial. We must expound the holy and infallible Scripture, teach and maintain the truth as systematized and summed in our Reformed confessions. We must always submit in child-like faith to the inspired, infallible Word of God. We must defend the traditions of our fathers: Calvin's Calvinism, the Reformed faith. We must do all of this in order that pastors and teachers may be prepared to shepherd God's flock through preaching and pastoral care at home and on the mission field. We need men who will declare the whole council of God publicly and from house to house. Our students, therefore, must study and learn and be convicted of the Reformed faith and of the necessity to preach it in all of its power and beauty. In all of this they must be motivated by the compassion of the Great Shepherd for the sheep. Finally, if they are to do that they need the wisdom of God. That is what is needed to shepherd God's flock. That, therefore, they must be getting in the seminary; for wisdom is the principal thing. This is what the Scriptures teach us in Proverbs 4:7: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

What is wisdom? The term in the text means: intelligence or knowledge or skill. A wise person has knowledge and is skillful, that is, he is able to use the knowledge. The word "understanding" is a further explanation of the idea of wisdom. It means discernment or perception. Wisdom is to perceive, apprehend truth, reality and to be skillful in the use of that truth. For wisdom is to know the truth and adapt oneself to it so as to live in harmony with it.

That wisdom is found first of all in God. God is the God of infinite wisdom, the all-wise ever blessed God. God is that because He is omniscient, He knows all things. God knows all things because

He determined all things in His council. He determined the goal or purpose of all things, the glory of Himself in the saving of the elect in Christ. Thus in His wisdom God determined the way to reach that goal. He created all things by and for Jesus Christ so that in all things Christ has the pre-eminence. God determined the way of sin and grace, of death and the cross and the resurrection. In His wisdom God makes everything work for that goal. He upholds and governs the entire universe and all of history to reach that goal, His own glory. This fundamental truth of the Word of God is denied by every heresy which plagues the church in our day.

Wisdom in us is to know God and His truth and to order our lives in harmony with God. Wisdom is to know all that God has revealed of Himself and of the world which He created and governs. It is to know God's purpose for that world and the world to come when our Lord returns at the end of the ages. We are wise when we live according to that knowledge of God, when we are in harmony with that reality. Wisdom is always practical. Wisdom implies that we conform or adapt our living so as to be in harmony with God. Jesus gave us the perfect illustration of that in His Sermon on the Kingdom in Matthew 7:24-29. In this passage our Lord tells of the wise man who built his house upon the rock. This man knew the reality of wind and rain and acted accordingly in the building of his house. When the wind and rain beat upon that house it stood, for it was built upon a rock. The foolish man built his house upon the sand. Though he knew the reality of the wind and rain he did not reckon with that reality, he did not conform and adapt. Thus when the wind and rain beat upon his house it fell. The application Christ makes is this: the wise man is the one who hears and does My word; the man who hears the sayings of Christ and does them not is a fool. That, therefore, is wisdom. It is to know God and to live in harmony with God. That man is wise. Very simply put, as Jesus said, it is to hear and do the word of God. Psalm 53 says that the fool says in his heart there is no God. The fool does not say that because of ignorance, for God is everywhere revealed in His creation, even His eternal power and godhead. No man can claim ignorance of God; no one can escape the knowledge of God. In spite of that, he says there is no God. That is why he is a fool. He refuses to reckon with God and to order his life to conform to God's revelation.

That wisdom is the principal thing! Wisdom is the chief thing. We do not mean to minimize scholarship. But the fact is that one may know all kinds of theology. He may even have a thorough knowledge of the Bible and be able to expound the Scriptures skillfully. But if he does not know God



and does not do that word of God he is a big fool. On the other hand, one may lack formal training in theology and have very little intellectual power and ability. But he knows God to be his Father for Jesus' sake. He knows God to be everything and he lives that way. That man is truly wise. Wisdom is the principal thing. This is where everything must begin and this is where everything must end, in the wisdom of God. This is the one thing that matters. Nothing in this life has any value or meaning or purpose apart from the wisdom of God. This is preeminently true of our work in the seminary too! All of our lecturing and exposition of the Word of God, all of our learning and acquiring of homiletical and pastoral skills means nothing apart from wisdom. The fool with all of his knowledge and education, his skill, his wealth and fame goes to the place of fools, hell. He that is wise has the ornament of grace and the crown of glory according to verse 9. The wisdom of God is the principal thing.

Therefore, get wisdom. This means, very simply: lay hold of it, grasp it, learn to know wisdom, make it a part of you. Live according to that wisdom. The context tells us how: by refraining from evil and pondering the paths of our feet. By living and walking in the ways of God and not entering the path of the wicked we live according to the wisdom of God.

But how are we to do that? How are we to get wisdom? In a sense we do not have to get it for wisdom is the gift of God's grace to His children in Christ Jesus. Christ is the wisdom of God. Christ reveals God to us especially in His cross and resurrection. Upon His ascension to glory Christ poured out His Holy Spirit to guide us in all the truth and to strengthen us to live according to God's Word. By that Spirit we have been born again so that we see and know God. And we have already been instructed in the Word of God from infancy in our covenant homes and schools and churches. By the grace of God we manifest the wisdom of God by hearing and doing the Word of God in our lives. Still the Word of God says: "Get wisdom." The meaning is: grow in it, increase in God's wisdom.

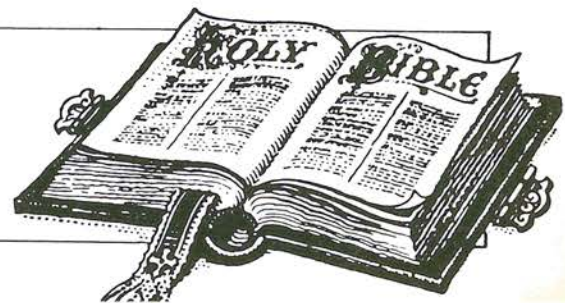
This means we must know God's Word. Therein is the wisdom of God revealed, and only therein.

This is our unique and blessed privilege in the seminary, to be busy all of the time in all of the courses with the Scriptures. Seize that opportunity and learn to know God's Word in order that you may be wise. At this point I wish to repeat what I said in my pre-seminary graduation address last spring. Seminary is not something incidental to your life, it is your life! The ministry of the gospel to which you students aspire is not just a profession among others, just a job. It is not even a matter of putting in much time and effort. The ministry of the gospel demands a total life commitment. Hence your calling is to study diligently and to work hard. You may not be a lazy or do slipshod work in the seminary. God does not need or want lazy ministers in His churches. God wants men who are competent, committed to the faith, and, above all, wise. God wants men who are willing to die for the Reformed faith after the manner of many of our fathers. Be faithful and diligent in your studies for the sake of the truth, for the sake of the churches, for God's sake.

That is what you need for the ministry. A minister needs many gifts. He needs a thorough knowledge of the Word of God and the ability to expound the Scriptures as they apply to the lives of God's people. He must, the Bible tells us, be apt to teach, patient, gentle; he must have the love of Christ in his heart. But the principal thing he needs is the wisdom of God. If with all of those gifts he is a fool, he cannot effectively shepherd God's flock. He needs wisdom to feed and nourish and to rule and guide the people of God. God says to you in His Word tonight: get that wisdom.

That is the calling of the professors as well. They must be wise. They must faithfully and with diligence expound the Scriptures, defend the truth over against all heresy repugnant to it. They must instruct the students from the Word of God in the skills which they need as pastors and teachers for God's flock. They must live lives that are worthy examples of the wisdom of God for the students to follow. In the way of faithfulness to this calling the seminary will prosper, the faith of our fathers will be preserved, and the churches and mission fields will be blessed with men of God who are wise shepherds of the sheep. God's name will be praised. May God in His mercy grant it.

