

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Controversy in religion is a hateful thing. It is hard enough to fight the devil, the world, and the flesh, without private differences in our own camp, but there is one thing which is even worse than controversy, and that is false doctrine tolerated, allowed, and permitted without protest or molestation.... Three things there are which men never ought to trifle with: a little poison, a little false doctrine, and a little sin.

J.C. Ryle

See "Reformed, Yet Always Reforming"

—page 402

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MEDITATION

Christ's Entry Into Heaven Itself

Rev. M. Schipper

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figure of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others:

For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

Hebrews 9:24-26

The writer of this epistle, whoever he was, was thoroughly acquainted with the spiritual economy of the Hebrews.

It is not necessary for us to identify the secondary author of this epistle, since the Holy Spirit, the Author of the Scriptures, has seen fit not to disclose

his name.

What is of importance to us is the evidence of his complete enlightenment of Israel's spiritual economy. Not only did he understand fully the economy in its typical apparatus, but also in its anti-typical significance.

The evidence of this last observation is clearly portrayed in respect to his conception of the priest-office as set forth in this chapter. In the first part of the chapter he reviews the matter of the typical priesthood. He describes the tabernacle with its various compartments. And he dwells on the various sacrifices and their service. And, beginning with verse eleven, he reflects on the anti-typical character of it all. Christ, so he declares, is the High Priest concerning the good things to come. Christ, so he continues, entered the Holy Place once for all. Not the earthly holy place, made with hands, but the heavenly, and that with a sacrifice that brought to an end all sacrifices. It is this that we especially wish to call to your attention as we consider in this ascension meditation: Christ's entry into the heavenly holy place.

What draws our attention, first of all, in the text, is the truth that the ascension of Christ into heaven is considered an historic fact.

In the Scriptures Christ's birth, His death, and resurrection are considered undoubted historic facts. Established historic facts, they are, upon which rests the faith of the Christian church. So also Christ's ascension into heaven belongs to the facts of history, though it is true that this fact never seems to receive the attention and the emphasis given to the above-mentioned facts. Surely the secular world does not know how to commercialize on this fact as it does with Christ's birth and resurrection. But also the church fails miserably to perceive the importance of the fact of Christ's ascension. Nevertheless, the ascension, as well as the nativity, death, and resurrection of Christ belongs to history.

Forty days after He arose from the grave He ascended into heaven before the eyes of the disciples. Of this they gave testimony. "And He led them forth as far as to Bethany, and as He lifted up His hands, He blessed them. And it came to pass in His blessing them, He was parted from them and was carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:50, 51). "And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye

have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11).

But history, beloved reader, is not realized factually only here on the earth, but also in heaven. Heaven, as well as earth, is affected by time and history. This is often forgotten in the waves of earthly historical events, when emphasis is placed on the events as they affect our earthly existence. But not to be forgotten is the fact that in time history also involves heaven. We need only to remind you that the fall in the angel world takes place within the brackets of time. Also the salvation of the saints who have lived and died is realized in heaven.

So Christ's ascension affects also the history of heaven. Forget not that all through the old dispensation the accuser of the brethren had access to heaven. There he denied those who after death entered heaven their right to be there, beginning with righteous Abel and continuing with the long line of saints who followed. But with the ascension of Christ this all ceases. The accuser of the brethren is cast out, never more to return. Christ's ascension signalled the complete justification of all the Old Testament saints.

Moreover, as the text makes abundantly clear, Christ's ascension and His sitting at God's right hand, finishes all His mediatorial work. Christ must enter the tabernacle not made with hands, to bring His sacrifice. But He must enter heaven itself to appear in the very presence of God. Such is the historic fact.

But notice, in the second place, the manner in which He enters into heaven.

It is not as an earthly high priest. The writer to the Hebrews draws a comparison to the earthly high priest. He tells us that the sons of Aaron entered the holy place made with hands. The reference is, of course, to the tabernacle constructed with human hands, first at Sinai, and later in the temple set by Solomon on Mount Zion. These constructions were composed of three main compartments: the outer court, wherein was the great altar of sacrifice; the holy place, wherein were the table of shewbread, altar of incense, and the candlestick; and the holy of holies, which was within the veil, in which was the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat. Into this humanly constructed edifice the sons of Aaron entered often. Daily there they received the sacrifices brought by the people to offer them, first for their own sins, and then for the sins of the people. And in the holy of holies the high priest alone entered once a year with the blood of bulls and goats to sprinkle it upon the mercy seat. But into that man-made structure Christ does not enter. He does not need to bring as the earthly priest many sacrifices, first for Himself and then for His

people.