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## ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

# Movies Portray Real Life?

One often hears, in excuse for the horrible sins portrayed in the movie and television, that one must present "real life." Adultery, fornication, murder—all these are "real life." Yet the desire to portray "real life" stops at the point of religion. This fact was pointed out in a news release in the *Grand Rapids Press* of Sept. 6, 1980:

A church film producer and critic says "movies these days reflect almost every aspect of life and death but seldom do they deal with an experience common to millions in every age—religious faith," except to spoof it.

The Rev. Robert Lee, film producer for the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. and film reviewer for a radio series sponsored by the council and the Episcopal Church, says most Americans believe in God and pray, especially in situations of fear or extremity but he adds:

"Movies censor out this reflection of real life more often than no."

Also, although 40 percent of the U.S. population worships each week, movies rarely depict worship except occasionally as a "comic interlude," he says. He says clergymen, when depicted, usually are shown as negative stereotypes—"inept, blundering, prissy or vain and fuddy-duddy."

Script writers "seem to have been seduced by secularism to the point of embarrassment at including bona fide religious moments," he says.

That presents an interesting point. If the movie and drama in general are so terribly concerned about

presenting "real life," why is the vast majority of presentations about the most horrible sins? The hypocrisy of the claim of presenting "real life" is rather obvious. The only "real life" the movie industry is interested in is the kind which titillates, the kind that attracts an audience which enjoys portrayals of the grossest forms of adultery and murder. This industry is not interested in "real life," but rather in the godless life. Yet some "Christians" condone this sort of thing.

On the other hand, were the movie industry to portray religious scenes, even apart from the "negative stereotypes," we should strenuously object. How can an industry, dedicated merely to profit and entertainment, comprised, as far as one can observe, of the greatest of unbelievers, portray any kind of religious scene? Would not such portrayal be stench in the nostrils of the Almighty? What Christian could find pleasure, entertainment, and much less godly instruction, in such presentations? I trust that none would.

Which brings one to the point: on what basis can the Christian enjoy the film industry presentations (I would refuse to call this "film arts")? If the religious can not, will not, (and from God's viewpoint, may not) be presented; and if what is presented almost inevitably involves the glorification of violations of God's laws; how can the Christian find a seat within the theatre or in front of the TV to see this?

## A New "Means of Grace"?

Some reports and decisions of major church bodies are being presented in the various religious periodicals. One shocking example of the direction in which churches are going can be seen from a report presented to the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada. (*Christian News*, June 23, 1980):

An Anglican Church report says it's time to drop "conventional prissiness" and the habit of "passing by on the other side" because of the growing number

of couples who live together without being married.

The report upholds the traditional view of marriage but takes a much more positive view of "living together" than any previous study by the Canadian wing of the 65-million member worldwide denomination.

It says that some forms of informal cohabitation can be sacramental and a "means of grace" for the couple involved. It distinguishes between various kinds of living together and says that where "free consent and sexual consummation" are found in the context of a



life commitment, a marriage already exists "in substance" if not conventionally or legally.

...Bishop Geoffrey Parke-Taylor...said in an interview that the church in the past had fallen into the trap of being overly condemnatory.

"There are a lot of anachronisms in our attitudes; more and more people are living together without formal marriage and the sooner we face this reality the better. But we walk a knife edge on the issue. If we condone such relationships, we're seen as too permissive; if we're rigid and judgmental, we turn people away just at a critical time when they need our ministry."

...Although the church has traditionally limited the word "sacramental" to church weddings, the report says:

"In an age when devout Christian men and women are found living together without the official sanction of marriage, we know from their experience that they minister God's grace to one another."

God, the report says, is not confined to his sacraments, nor is the sacrament limited to the church's actions and thoughts.

"We must be prepared to marvel in silence when we see that he can make common law marriage' on occasion a means of grace."

The authors go on to say they would like to see all such relationships officially sanctioned, "but God's action does not require our sanctions."

...Appended to the report is a series of "pastoral cases" suggested for use in group study of marriage and related problems. One of these postulates a case of a minister who is cohabiting with a Christian woman and has applied for a church position for which he is eminently qualified. The questions are:

Does it matter if the position is that of a parish

minister, a chaplain to an institution or a church administrator?

In your consideration, how important is his domestic situation?...

The action of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada was reported in the *Presbyterian Journal*, Aug. 13, 1980:

The General Synod...did not know what to do with a formal study report on the general subject of marriage, divorce and living together. The problem was that the report condoned the common practice of living together without benefit of marriage.... Among the clergy who favored the report's findings was the Rev. Gary Patterson of the Caledonia Diocese who said he found the report "exciting and realistic." Others were critical. Professor Donald Master, of Guelph University, a layman, said, "I find it absolutely incredible in a day of slipping morals that the church should approve of something which many heathen would not accept." The Synod, uncertain as to what to do, referred the report to the House of Bishops "for further study."

That such reports could be presented is itself shocking. That those who write such a report are not themselves subject to the discipline of the church, is almost inconceivable. That a church body does not forthrightly reject and repudiate such a report seems impossible. There is, evidently, no study of Scripture in this regard. There is no concern with the clear and unmistakable testimony of Scripture against adultery and fornication. Rather, sin is termed a "means of grace" under certain circumstances. The concern seems to be that the church appear neither too "permissive" nor too "judgmental and rigid." This is the sad consequence of denying the infallibility of Scripture.

## Submit—or Else!

The *Christian News*, June 23, 1980, reports also the action of Presbyterians where the ministers are told to accept women in the ministry—or resign.

Presbyterian Church ministers opposed to women clergy have been given 10 years to change their minds or get out, the 106th General Assembly has decided.

The assembly meeting in Windsor also decided to ban from now on the ordination of anyone opposed to women clergy. The ruling requires Presbyterian ministers to cooperate fully with female elders and clergy, but will not—until 1990—force them to take part in ordaining women themselves.

The church, which has 166,190 adult members, decided to ordain women in 1966 but about 15 percent of its 993 ministers are adamantly opposed to the move.

The long-simmering controversy came to a head here when delegates to the assembly debated the "test case" of 'Daniel MacDougall of Bridlewood Church, Toronto.

Mr. MacDougall, after receiving his theological training, asked to be ordained, but, in so doing made it clear he was opposed to women clergy and could not in good conscience participate in such ordinations.

The East Toronto Presbytery refused to ordain him



and so did a church board of appeal.

...The motion outlining the 10-year deadline for dissidents contained a clause permitting Mr. MacDougall to be ordained but imposing the ban on ordination of anyone opposed to women clergy....

So, ordination of women has come to the full cycle. First, there is permitted ordination of women into the offices of deacon and elder. Later, women are allowed to be ordained into the ministry. All this is presented as a "voluntary" sort of action. But

soon, when the "liberal" has seized firm control, there is no longer "voluntary" action, but it becomes compulsory. The Presbyterian Church appears to moderate its decision by allowing the ministers 10 years during which to "see the light." Yet one sees the mark of the anti-christian church—the "church" which demands of its ministers and members to subscribe to that which is plainly contrary to the Word of God. We'll be seeing more of this, doubtlessly, in the future.

## THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

# Clowns, Jesus, and the Preaching

*Rev. R. Flikkema*

It is 9:30 A.M. on a Sunday morning. God's people, and you with them, are all seated together in God's house of worship. You are all prepared to worship and serve your God by singing praises to His name, by reading His Word, and by hearing the voice of the Great Shepherd of the sheep speak to you through His herald, His official ambassador, your minister. And you are very eager for that too. Anxiously you await the moment for your minister to come through the door onto the platform and before the pulpit. Anxiously you await the moment when your minister will say, "Beloved in our Lord, hear now the Word of God. Thus saith the Lord."

But in the midst of your preparedness, in the midst of your eagerness to hear your minister preach the Word of God to you, you have a very uneasy feeling. On this Sunday morning you sense that something is wrong. Very wrong! There is in the air a new sound, a strange sound, one which you are not used to hearing. It began already when, instead of hearing the organist play some fitting organ music, a versification, perhaps, of one of your beloved Psalms, which in the past always served to place you in a mood for proper worship, you heard a song the words of which were familiar a few years ago: "Be a clown! Be a clown! All the world loves a clown!" And having heard that, you say to yourself: what in the world is going on? And, even more, you ask yourself that question when your minister does walk through the door and does stand before the pulpit. He does not look at all like your minister. Instead of wearing a nice suit befitting the office of the ministry, he is wearing some baggy clothes. Instead of having his hair combed and in place, he is wearing a brightly

colored wig. Instead of having his face washed, he has his face full of makeup. You look at your minister in disbelief! Why, you say to yourself, he looks like a clown, and he even acts like a clown! Look at him! He has just jumped off the pulpit! He is going through the aisles passing out popcorn to everyone! He is even giving a piece to me! And now look at him! He is riding a bicycle, the wheels of which are all bent up, up and down the aisles! Am I in church, or am I in a circus? Maybe I have come to the wrong place!

Recognizing those thoughts in your mind, and that look of disbelief on your face, your minister jumps up on the platform once more and he says to you: "Perhaps you are wondering what in the world I am doing. Perhaps you are wondering why I am dressed like a clown, passing out popcorn, and riding a bicycle with bent up wheels up and down the aisle. I am a clown. That is what every Christian and particularly every minister should be. Don't you know that? Never again will you see me on this pulpit wearing a minister's frock. Never again will you see me preaching from this pulpit a sermon of forty-five minutes or so in length. From now on I am going to be a clown. And if you want to know why I am going to be a clown, turn with me to the Word of God in Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. There you read in the third chapter, the eighteenth verse, 'Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.' 'Let him become a fool, Paul says in that verse. And still further, turn with me to what the Apostle Paul says in the fourth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, verse ten. 'We are fools for



Christ's sake,' Paul says in that verse. That is why I am dressed like a clown. That is why I act like a clown. I have become a fool for Christ's sake."

Perhaps, having read this article thus far, you are beginning to think to yourself, what a farfetched bit of nonsense Rev. Flikkema is writing. I never read anything so ridiculous in my life. To think that I would ever see the day when my minister shuns his minister's frock and dresses up like a clown! To think that I would ever see the day when my minister passes out popcorn and rides up and down the aisles of my church on a bicycle with bent up wheels! To think that I would ever see the day when my minister justifies his clownish appearance and actions by quoting the Word of God in I Corinthians 3 and 4. What nonsense!

Yes, what nonsense! But, nevertheless, what I have written is not nonsense in the sense that it does not take place. It does take place. In *Time* magazine's September 1 issue in its department on "Religion" you will find an article entitled "Becoming Fools For Christ." And underneath that title you will find a subtitle which reads "Clowning as an aid to holy ritual and service." If you have *Time* magazine in your homes, you ought to read this article. But if, however, you do not, allow me to quote some pertinent excerpts from the article.

On the darkened stage, a white-faced clown with bulbous nose, orange woolen wig and baggy red-and-white costume sits at a table reading a large book marked *Bible* (emphasis mine-R.F.). He eats from a box of popcorn as big as a milk crate. Beside him two mimes in blue leotards do their silent best to act starved. When the clown notices, he merely makes the sign of the cross and calmly resumes reading and eating. Now a large banner unfurls upstage saying FEED THE HUNGRY! At last the clown gets the message and hands small bags to two members of the audience, with gestures to indicate that each is to put a piece of popcorn into the mouth of his neighbor and embrace him, then pass on the bag so the neighbor can do the same. Soon the audience of 200, nearly all dressed as clowns, is busy munching and embracing.

As an explanation for the above, *Time* has this to say.

It was not a bizarre come-on from Barnum and Bailey. Not at all. The 200 clowns were a congregation. The popcorn passalong was part of a two-hour Christian Communion service conducted entirely in mime and gesture by the Rev. Floyd Shaffer, the red-and-white clown, who is really a Lutheran minister from Roseville, Mich.

For our Michigan readers, that brings this type of thing close to home. Concerning the "theological justification" for this new ministry, the article goes on to say:

The clergy clowns find a theological justification for their unusual ministry in the injunction of St. Paul to

the Corinthians to become "fools for Christ's sake" because God has "made foolish the wisdom of the world."

As proof, therefore, of this clown ministry they cite the Apostle Paul. Interesting it is to note, however, that they do not only cite the Apostle Paul, but they also cite the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Concerning that fact the article says:

They discern multilayered analogies between the clown and Christ: the clown's joy in living and mimed delight in simple things, like the scent of a flower, for instance, recalls Jesus' command to "consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." The simplicity and child-like persistence of the clown can have a special meaning for Christians. "The clown refuses to accept the limits of the possible," explains Tim Kehl, a professional clown and magician who is also a United Church of Christ minister. "A clown will insist on riding a bicycle whose wheels are out of kilter or trying to walk a slack tightrope. Sooner or later he will succeed—to the great delight of the audience. *The resurrection of Jesus is the supreme example of God's refusal to accept the limits of the possible*" (emphasis mine—R.F.). Through love, the clown, like Jesus, can transform the ordinary into the sacred.

And, finally, as proof of the fact that this clown ministry is by no means small in numbers, I submit the following quote:

Today there are 3,000 clown ministry groups in the U.S. who put on big noses and suits of many colors in order to serve God.

Sound good? Is this type of ministry, this, what I called in the beginning of the article, "a new sound," a proper thing to follow? Do the arguments, the proof, in I Corinthians and in the life and ministry of Jesus sound persuasive? Concerning the passages in I Corinthians, it is not the intent of this article to say a great deal. The only thing I want to say is that anyone who uses those passages of the Word of God as proof that ministers, as well as God's people, should dress up like clowns, simply does not understand those passages of the Word of God. He simply does not! Concerning the proof of the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is also not the intent of this article to say a great deal. There are, however, two remarks in that connection that I do want to say. In the first place, when I read this article it struck a very familiar note. As I read this article my thoughts immediately went back to my high school years. I remembered a chapel exercise that we were required to attend. It was a film. It was a film about a clown who went about doing good things for the people round about him. But in the end no one understood this clown or appreciated the good things that this clown did for them. And because they did not, they hanged him. That's right. They hanged him! Or was it that they crucified him? It



really makes no difference. The point is that this clown was supposed to represent Jesus! Jesus, according to that film, was that clown! And that brings me to the second observation that I want to make, and that is this. I took exception to that film which represented my Savior as a clown then. And I take exception to that film and any other person or organization representing my Savior as a clown now. Jesus was no clown! A clown, according to my Webster's dictionary, is by definition, "A clumsy, boorish, or incompetent person. A performer who entertains, as in a circus, by antics, jokes, tricks, etc.; jester. A person who constantly plays the fool, makes jokes, etc; buffoon." That according to Webster's dictionary is what a clown is. I submit to you that Jesus was not clumsy! He was not boorish! He was not an incompetent person! He did not entertain people! He did not play the fool! He did not make jokes! He was not a buffoon! But on the contrary, He was the Savior, the Son of God in our flesh Who preached the good news of salvation to those whom the Father had given to Him from all eternity, and Who preached everlasting damnation to all those whom the Father had not given to Him from all eternity.

And the point is, He preached! And so also does He command every single one of the men whom He has called to stand before God's people in His

house on the Lord's Day. He commands them to preach. Not to be clumsy! Not to be boorish! Not to be a bunch of incompetents! Not to be a performer! Not to play the fool! Not to make jokes or be a buffoon! But to be a preacher and to preach! And woe unto the preacher if he does not do that! It is by the preaching, the God-ordained means of the official proclamation of the Gospel, that God saves His people—not by a bunch of clownish actions. Those who want to quote the Apostle Paul ought to read what the Apostle Paul has to say in I Corinthians 1, verses 16 to the end. The one word of the Apostle Paul in all those verses is: preach. Preach for it is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Preach "lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." Preach for "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." If you want to talk about foolishness, then all you have to do is preach. To the ungodly world, preaching is foolishness. But not to God. To God, preaching, a minister standing upon the pulpit and saying, "Thus saith the Lord," is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

But the so-called church today does not like the God-ordained means of the preaching, and in its place has set up a bunch of clowns. Is that a sign of the times? To be sure. He that hath an ear, let him hear.