As the anti-type He enters heaven itself as the perfect high Priest. The long line of the Aaronitic priesthood served only as faint pictures of the reality to come. The shadows, of course, were made possible by the reality that reflected them. But the shadows could not be the reality. Therefore temporal offices were filled by temporary men. But Christ is the reality, and in that sense the only High Priest. Apart from Him all other priests were of no significance. He is the fulfillment and the perfection of the priest's office, His sacrifice alone could take away sin; His sacrifice alone has eternal and abiding value.

Moreover, the text stresses the truth concerning the place Christ entered. Though it was true that God dwelt in the shadows of the earthly tabernacle, He nevertheless dwelt in isolation. No one might enter into His presence except the high priest, while the people stood afar off in the outer court. Only the great high priest might enter the holy of holies once a year, but he could abide there only for a moment, and he must needs go out. But Christ enters into the very presence of God. The text says literally: before His face. And Christ abides there: and, wonder of wonders, we with Him. Here, very really, God and His people in Christ are one. Our High Priest enters heaven itself, into the very presence of God, and in our behalf.

Now, once for all! Upon the end of the ages! He appeared unto the abrogation of sin through His sacrifice! Such is the literal translation of the text.

And the meaning is clear. Not often did He appear, as had the shadow-priests in the humanly constructed tabernacle, with many sacrifices which could never take away sin. At the long end of the ages when repeatedly sacrifices were brought which could only remind the worshippers of the one sacrifice that would bring an end to all sacrifices, Christ brings the one sacrifice, the all-sufficient sacrifice of Himself, that forever satisfies the justice of God over against our sin, the sin of all His people—that efficacious sacrifice Christ brought for us into the very presence of God.

The Priest and the offering are all one in Him. His sacrifice is the perfect one because it alone takes away sins. This sin and the consequences of sin are forever abolished for God's people.

Notice, in the third place, how the text stresses the purpose of Christ's ascension.

He enters heaven itself and appears before the face of God in our behalf. He enters as the Mediator of His people. Always, in all that He does, He represents them. But His mediatorship was not by our appointment. He was not democratically chosen by

the will of the people. He does not rise to His High-Priestly office out of the house and loins of Aaron. Rather, He comes out of the volume of the book, out of the eternal counsel of God to do His will. Thus He is the Servant of Jehovah; and all that He does is by divine appointment. His birth, His passion and death, His resurrection, but also His glorious ascension, is all of God. But all in our behalf. So now, at the end of the ages of the old dispensation, with the perfect sacrifice of Himself in our behalf, He presents Himself before Jehovah's face, in the heavenlies.

With the sacrifice that brings an end to all sacrifices!

The sin problem of all His people is finished forever!

Indeed, with our sin and guilt He went to the cross, where the God of our salvation poured upon Him all the vials of His holy wrath to satisfy His justice with respect to our sin. There He Who knew no sin was made sin for us. There He was forsaken of God that we might be made righteous, and never be forsaken of Him. Because He was faithful unto death, God declared Him to be righteous and we in Him; and, therefore, raised Him from the dead. Yea, God raised Him unto the highest heavens, in order that He might receive the reward of merit. Into heaven itself, that is, the heaven of heavens, the highest pinnacle of glory and honor, at the right hand of God, into His very presence, He ascended. There Jehovah-God brings His Son, our Mediator, to report as it were on His commissioned work. There He presents Himself as the one Who has put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

And the implication is that there the Father acknowledges the perfect sacrifice as sufficient to put away forever your sins and mine.

At the end of the ages!

Not the end of the world is it to which the text refers, but undoubtedly to the end of the ages of the old dispensation, at the end of the long line of earthly priests and sacrifices. At that point in time Christ appeared with the sacrifice that brought an end to all sacrifices, satisfying God's justice and bringing also to an end God's curse over our sin and guilt.

And therefore unto the end of the ages, that is, unto the day when Christ comes again on the clouds of heaven to take us also into the very presence of God, unto then we are accounted righteous before God. And that is forever.

Then, as God the Father undoubtedly said to His Son when He appeared in His ascension, "Come ye blessed One into My presence to receive the reward of your mediatorial work," so shall He also say to

us at the end of the world: "Come, ye blessed, enter into My blessed fellowship and communion forever; for ye are righteous through Him Whom I

have highly exalted, because He so deeply humbled Himself for your sins, and the sins of all My people."

EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

The GKN on the Nature of the Authority of Scripture (6)

The proof of the pudding is in the eating, it is said.

This maxim may be applied to the subject under consideration, that of the authority of Scripture. And it may be applied especially to the Report/Decision of the GKN which we have been considering in this series. Applied in this area, it means that we can test what a person or church believes concerning the authority of Scripture by examining what that person or church believes concerning the trustworthiness, or reliability, of Scripture.

In this installment of this series we shall follow this method.

Let me explain.

We are up to the main chapter, Chapter IV, of the Report/Decision of the GKN. This chapter is entitled "The Nature of the Authority of Scripture." After a brief introductory section, this chapter proceeds to the important subject, "The Foundation of the Authority of Scripture." Following this section, there is a section entitled "The Historical Trustworthiness (reliability) of the Bible." Now we shall return eventually to a discussion of the section on "The Foundation of the Authority of Scripture." However, the latter is written in such a way that its erroneous character is somewhat covered up. And while it is by no means above criticism, it is probably better to establish first and clearly that the Report/Decision does indeed deny the divine authority and infallibility of Scripture and does indeed deny our Reformed confession by demonstrating that the Report/Decision denies the trustworthiness of Scripture.

The connection ought to be plain to everyone. If Scripture is of divine authority, i.e., the very Word of God, then it is absolutely reliable, or trustworthy. For the Word of God, Who cannot lie, is true. By the same token, if Scripture is not trust-

worthy, not reliable, it cannot possibly be of divine authority, be the Word of God Who cannot lie. This follows with inexorable logic.

All of this, remember, stands connected with our Reformed confession concerning Scripture. It will be beneficial, as we consider these matters, to have this confession clearly before us. I refer especially to Articles 3, 5, and 7 of our Belgic Confession of Faith. Article 3 is entitled "Of the written Word of God" and reads as follows:

We confess that this Word of God was not sent, nor delivered by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as the apostle Peter saith. And that afterwards God, from a special care, which He has for us and our salvation, commanded His servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit His revealed word to writing; and He Himself wrote with His own finger, the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.

The Report/Decision claims only that today they would state Article 3 differently. In actual fact, however, as we shall see, the Report/Decision contradicts Article 3. Too bad that the GKN does not have the honesty to discard the article!

Article 5 of the Belgic Confession reads as follows:

We receive all these books, and these only, as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith; believing without any doubt, all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts, that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves. For the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling.

This fifth Article is obviously also involved in this discussion. The article is entitled "From whence the Holy Scriptures derive their dignity

and authority." Notice that it asserts unequivocally that the canonical books are received by us because these books "are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves." This is what the Holy Spirit witnesseth in our hearts. This article, therefore, goes to the very heart of the authority-question. And also this article the GKN, in all honesty, ought to discard. In the light of the Report/Decision it has officially become a museum piece.

Article 7 has as its main subject "The sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, to be the only rule of faith." Yet this article is also pertinent to our discussion because the very foundation of that sufficiency is the unique authority, and therefore infallibility, of those Scriptures. The article reads as follows:

We believe that those Holy Scriptures fully contain the will of God, and that whatsoever man ought to believe, unto salvation, is sufficiently taught therein. For, since the whole manner of worship, which God requires of us, is written in them at large, it is unlawful for any one, though an apostle, to teach otherwise than we are now taught in the Holy Scriptures: nay, though it were an angel from heaven, as the apostle Paul saith. For, since it is forbidden, to add unto or take away anything from the word of God, it doth thereby evidently appear, that the doctrine thereof is most perfect and complete in all respects. Neither do we consider of equal value any writing of men, however holy these men may have been, with those divine Scriptures, nor ought we to consider custom, or the great multitude, or antiquity, or succession of times and persons, or councils, decrees or statutes, as of equal value with the truth of God, for the truth is above all; for all men are of themselves liars, and more vain than vanity itself. Therefore, we reject with all our hearts, whatsoever doth not agree with this infallible rule, which the apostles have taught us, saying, Try the spirits whether they are of God. Likewise, if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house.

Even as I type these articles, it strikes me how completely foreign to them is the language of the Report/Decision. These articles are clear, completely clear, on every question that is raised in the Report. But the Report is in flat contradiction to this language of our Confession.