## IN HIS FEAR

# Worshiping the Lord in Godly Fear and Reverence

*Rev. Arie Den Hartog*

Worshipping God is the highest of all religious obligations and experiences. We are commanded to worship God. This is the solemn obligation which God has placed on every man. We ought to consider worship our most important duty toward God. It ought to be the very heart and center of our life. We must worship the Lord in holy fear. Especially must it be evident that we are a god-fearing people by the attitude that we have toward the worship of God. We must say with the Psalmist, "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple." We as Reformed people believe that God is absolutely sovereign. A sovereign God is One to Whom belongs all

worship. He is One to Whom belongs all praise and honor and glory and adoration.

In past articles we have considered the fact that the proper fear of God is the heart of true Christianity. But there is today very little fear of God among men. Sadly this fear of God is absent also from many Christian churches. We too must ask ourselves whether we truly fear the Lord. If we are indeed a people who fear God this must be evident in our worship of God.

To worship God means that we come consciously into His presence and bow before His feet with fear and trembling. When we worship God we acknowledge God as the Sovereign Almighty God, the



Creator of heaven and earth and all they contain. To worship God means that we stand in awe of His perfect holiness and righteousness. It means that we receive in our hearts and souls a profound impression of who and what God is and that we exalt and praise His great and holy name. To worship God means that we give unto Him wholehearted praise and thanksgiving for all of His wonderful deeds and mighty works. It means that we acknowledge Him as the source and fountain of all blessing and as the only sovereign God of our salvation.

We are commanded to worship the Lord. This is not merely something that man may take a light attitude toward; it is not something which he does according to his whim and fancy. It is the command of the Lord God Himself. The first commandment of the law commands us to worship the Lord. "It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). We are commanded to worship God because He is the Lord our God. We are the creatures of His hand. In Him we live and move and have our being. In the worship of God the Psalmist says, "Know ye that the Lord He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves" (Psalm 100:3). We are commanded to worship God because He is Jehovah the Sovereign God of our salvation. He says in His law, "I am the Lord thy God who hath brought thee out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage."

We must worship God with fear and trembling, with holy reverence and awe. We fear before Him because we know what a great and terrible God He is. We fear before Him because we know what He has done in days of old and what He continues to do as the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. We fear before Him because we know that He is holy and therefore a consuming fire to all workers of iniquity. We worship Him with fear, knowing that He demands that men love Him with all their heart and soul and strength and mind. We know that God hates any deviation from His holy law. We worship God with great fear for we know that His salvation is entirely of His sovereign grace and mercy alone. Nothing whatsoever can we ourselves bring into His presence. We worship God in fear because we know that by nature we are worthy only of the wrath and displeasure of this great and terrible God. It is only of His mercy which faileth not, that we are not consumed. We worship the Lord with fear because we know that none can stand in His presence save those who come through the blood of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. To worship the Lord in fear means that we stand trembling at the foot of the cross, we dare not enter into God's holy sanctuary save in the shadow of the cross.

With a deeply spiritual attitude and disposition

we must worship God and not with the carelessness which is so characteristic of much of the worship of our day. We must worship God in Spirit and in truth. We must not worship God out of mere custom or form. God abominates mere form worship. It is hypocrisy which is stinking to His nostrils. Only that which is true spiritual worship and holy is acceptable unto the Lord. Only that worship which is in harmony with the Word of God is acceptable unto Him. All our thoughts and actions in the worship of God must be controlled by what He has revealed of Himself in His Word.

We must worship the Lord with fear and trembling, especially in His house on His holy day. Indeed we must also worship Him in our homes at His altar. But especially are we commanded to worship the Lord in His sanctuary. We are commanded to do this. That is the main reason why we must go to church from Lord's Day to Lord's Day. If we are god-fearing we will consider it a very serious matter when our seat in church is empty. To stay home from the worship services, for a reason less than that God in His providence keeps us from going there, is a refusal to worship Him and a manifestation of a lack of the fear of God.

We go up to the house of the Lord there to dwell in the holy sanctuary of the Lord, in His presence. God dwells in His house in the cloud of His glorious presence. No, this does not mean that God dwells in temples made with hands. There is no special holy significance to the church buildings in which we worship. The Lord is pleased to dwell in the midst of His people through His Word and Spirit. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there I am in the midst of them." There is indeed a real spiritual presence of God with His people on the Lord's Day. We must be profoundly conscious of this as we worship God in His house. We must worship God in fear and trembling as He is pleased to manifest Himself among His people through the means of the preaching of the Word and the use of the holy sacraments.

We must be profoundly conscious of the fact that the Word which is preached on the Lord's Day is not the word of men but the Word of God Himself. Of course, the preacher must be earnestly faithful, that he come as a true spokesman of the Lord and not with his own words. But also when we in the congregation hear the Word, we must be like the saints of Thessalonica for which the apostle Paul gave thanks. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believeth." When the Word of God is preached in church we must do as the words of



Habakkuk 2:20 tell us. "But the Lord is in His Holy Temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him." To keep silent before the Lord means that not even the slightest inclination against the Word of God arises in our hearts. It means that we say with our whole heart, "What the Lord says, that we will do." When we hear the Lord speak to us through His Word we rejoice at the wonderful God of our salvation. We give thanks unto Him and exalt His name for all of His wonderful greatness and goodness.

To worship the Lord in fear means that we attend carefully unto the law when it is read. We do not listen to it as merely a necessary, routine, formal part of the worship service. Each time the law is read we allow our hearts to be searched and all our sins to be discovered. In fear and trembling before the holy God we acknowledge and confess our great sin in His sight. In fear we repent in deep humility. In fear we make a sincere godly resolve to walk in a new and holy life.

The god-fearing man is evident in the offerings that he brings unto the Lord. He is deeply conscious that the Lord sees him and knows his heart when he brings his offering. The god-fearing man knows that he cannot in any way repay God for all His benefits. But he knows that God is sore displeased when men bring niggardly offerings unto the Lord, when men have great abundance and give only precious little. The god-fearing man knows that God loves the liberal and cheerful giver.

The god-fearing man can be heard in his singing. That does not mean that he can necessarily formally sing more beautifully than the man who does not fear God. It does mean that he sings to the Lord with zeal and with the heart. He does not merely mumble the words in a laborious way. He sings with the heart to the Lord in praise and exaltation of His great and holy name.

The god-fearing man can be seen in his prayer unto the Lord. He bows in deep humility unto the Lord, pouring out his heart and soul unto the Lord with exaltation and thanksgiving, supplication and confession. He prays earnestly with and for the people of God. The congregational prayer is not a

time for his thoughts to wander to the cares of this world. Rather this prayer is a time when he is knit together heart to heart with his fellow worshipers and when he has close and dear fellowship with the Lord his God.

If we truly worship the Lord in fear it will be manifest in all our actions and all our attitude about worship. It will be manifest even in things which are in themselves small yet important. It will be manifest in our seriousness about preparing to come to the house of the Lord. We will indeed spend time in serious prayerful preparation. When Israel came to the mount of the Lord it was commanded of them that they should sanctify themselves lest the wrath of God come upon them. When we come to the house of the Lord we sanctify ourselves through faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The fear of the Lord ought to cause us even to prepare ourselves physically and mentally that we might be alert to hear the Word of the Lord. In the fear of the Lord we come to His house with expectancy to hear His Word. The fear of the Lord brings us to the house of the Lord in time for us to spend time in prayer and meditation before the worship service. The fear of the Lord makes us attentive to the preaching of the Word. Surely we do not fall asleep under the preaching of the Word for we know that this is a most dreadful affront on the name of the God Whom we worship. A more total ignoring of the Word of God and more godless attitude in the worship service than sleeping in the presence of God is hardly imaginable. In the fear of the Lord we teach our children also to sit still in church and to listen to the preaching of the Word. We teach them that, according to the promise of His covenant, God is the God of His people and of their children. Even our dress is an expression of the fear with which we come into the house of the Lord and the high reverence and honor we pay unto our God.