Now in the very first subdivision of Section II (The Historical Reliability of the Bible) the question is raised: is the Bible "more trustworthy (reliable) than other sources?"

What does the Report/Decision answer? Here are two direct quotations from p. 41:

"One cannot, therefore, understand all accounts in the Bible without anything further as reliable (trustworthy) historical writings."

"Taking everything into consideration, there is, however, nevertheless also not sufficient ground

for the assertion that the Bible in a historical respect would be more reliable (trustworthy) than other sources."

There you have it!

Literally the Report/Decision asserts that the Bible is no more trustworthy than other sources when it comes to historical accounts.

Now remember what this implies. Those other historical accounts are not trustworthy, or reliable. The Bible is no more trustworthy than they are. Conclusion: the Bible is not trustworthy.

And what is the conclusion from this? One of two things follows:

1) Either the Bible is of divine authority, and then God is a liar (His historical accounts are not reliable.)

2) Or the authority of the Bible is human, just like those other historical accounts which are unreliable.

Both ways you lose the Bible!

But the Report/Decision also gives some shocking examples of what it means in this connection. Let me cite some.

1. It refers to the fact that in the ancient Near East there were historical writings which were consciously subjective, if you will: tendentious. An example is the annals of the Assyrian kings, which plainly served the greater glory of these rulers. Defeats were passed by in silence, or even presented as victories. The numbers of slain enemies were greatly exaggerated, and their own losses were minimized. This was done in those days, according to the Report, just as today in military communiques in time of war this happens for propaganda purposes.

But then the Report goes on to say: "It cannot be maintained that the Old Testament is completely free from such colored information." And some examples are given: "From extra-biblical sources we know, for example, that Israel under Ahab or Jehu must have suffered severe losses against the Moabites, but the Bible is silent about this. The so highly praised historical writings concerning David and Solomon serve, of course, also the purpose of legitimizing the Davidic dynasty. And also the Old Testament sometimes mentions wonderfully large numbers of slain enemies."

Understand well what the Report is saying. In plain English, those exaggerated propaganda reports are LIES! Some of these Dutch theologians ought to remember rather vividly that Herman Goebbels, in the days of the Nazis in World War II, was the past master of this "big lie" technique. The Allies, of course, were also not innocent. But now they are ascribing such lies to God's Word!

2. The Report brings up an old, old argument which has been answered many times. The Report claims that "not all literary genres which we meet in the Bible have the same kind of importance when it comes to historical reliability. In a folk-account (or does the Report actually mean what we call a "folk tale" when it speaks of "*een volksverhaal*"?) it is not so important who the hero was who killed Goliath, David (I Sam. 17) or Elhanan (II Sam. 21:19)."

3. But notice the mockery which this segment makes of Scripture! "Etiology (the science which explains the origin of customs, HCH) furnishes in the form of a short tale answer to what men have called the 'child-question': 'Why is this place holy? Why is it called thus?' etc. Thus, for example, the story of the two daughters of Lot, who made their father drunk in order to conceive by him (Gen. 19:30-38). This is about a form of incest which not

only in Israel but in the entire ancient Near East was strongly disapproved. The first daughter bears a son and calls him Mo-ab, a clear allusion to the fact that according to the Hebrew text he was me-ab, 'from father' (Gen. 19:36). The son of the second gets the name Ben Ammi, which in fact means 'son of my blood relative'—he becomes the tribe-father of the Ammonites. The moral of the story therefore: all Moabites and Ammonites are bastards. We plainly have to do here with folk humor, and we would be taking this account too seriously if we saw historical writing in it. Nations all over the world mock one another in the same way."

Do you see what this Report does to the Bible?

Next time we will return to the section on "The Foundation of the Authority of Scripture" and try to see what lies behind all this.

Impressions of Singapore (4)

Another memorable impression which I received during last July's visit to the GLTS in Singapore was that of what I would call a practical experience of the catholicity of the church. The truth that the church of Jesus Christ is catholic implies that the church is supra-national, that it transcends, in fact, all natural differences, especially differences of race and nation and tongue and clime. This does not mean that these differences are erased; that would, of course, be impossible. The differences remain. But they do not enter into the picture as any kind of criterion of membership in the body of Christ; they do not affect the question of one's participation in the communion of saints. They are transcended.