Is it indeed evident in things small and great that we are truly god-fearing people when we worship the Lord in His holy tabernacle? Surely the Lord is honored only by such a spirit of worship.

## **BIBLE STUDY GUIDE**

# **Matthew — The Gospel of the Promised Messiah (1)**

*Rev. J. Kortering*

Among the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, God has seen fit to include four gospels:

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Three of these gospels are known as the synoptics, Matthew,



Mark, and Luke. They are called that because they take a general view of the ministry of our Lord. The authors either witnessed personally or had access to oral tradition or written material that dealt with this history. They wrote concerning this with a certain purpose in mind. John, the other gospel writer, is not concerned about such an overview, but rather writes concerning certain aspects of the spiritual nature of Jesus' ministry. The Lord Jesus instructed us about witnesses: "in the mouth of two or three witnesses that every truth may be established" (Matt. 18:16). The Holy Spirit gave us four witnesses concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ. The truth is thereby firmly established.

### THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

Since we are concerned with the gospel of Matthew at this time, we have occasion to raise what has become known as the synoptic problem. Briefly and simply stated this problem focuses upon the differences between the synoptic accounts. All three authors deal with the same events, same teachings, same historical settings, yet each one writes differently in certain instances. A careful comparison (such as a harmony of the gospels) indicates these differences. Take the sermon on the mount as an example. Mark makes no mention of the sermon at all. Between the other two synoptic accounts, Luke mentions that it took place on a level place (Luke 6:17), and Matthew says Christ went into a mountain (Matt. 5:1). Matthew's account includes much more detail than that of Luke (Matt. 5-7 as compared to Luke 6:17-49). There is a difference in the selection of words that Jesus used, e.g., the beatitude recorded in Matt. 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," whereas in Luke 6:20 we read, "Blessed are ye poor for yours is the kingdom of God." Some commentators suggest that Matthew and Luke refer to two different instances, yet the consensus among conservative Bible students is that there was only one sermon preached and that Matthew and Luke refer to the same one. The question is brought up, how these gospel accounts can be considered reliable when such differences are evident.

In the pursuit of answering this question, many books have been written and scholars have researched many fascinating details to come with plausible explanations. Without getting into the realm of the technical, we summarize a few of the considerations that have been set forth. First, our faith in the Holy Spirit's authorship allows for such individual recording of the gospel accounts. We reject a mechanistic view of inspiration (the Holy Spirit simply dictated the words to the authors) and hold to the idea of organic inspiration (the Holy Spirit used each author with his own personality,

writing style, vocabulary, etc.). The point is that the Spirit so overruled the writing that the differences that are contained in them were intended by the Spirit. They did not creep in as human errors or the like. Secondly, the same thing would apply to the possible use of secondary materials. By this we mean that the authors consulted other writings in connection with their own writing. Some see evidence that Matthew and Luke relied upon Mark's gospel when writing their own accounts. In addition, mention is made that Matthew used another source called the "logia." Generally, the "logia" refers to writings that Matthew was to have made when he was a disciple of Christ and that he wrote these in Aramaic. Some say these writings are the same as what we now have in the gospel of Matthew, that they were simply translated from Aramaic into Greek. Since this is much disputed, the only valid point is that, whether the authors used secondary material or not, the Holy Spirit overruled such use so that the end product was clearly the Word of God and free from human error. The same thing would be true of "oral tradition" or witnesses which contributed to the content of the gospel accounts, Luke 24:46-49. Thirdly, we can understand that different authors might write differently about the same event. Each one saw what the Holy Spirit wanted him to see from his own perspective. For example, the reference to the sermon on the mount preached on a level place or in a mountain can easily be reconciled: Christ went up into the mountain and sat down upon a level place within the mountain. Similarly, the use of words may vary without error. Matthew refers to "poor in spirit" while Luke speaks of "poor." The intent is the same though the words differ. Finally, each author wrote the gospel with his own Spirit-filled purpose in mind. To attain this purpose, each wrote concerning the events that best fitted that purpose, and wrote in such a way that would communicate it so that the reader could understand. Instead of thinking in terms of inner contradiction, the believing Bible student will marvel at the wisdom wherewith the Holy Spirit led each of the authors to write his own account. When placed side by side these convey an accurate and complete message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### THE AUTHOR AND DATE

The gospel of Matthew makes no direct mention of the author. The only internal evidence is that in the list of the disciples in Matthew 10:3 he is called, Matthew *the tax collector*, perhaps a reference to his unworthiness, while Mark, Luke, and John only refer to him by name. The author wrote as a Jew for Jews. The gospel presumes knowledge of Jewish customs and way of life. Mention is made of such things as "bringing thy gift to the altar" (Matt.



5:23), "phylacteries" (Matt. 23:5), or "whited sepulchres" (Matt. 23:27).

There is no dispute concerning Matthew's being the author. He is the publican (Matt. 9:9-13). He is also referred to as Levi, the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). We read nothing of him after Acts 1:13 where he is listed as one of the disciples in the upper room, waiting for the Holy Spirit. The early New Testament church and the early church fathers accepted Matthew as the author of this gospel. This certainly is a tribute to the power of the Holy Spirit and of grace that took a "publican," most notorious for their way of sin, and made him a vessel fit for writing the Holy Word of God.

In trying to determine a date for the writing, a few things enter in. The 24th chapter, which records Christ's teaching concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, must have been written prior to A.D. 70 since there is no reference to the event having taken place. Besides this, the gospel breathes with a spirit of concern for the spiritual welfare of the Jews (the great theme of Christ as Messiah) while at the same time expressing joy in the complete gathering of the church including the gentiles (Matt. 28:19, 20). It was properly suited to the needs of a church such as Antioch, which needed the proof of Messiahship for the Jews, but also the great gospel ministry for the gentiles. Taking this into consideration, the date can well be placed between A.D. 60-70.

This means that the first gospel which we find in our Bible was not the first New Testament book written. The following books more than likely were written before Matthew: James, Galatians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Corinthians, Romans, Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians, I and II Peter, and Mark. The question might arise why Matthew is placed first in our New Testament Bibles. The church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit was led to select which books were to be included in the inspired canon of Scripture. Similarly, we may believe the Spirit led them to arrange the books as they did. The general orderly progression of the message of the gospel can be learned by reading Matthew through Revelation. The ministry of Jesus is recorded, the spread of the gospel through the ministry of the apostles, the letters of instruction to the early church, and finally the

return of Christ and the kingdom of heaven. Within this structure, Matthew takes its place at the beginning. First, it begins with the generations of Jesus Christ, much like the Genesis of the Old Testament. Second, his concern is for the Jews to believe that Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy, a beautiful transition from the Old Testament. Finally, the message concerns Jesus as the Messiah Who was long promised to the people of God. The New Testament begins on such an exalted note.

#### THE CENTRAL MESSAGE

As we approach the first book of the New Testament, we ask ourselves, What must we look for as we read it? What purpose does God have in writing it? In answering this, we consider the following.

First, Matthew is not a biography of Jesus. God does not tell us what we may call "human interest" features. We do not learn a "life of Jesus." This is not the purpose; and if we should anticipate this we will be disappointed.

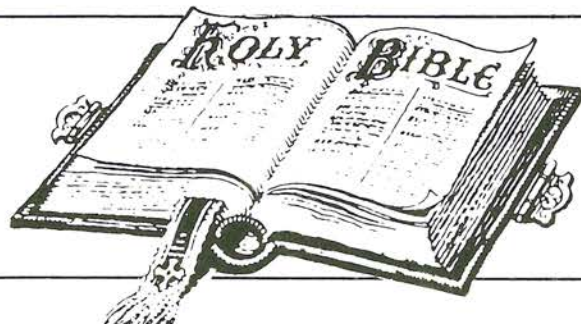
Secondly, we do not mean by this that the gospel of Matthew does not have historical detail. There is much history in this account. The record of Jesus' birth, His beginning ministry, the work He did as the Messiah, is a record of real history.