Now it is indeed a shock for one who is accustomed to facing an audience or a congregation of blonde, blue-eyed, Anglo-Saxons to stand at the lectern and to be confronted by a sea of oriental faces. To be sure, in a city like Singapore one experiences constantly, wherever he goes (except, of course, at the den Hartogs' apartment) that he is in an oriental community. But, even so, it is different when one lectures or preaches. All my adult life I have been accustomed to facing but one kind of people when I lecture or preach. It becomes habit. One expects that kind of audience. But this habit was suddenly interrupted, especially on the evening of my first lecture, when I faced an audi-

ence of some 200, almost all of whom were young Orientals. I was suddenly and forcefully reminded: you're not at home; you're in Singapore!

And yet how soon that shock passed and was virtually forgotten! In a community such as Singapore, of course, this is possible partly because there is no language barrier. English is spoken commonly. I can well imagine that foreign missionaries who must face the additional problem of a language-barrier experience this "culture-shock" even more. But in Singapore the Lord has given us a foreign mission field in which to a large extent the English language can be used; if this had not been so, the problems of ministering on that field would have been far greater. (By the way, though, Rev. den Hartog sometimes wishes he could speak and understand Mandarin Chinese.)

Chiefly, however, that shock passed because of what I would call a practical aspect of the catholicity of the church. Brother Ong led us in prayer. We sang some of the familiar Reformation hymns. We read the Scriptures. After a while I began to lecture and to expound the history and the truths of the Reformation. I could observe my audience paying careful attention, showing interest, drinking in the same truths of the gospel of sovereign grace that you and I love. More and more the awareness of the natural differences become submerged in the

awareness of our transcendent spiritual unity. I felt at home in the communion of saints!

Something of the same thing I experienced when I preached at the Kampong on the Lord's day. Although I had to simplify somewhat, in the main I preached as I would at home. From a natural point of view everything (including the fact that I preached in my stocking-feet!) reminded me that I was not at home. But from a spiritual point of view we were at home in the midst of the saints who serve the same Lord, love the same Christ, believe the same gospel of sovereign grace as we do.

And it is not long before one experiences the same thing in less formal contacts and in personal conversations.

The final impression which I wish to mention is the impression that this group of young people in Singapore was (and is) deeply disappointed by the decision of our 1980 Synod forbidding them to be instituted as a congregation until they can subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity. This was one of the first things about which some of the men of the Executive Committee of the GLTS spoke to me upon our arrival, and it was also one of the last things about which they sought my counsel. In fact, one of the purposes of our last evening's gathering for a delicious 10-course Chinese dinner (no fish eyes, no bat soup, and no python meat!) was to give the young men of the Executive Committee opportunity to discuss this matter with me and to chart a course of action. I wish to stress that I made absolutely no propaganda against the decision, though I shared their disappointment. I counselled them to make the best of the situation and to try to study the creeds and reach the point at which they could subscribe to them as soon as possible. But the latter has proved impossible, and will be impossible for some time to come, too. Bear in mind that they take this matter of subscription very seriously, and that they will not subscribe lightly. And this is to their credit!

Now it is not my purpose to write at length about this issue. I trust it will receive a renewed airing at our coming Synod. I am writing now about *impressions*. I will stick to this. But I do have some further impressions in this connection.

A second impression which I received is that

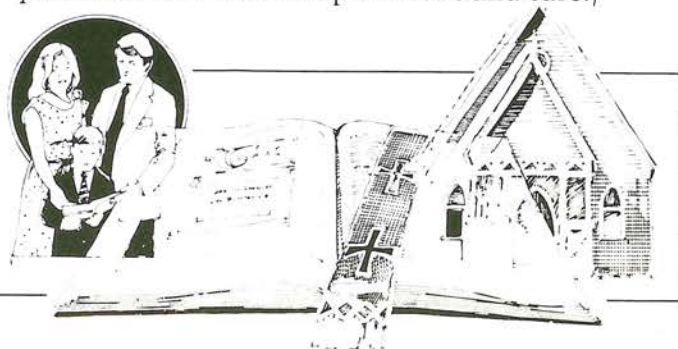
there is every indication that the group in Singapore is *ready* to be instituted. I am referring not merely to their eagerness and their strong desire. That, too! At present they have no church and no church life, and they have not had these for a considerable time. It is not difficult to understand this strong desire, is it? Put yourself in their shoes, if you can.

But I am referring to their readiness in an essential regard. They are ready, I believe, *to manifest the marks of the true church* in their community. In the first place, it ought to be perfectly obvious that they desire and love the pure preaching of the Word, the first mark. And I mean: pure! How else do you account for the fact that they desire the presence of our missionary? Besides, I witnessed their response and their enthusiastic love of the Reformed truth. In the second place, our own Synod has taken the stand, albeit inconsistently, that they are ready with respect to the second mark, the right administration of the sacraments. We have, in fact, said (though I disagree with the decision) that they can have *half* of that second mark, baptism. But do not forget that baptism and the Lord's Supper are principally inseparable; and this is even more emphatically true of the relation of adult baptism and the Supper. Yet we continue to deny them the Lord's Supper, which they cannot have until they are instituted. In the third place, they strongly desire (and understand) the third mark, that of the proper exercise of Christian discipline. As I have said before, there is a strong emphasis on a sanctified walk. Along with this, there is a concern that the key of Christian discipline is needed. This was, in fact, mentioned to me more than once. Besides, there are young men who, though self-effacing, nevertheless would be capable of serving in the office of elder and of employing that key of Christian discipline.

This was one impression, therefore, that left me with a feeling of sorrow and sympathy in Singapore. I sincerely hope this will be remedied. It would also solve the completely abnormal situation with respect to baptism.

(Footnote: During the summer months our Singaporean seminary student and his wife, Mr. & Mrs. Lau Chin Kwee, hope during a brief vacation to visit many of our churches. We commit them to your Christian fellowship and love and care.)

*The Standard Bearer
makes a thoughtful gift
on any occasion.*



TRANSLATED TREASURES

A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

[In this entire section of the pamphlet Kuyper has been talking about the causes of deterioration in the church and has discussed how this deterioration develops in the church as the church undergoes a change from a condition of spiritual strength to one of grave weakness.]

40. Concerning Deformation in the Members.

All deformation in the members of a certain church which deforms the church itself begins with the confession of the members and not, as is usually thought, with their walk of life. It is not as if life is of lesser importance, but rather that one's walk has ecclesiastical value only as a confession. Everything is measured in the church of Christ by the standard of Christ. Only one thing has value for the church as church: your faith. Only your faith is an instrument of salvation, and only your faith binds you to the Lord. Virtues of those who do not possess the grace of God may have value for the civil community, and to this extent must tend to God's honor if these virtues restrain the lawlessness of the malicious—yes, indeed, to prepare for the church a place for the sole of her feet.¹ But they do not have ecclesiastical value. A church without any sincere members, consisting only of members each of whom is adorned with civil virtues, but is far away from faith in the Lord Jesus, would not only not form a good church, but would form no church at all. Such a gathering of people could as well be heathen and idolatrous. The attempt to judge the members of the church by placing the walk of the church on the foreground must be resolutely rejected. It is still true as it has always been through the ages: confession and walk, not walk and confession. Confession must remain on the foreground because in it lies the mark of a Christian, and the walk can only first be judged by the glimmer of that light.

This corruption in regard to confession appears in the members in more than one form.

The most common form (alas!) is that of indifference, when many say they assent to the confessions but hardly know them and are not even troubled by this; they do not recognize opposition to the confes-

sion and cannot even become excited about it. It is the offensive sin of so many men and women, who at confession of faith, baptism, and the Lord's Supper repeatedly declare their assent to the doctrine of the church, and who are the same ones who never lift a finger to try to find out what the doctrine of the church is.

The seemingly opposite form of this is that of externalizing the confession, i.e., the sin which separates this confession from the heart. In that case they are very busy with the confession, are zealous for it with a burning zeal; they investigate and analyze it; but they consider it a dry abstraction which is to be imprinted on the memory, preserved through reasoning, and which requires repetition in its most literal form. Actually this sin takes the confession out of the confession. You thought you heard a lion roaring and found nothing but an anatomical skeleton of the king of beasts.

The third form under which the confession of the members manifests its sickness is the violation of confessional balance. There are in the confession of the church, even as in every organism, distinct members or parts and pieces, each of which in the harmony of the whole has its own place and purpose. These parts are not alike, but each differs according to its own nature. One is the eye, the other an ear; a third part is the heart, a fourth the head. In brief, the whole confession is related harmoniously as a body. The demand of that confession is, therefore, that it sees with its eyes, walks on its feet, and lifts up its head. But now sin violates that proper balance; transposes the emphasis; takes away the importance of what ought to have stress; and lays stress on what cannot bear such emphasis. One wants the eye to hear, wants the ear to see, and wants to give the head the function which only the heart can perform. Much one-sidedness originates from this—those unnatural monstrosities which make the confession of the church sickly and which all find their mark in this that they are disturbances of its balance.