Thirdly, this record of history is given us not to satisfy our historical curiosity. We are not to read this gospel as "history buffs." Rather, as John speaks for the other authors, "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name," John 2:31. As we read the gospel of Matthew, we must keep this ever before our minds. This is written that we may believe in Jesus.

Finally, Matthew writes this gospel to set forth Jesus as the Messiah. The one in Whom we believe is none other than the promised Messiah! The Old Testament saints believed that He would come; the prophets spoke of His coming; the blood of bulls and goats cried for their fulfillment in Him; and now the Holy Spirit moved Matthew to write the first gospel to tell the Jews and the entire church that this Jesus did indeed come and is King as God has promised.

We will examine the message in outline form in our next article.

**The STANDARD BEARER  
makes a thoughtful gift  
for a shut-in.**





## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# Choosing at the Becoming of Age

*Rev. Rodney Miersma*

Decisions! Choices!

Sooner or later everyone must make a choice. Not everyday choices such as "What shall I eat?" or "What shall I wear today?" are meant here. The choice that I want to bring to your attention is as important as life itself.

As young people, you must make a choice between the kingdom of heaven and the pleasures of the world. "Wait a minute!" you say, "as an elect child of God I have been chosen by Him; I did not and could not choose Him." Correct you are. God certainly chooses His people unto everlasting life; but man also chooses. He either chooses the way of sin or by God's grace he chooses the way of life.

This fact is seen in Scripture, especially at Mt. Ebal and Gerizim where there is placed before Israel the blessing and the curse. Or think of Joshua in his old age when he stands before Israel, "Choose you this day whom ye shall serve." Joshua had made the choice, as is evident from his confession, "As for me and my house, we shall serve the Lord." Thus, today as well, you, as covenant young people, must make a conscious choice between what your old nature tells you and what your regenerated heart is saying. The two sides are well defined; it is either the world and its pleasures of sin, or Christ and His kingdom. From a natural viewpoint you will never be able to make this choice. Such a choice can only be made by faith, the evidence of things unseen.

We have another example of such a choice made by faith recorded for us in the Holy Scriptures. I refer to the choice made by Moses when he became of age, as we find it in Hebrews 11:24-26: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

As we take a good look at the whole matter of making a choice, there are certain considerations that must be borne in mind. First of all, it is very evident and easily understood that for a real choice

to be even possible one must be a rational, moral creature. In order to choose, one must act according to intellect and reason. The intellect and reason must make a judgment with respect to two or more objects after considering their relative importance and value. After considering the pro and the con one shows a preference of the one or the other. In addition to the intellect there is also the will. This is the follow-up action whereby the will desires that which the intellect has preferred. Thus, it stands to reason that an inanimate object such as a stone or fence post cannot choose. Even if we turn to living creatures such as trees and plants we see immediately that they do not have the capability to choose. But what about the animals? Even though they may show preference for one thing or another, they do not consciously, rationally, and morally make a choice, nor can they do so.

As young people, however, as rational, moral creatures, created in the image of God, you not only can choose but do choose very often. This occurs daily in one's life with respect to natural things such as what to eat, what to study, or what to wear. But, more important, with your intellect and reason you must make decisions as to spiritual things. Consciously and willingly you must decide for or against God, for or against Christ and His kingdom. This was the nature of the choice of Moses.

The second consideration is that you as a covenant, rational, moral young people, must make this choice when you become of age, just as Moses did "when he was come to years." In other words, one must not only be a rational, moral creature, but one must reach a certain stage of development in order to choose. The more important the decision, the more advanced must this development be. You certainly would not expect a small baby in the cradle to make a choice. No doubt the babe is a rational, moral creature as well as is an adult. The babe may also be a child of God, his heart regenerated already at the time of conception. Yet that child has no conscious knowledge of the objects between which a choice must be made. He knows nothing of the covenant of God, nor does he know the pleasures of sin. He has neither knowledge of his sin and misery in which he was conceived and born nor of his salvation in Christ from that sin.



Such a child simply has not reached the stage of development at which he can choose for God's kingdom or the world of sin.

In fact, almost all the decisions are made for him by his parents. They choose his clothing, his home, and his school. What is true concerning his natural life is also true concerning his spiritual life. The parents choose the church wherein he is baptized and indoctrinated. As long as the child has not come to age, the parents will make these decisions for him.

The day arrives, however, when this cannot be done anymore. As young people you have reached that stage of development, or soon will, when you must make a conscious choice with respect to spiritual things. This is what is sometimes called as "the years of discretion," here applied to one's spiritual life. As we see in this passage from Hebrews, Moses arrived at this point in life when he was forty years old. This does not mean that he did not come to years of discretion before this time, not that he did not make a conscious choice before he reached the age of forty. However, it was at forty that he came to a definite conclusion and revealed his choice. Moses had had a very strange history. Born in Egypt at a time when all the Hebrew male babies were supposed to be killed, he was hid for three months at home by his parents, who then set him afloat in the river Nile for he could not be safely hid any longer. Soon the daughter of Pharaoh discovered him and adopted him for her own child. Because he was yet so small he was returned to his home through the instrumentality of his sister Miriam who was watching from a distance. In the covenant home of his parents Moses learned of his people and their God. The rest of his education was obtained in the courts of Pharaoh.

Therefore, although the age of forty seems late for such a choice, when we remember the circumstances of Moses' life and education we begin to understand. In addition we may bear in mind that Moses lived to be one hundred twenty years old,

which is comparable to our seventy to eighty. The point, however, is not to say that one must make profession of faith at a specific age such as seventeen or eighteen, but when one comes to years, when one reaches the age of discretion spiritually.

In your case, having been instructed in covenant homes from the day of your birth, this coming of age will not be late in your life. And you will want to reveal this choice publicly before God and His people. Putting this off really is a sign of a definite spiritual weakness, maybe even a revelation of the fact that you have made a choice, but not for God's kingdom. A child of God knows and loves his Lord and desires to make public that which he has decided in his heart through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Moses made that choice after a bitter struggle in his heart, and, we might add, at exactly the right moment in history so that he might serve as God's servant to lead His people out of Egypt, the house of bondage, into the land of Canaan, a picture of heaven.

The object of Moses' choice and the reason why he chose what he did we will discuss in more detail next time. But in the meantime let us remember that we, you and I, must and always do make the same choice as Moses did. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, which meant that he had cast his lot with the people of God, although they were maltreated and oppressed. So we are called to do the same thing and to make the same choice, not only once, but constantly. We cannot belong to the people of God and to the world at the same time. That is impossible. Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God instead of enjoying the pleasures of the world for a season. We must and always do make the same choice before the face of God.

But we will wait until next time to look at this in detail. For now we must remember that there is a time when this choice must be made. Doing so we will rejoice with God's people in our confession.

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## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

# Of God's Covenant With Man

*Rev. Ron Van Overloop*

In the seventh chapter of the Confession, the Westminster Assembly gives its presentation of the covenant. The first two sections treat God's relationship to man before the fall, while the remaining

four sections deal with God's relationship to the believer in Christ after the fall. In this issue we will treat only the first two sections.



1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.<sup>a</sup>

a. Isaiah 40:13-17; Job 9:32, 33; I Samuel 2:25; Psalm 113:5, 6; 100:2, 3; Job 22:2, 3; 35:7, 8; Luke 17:10; Acts 17:24, 25.

2. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works,<sup>a</sup> wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity,<sup>b</sup> upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.<sup>c</sup>

a. Galatians 3:12.

b. Romans 10:5; 5:12-20.

c. Genesis 2:17; Galatians 3:10.

At times this chapter of the Confession has been used to indicate the deficiency of the Westminster as a Reformed Creed. We would urge caution. It cannot be denied that an initial reading would lead the Reformed believer to give criticism. However, there are several items which should be pointed out for a fair representation of the Westminster Confession. If after these items are produced and the deficiency remains, then let the criticism be brought.

Let us note the title given to this chapter. It seems rather significant that the title speaks "Of God's Covenant with Man," using the singular. Yet sections two and three speak of the first covenant and of the second covenant. Our study produced no known reason for this apparent discrepancy. We would prefer that the numbers were dropped and that the Confession would follow its caption, i.e., that there is historically one positive relationship which God has with man, namely, a relationship of covenantal friendship.

Concerning the first section let us note first of all that this section purposefully and beautifully sets the tone for the whole chapter. It establishes the fact of the infinite distance between God and the creature. What more proper way can anyone find with which to begin any consideration of the relationship between God and man.

Thomas Goodwin, one of the men who sat on the Assembly which authored the Confession, introduces a chapter in which he deals extensively with this concept of the infinite distance between God and man with the following caption.

The infinite distance between God and the creatures, in respect that he is the maker and preserver of them; in that also he is eternal, and so before they had being he dwelt alone in Himself, and possessed all things in Himself.—He is the high and lofty One, and is so supremely excellent, as it transcends all other; His name is holy, and so is above the creatures, and separated from them.—The true name of Being is

proper only to God: the creatures are but the shadows and appearances of being. (*The Works of Thomas Goodwin D.D.*, vol. VII, Edinburgh: James Nicholl, 1863, P. 10).

Secondly, our consideration of this first section points out the teaching that man owes obedience to God. This is simply because of his creation. Creation places upon man the obligation and responsibility to obey God. This fact is supported by Psalm 100:2 and 3. "Serve the Lord with gladness.... it is He that hath *made us*." When man has done all these things commanded him, he still must say, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

Permit me again to quote from Thomas Goodwin in order that we might gain a better perspective of what the authors of the Westminster meant.

This first estate I would term, upon many accounts, the estate of pure nature by creation-law; and as rightly as our divines do call the covenant we were by nature brought into *foedus naturae*, the covenant of nature, which is founded upon an equitable intercourse set up betwixt God the Creator and his intelligent unfallen creatures, by virtue of the law of his creating them, and as by their creation they came forth of his hands; God dealing with the creature singly and simply upon the terms thereof, and the creature being bound to deal with God according to that bond and obligation which God's having created him in his image, with sufficient power to stand, and having raised him up thereunto out of pure nothing, lays upon him." (p. 22)

"The first covenant of works under which Adam was created is termed by divines *foedus naturae*, the covenant of nature; that is, of man's condition, which from and by his creation was natural to him; yet I would rather call it the creation law, *jus creationis*, or of what was equitable between God considered merely as a Creator on one part, and his intelligent creatures that were endued with understanding and will on the other,..." (p. 23)

Thirdly, this section teaches that the distance between God and man is so great that man could have no fruition, i.e., enjoyment of God apart from an act of God. Although some describe the activity of God in taking up a relationship with Adam as grace, the Confession does not. Rather it uses the phrase "voluntary condescension." It certainly was an undeserved act of God whereby He condescended to avail Adam with a right knowledge of his Creator. But we desire not to use the concept "grace" to define the relationship of God with pre-fall Adam because Scripture uses this concept to refer to the power of saving fallen and sinful man in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Adam before the fall did not deserve to stand in a positive relationship to God. It was only the condescending goodness of God that made the positive relationship possible.

Now this enjoyment of God which Adam was



privileged to receive because of God's voluntary condescending goodness is called "covenant." With such a definition, the Westminster Confession may not be charged with making the covenant an agreement or pact between God and man. I would wish that all those in present day who possess the Westminster as their creedal basis would be very much conscious of this presentation of the covenant by the Confession. I believe that this presentation of the covenant, viz., enjoyment of God based only upon a voluntary condescending goodness of God, would force them to refrain from defining the relationship of God with man as an agreement or pact.

It is important to notice that the condescending act of God which makes it possible for Adam to have a relationship with God did not occur as a separate event apart from man's creation. Rather Goodwin presents it as existent "by virtue of the law of" God's creating him. Thus this covenantal relationship is given with man's creation; and therefore it is a fundamental and essential relationship and is not an agreement established sometime after man was called into being.

In section two the Confession informs us how it was that Adam before the fall enjoyed God as his blessedness and reward. Let us consider now this presentation of the covenant of works.

Rev. H. Hoeksema, after quoting from Dr. Charles Hodge, summarizes the generally accepted doctrine of the covenant of works.

Here, then, we have a rather clear and comprehensive exposition of what is commonly meant by the so-called covenant of works. We may summarize its various elements as follows: 1) The covenant of works was an arrangement or agreement between God and Adam entered into by God and established by Him after man's creation. It was not given with creation, but was an additional arrangement. 2) It was a means to an end. Adam had life, but not that of highest freedom. He was lapsible. And the covenant of works was arranged as a means for Adam to attain to that highest state of freedom in eternal life. 3) The specific elements of this covenant were a promise (eternal life), a penalty (eternal death), and a condition (perfect obedience). 4) In this covenant Adam was placed on probation. There would come a time when the period of probation was ended and when the promise would be fulfilled. 5) At the end of the period of probation Adam would have been translated into a state of glory analogous to the change of believers that shall live at the time of Christ's second advent. 6) The fruit of this obedience of Adam would have been reaped by all Adam's posterity. (*Reformed Dogmatics*, RFP, p. 216)

Rev. Hoeksema continues by saying, "Many and serious objections may be raised against this rather generally accepted doctrine of the covenant of works" (p. 217). He then proceeds to give five

Scriptural objections. The first is that "nowhere do we find any proof in Scripture for the contention that God gave to Adam the promise of eternal life if he should obey that particular commandment of God." The second criticism given is that obedience to God is an obligation and does not merit a special reward from God. The third objection deals with the difficulty of conceiving when the so-called probationary period would have ended and what would have happened then. The fourth objection is that this conception of the covenant of works presents the covenant relation as something incidental to man's life in relation to God and not as fundamental and essential. The fifth objection is that "from the point of view of God's sovereignty and wisdom this theory of a covenant of works appears quite unworthy of God. It presents the work of God as a failure to a great extent" (p. 220). These objections are very much to the point.

Let us notice that Rev. H. Hoeksema gives these objections to what he calls "this rather generally accepted doctrine of the covenant of works" (p. 217). The question we must face is whether the rather generally accepted doctrine of the covenant of works he mentions is the same conception of the covenant of works contained in the Westminster Confession. Is the presentation which Dr. Charles Hodge gives of the covenant of works in the 1800's the same conception which the writers of the Westminster Confession had in the 1600's?

It is our contention that the "rather generally accepted doctrine of the covenant of works" of the last century and a half existing in most churches with the names of Presbyterian and Reformed is different from the doctrine of the covenant of works as presented in the Westminster Confession. It may appear to be the same merely because of the wording of the second section of chapter VII which calls Adam's relationship to God a covenant of works consisting of a promise and a condition.

Our studies of the writings of the Hodges, James Thornwell, and others of their time and since then revealed a difference in conception of the covenant of works from that of men such as Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), who sat on the Westminster Assembly, and Thomas Brooks (1608-1680). It is our premise that we must go to Goodwin and Brooks in order to learn the conception of the covenant of works contained in the Westminster Confession and not to the Hodges, et. al.

In order to substantiate this contention we believe it necessary to quote rather extensively. However, this would require more room than what we are allowed for this article. Therefore, we will continue with this in the next issue of the *Standard Bearer*.



We conclude by reminding ourselves of the care with which the Westminster Confession approaches the whole subject of the relationship of God and man. The perspective is that an infinite distance separates the holy and lofty One from His creatures and makes any enjoyment of God by man impos-

sible apart from an act of condescending goodness of God whereby Adam could know God and enjoy Him. This sets the basis for any consideration of the positive relationship between God and man both before and after the fall into sin.



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## Annual Secretary's Report — R.F.P.A.

The 18th of September, 1980

Dear Members and Friends of the R.F.P.A.,

I Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

God has greatly blessed our labors by enabling us to publish the *Standard Bearer* for the past fifty-six years. In August, 1900 copies of the *Standard Bearer* were printed. We used 150 copies of that issue for Bound volumes. Our business manager mailed 775 copies locally and 764 copies outside the G.R. area, which is a slight increase in subscriptions over last year. Our Foreign subscriptions have been reduced to 117 copies per issue.

Our Treasurer reports that gifts this year totaled \$14,700.96. Of this amount, \$8,688.25 was from church collections and \$6,012.71 was from individual gifts. Your generous gifts are needed in order that the *Standard Bearer* be printed and be sent to the four corners of the earth.

Our continued need of financial support was made known to the consistories of our Protestant Reformed Churches by letter. Emphasis was placed on increasing the number of church collections per year; encouraging, by way of bulletin, support for the *Standard Bearer* to a greater measure; and encouraging to-be married and young married couples to be subscribers. The letter ended with these words, "We as a Board are confident our people will respond once the need is known. May God continue to bless us as churches as we labor for and to the glory of His Name and to the coming of His Kingdom."

The Board has been trying to combat the increase in costs of producing the *Standard Bearer*. In the month of June of this year we asked Commercial Printing to do our typesetting, at a reduction in cost.

The Board has also been trying to locate a place in which to store *Standard Bearer* materials and



R.F.P.A. publications. We approached Synod of 1980 through the Theological School Committee concerning the purchase of land on which to build. Synod disapproved the request.

Over the past year, our Editor-In-Chief and Department Editors have supplied us with articles regarding God's Word. These men have maintained, kept, and proclaimed God's Word of Truth; have been steadfast in refuting, uncovering, and bringing to light false doctrines which have misconstrued, perverted, and distorted the Holy Scriptures; and have purposed, concluded, and determined to adhere to the reformed doctrine of election and reprobation. These faithful servants earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to

the saints have written and will continue writing, D.V., by the grace of our Covenant God.

The Board wishes to thank our business manager, Mr. Henry VanderWal for his devoted efforts and hard work, and to thank the following brethren for their hard work over the past years: Jim Van Overloop, Fred Huizinga, and David Harbach. Thank you brethren for your sincere concern.

The Staff and Board of the R.F.P.A. sincerely desire your unceasing prayers and faithful support.

The Board of the R.F.P.A.

David Harbach, Sec'y.

### IN MEMORIAM

On September 27, 1980, it pleased our Father of all mercy to take unto Himself, our wife, mother and grandmother, MRS. JOHN HOEKSTRA. In sorrow we rejoice to know our loss was her gain.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (II Corinthians 5:1).

Mr. John Hoekstra  
Miss Beverly Hoekstra  
Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Driesen  
Sherilyn, Judith, Lori, Mark, Brian  
Mr. and Mrs. John Hoekstra  
Scott, Monica, Jeremy

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 2, 1980, our parents, MR. AND MRS. BERNARD LUBBERS, will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, are thankful for giving us God fearing parents who have brought us up in the fear of His name.

Our prayer is that God may bless them with His grace in the years that lie ahead.

their children and grandchildren  
Jerry and Bonnie Lubbers  
Scott, Jeremy, Eric, Jessica  
Linda Lubbers  
Bruce and Deb Lubbers  
Jonathan, Joshua  
Gord and Sue Lubbers  
Ed and Melanie Hekstra  
Ken and Machele Elzinga  
Jason  
Brad Lubbers  
Doug Lubbers

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The School Board of the Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School of Hull, Iowa expresses their sincere sympathy to fellow board member Mr. Bernard Driesen and family in the loss of their son and brother, Mark Driesen, who was a student in the seventh grade of our school.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21)

Mr. Jim Kooima, Pres.  
Mr. Wm. K. Kooiker, Sec.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies Aid of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to Mrs. Bernard Driesen in the loss of their son, MARK, at the age of twelve years.

"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (II Corinthians 5:8).

Rev. R. Cammenga, Pres.  
Mrs. Egbert Gritters, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

We take this occasion to express our Christian sympathy to three of our members, Mrs. Ann Van Meeteren, Charles Van Meeteren and Beverly Feenstra in the loss of their husband and father, ADRIAN VAN MEETEREN.

We find our comfort in the words of the psalmist—"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalm 73:24).

The Mary-Martha Society  
The Men's Society

## News From Our Churches

Rev. Kamps of our Doon congregation declined the call extended him from the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.

From a trio of Reverends Miersma, Kuiper, and Engelsma, Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Redlands has extended a call to Rev. Engelsma.



While without a pastor of their own, Redlands has obtained the services of some of our "retired" ministers. We learn from a Redlands bulletin that Rev. Heys even had an opportunity to show his slides of New Zealand and Singapore during his stay there.

Speaking of the travels of emeritus ministers, Rev. Lubbers, with the permission of the Pella Consistory, from which church he was emeritated, left in mid-September for Skowhegan, Maine. Rev. Lubbers plans to spend eight or nine weeks preaching for a group of about 50 souls in the Skowhegan area.

Although the Sunday School seasons of our churches vary considerably, the following excerpt to the parents of Sunday School children of First Church could prove helpful to all who use *Our Guide*: "Our hope is that the Sunday School paper will provide the tool, as the Sunday School class does the incentive, for systematic study of the Scriptures with your children. The paper was designed, as is obvious from a reading of it, not simply for *children*, but for *parents with their children*. It's designed, too, to serve as a study guide. We trust that those who intend to put some *work* into the lessons will find the papers to be helpful. And we hope that you do; for, as is the case in every worthwhile venture, the benefits derived are in direct proportion to the time and energy expended."

Since June 29 the First Protestant Reformed Church of Edmonton has been holding its worship services in the Mt. Zion Lutheran Church of Edmonton. It seems that the building in which they had been meeting is slated for a date with the wreckers' ball to make room for a multiple housing unit. It is apparent that this move has not been without its challenges. Due to the services of the Lutheran congregation at 10 A.M., our group must meet at 11:15 for their morning service. What about the afternoon service? Well, that's more complicated yet. Although there is no need to work around the Lutheran services, since they are non-existent, their usual 3 P.M. service makes it difficult to fit lunch in between the services. The last we heard was that a 7:00 or 7:30 P.M. worship

service was being considered. But that's still not all; the construction of a two-story educational wing on the premises adds to the present chaos, so much so that the Bible study class of our congregation has been cancelled for several weeks. Hopefully all this will straighten itself out and will not discourage you from visiting our Edmonton congregation when you just happen to be passing by. To facilitate that visit we include the address of the Mt. Zion Lutheran Church: 11533 135th St. We suggest, however, that you call Rev. Moore about the exact time before you stop in.

Living in the space age as we do, the word satellite does not make us take particular notice. However, the term satellite school just might. At a September 29 meeting our Hope School in Walker, Michigan adopted exactly that idea when they approved the following School Board proposals: "Proposal #1 - The Board recommends that the society approve the purchase of approximately 17 acres of land at the northeast corner of New Holland Street and 40th Avenue at a total cost of \$82,800.00. Proposal #2 - The Board recommends that the society approve to proceed with plans to build a ten room Satellite School with all-purpose room and kitchen on the above parcel at an approximate cost of \$610,000.00 including furnishings."

In mid-September our business manager, Mr. VanderWal, received a letter of inquiry concerning people who receive the *Standard Bearer* in the Plymouth, Vermont area and the Whitehall, Granville area of New York State. Their plea for information reaches even further than that, however, for they write: "If there are any other subscribers in Vermont, or even western New Hampshire, we would welcome the names and addresses of these people so that we can make contact." Why do they want to contact these people? "We wish to share our tapes, (i.e., studies in Bible Doctrine, First Protestant Reformed Church sermons, etc.) and possibly study the Heidelberg Catechism." If any in our reading audience fits the above specifications or knows someone who does, contact Roger and Carolyn Steward, P.O. Box 33, Plymouth, VT 05056.