The fourth form is that of superstition. The members of the church seek to mix into the confession what does not belong there. This sin originates

¹There is here some evidence of Kuyper's common grace.

when the church, having no eye for the actual mystery of the kingdom, finds her confession insufficiently mysterious and now has a strong desire to push into her confession all kinds of falsely mystical elements.

The fifth or last form is that of unbelief. Rising when the confession is sufficiently out of joint to become openly disputed, the members of the church now have no scruple to set their denials over against the confession of the church and to do this at the top of their voices.

Sin against the confession can go no farther than this. Having come to that point, the confession crumbles and fades away, and the confession of the sinful principles of the world replaces the confession of true and holy principles.

Deformation in walk keeps step with these five forms of the deformation of the confession.

Indifference, in its first form, results in this that all difference between the walk of the confessors of Jesus and the decent children of the world falls away. The two live alike. The church walks just as others walk. As the world rises and falls so the church rises and falls—in the spiritual sense of the word. But nothing of Christ can be found in their walk. They do nothing for Jesus nor forsake anything for His name's sake.

Externalization on the other hand, its second form, breeds Phariseism. This is an eroding of the sinful heart under an appearance of detailed confession, but the sinful heart is compelled to hide itself and thereby carries with it the mold of corruption and the smell of death.

Violation of balance, the third form, produces in one's walk, just as in the confession, a series of one-sided phenomena; riddles of man's heart, a strong passion for sin alongside of rigid self-denial; fiery but deadly; sober and moderate, but inwardly full of lies; completely merciful, but a slave to the sensual; two hearts in one breast; worshipping God and mammon at the same time.

Superstition, in the fourth place, falsifies life by exaggeration. It is a self-willed worship which denies the pleasures of the flesh; and, turned about by inward compulsion, what was once begun in the spirit, ends in the lust of the flesh.

Unbelief, finally, its last form, is manifested in a determined hatred; it opposes the Christian way of living; it is eager to indulge in the service of the world in all its glitter, but to do this under the shadow of the cross.

If now such evil, in the absence of discipline, works through unchecked and unpunished, then it finally deforms the church as church so that it affects the majority of the members. "The

members of the church may be known by the marks of Christians, namely, by faith; and when they have received Jesus Christ the only Savior, they avoid sin, follow after righteousness, love the true God and their neighbor, neither turn aside to the right or left, and crucify the flesh with the works thereof" (Belgic Confession, Art. 29). There is indeed much weakness in them, "but they fight against them through the Spirit, all the days of their life, continually taking their refuge in the blood, death, passion and obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ" (idem). On the other hand, if these marks gradually fall away so that not only is weakness present, but also an unwillingness to fight, and not only unwillingness to fight, but also opposition to Christ; if the waters of unrighteousness spread, then the church as church is endangered, even though her preaching is still ever so pure, because impious people are able to be in the church of Christ, provided they are subjected to the saints. But turn this relationship around so that the impious gain control and suppress that which is holy, then one has a gathering of ungodly instead of a gathering of the devout, and the result is a deadly danger for the life of the church.

41. Concerning Deformation Of Office Bearers.

Usually the corruption of the members pulls the corruption of the ministers after it. There is a connection between the two. A godly church is usually adorned with pious ministers. On the other hand, a church which has deteriorated sees its own disgrace on the pulpit. Yet this rule is not always applicable. This is true for two reasons. First, it pleases God the Lord, out of pure mercy, often to bestow on a declining church preachers of righteousness to raise His church up again. But it is also true, on the other hand, that God sometimes forsakes a good church and deprives it of ministers if that church endangers itself by giving to those ministers an honor which belongs to Him alone, or if the church must be tried and tested by being abandoned.

This is the reason why the deformation of a church can properly proceed from the ministers. That is to say, the church can be affected by an appearance of evil which does not find its origin in the common life of the members, but, in a unique way, finds its origin in the official life of the office bearers. Especially the ministers of the Word occupy a very influential place in the church of Christ, and are, because of this, susceptible to temptation peculiar to the office. This temptation has a four-fold character. The first form of this process of illness is the minister moves in the sphere of holy things in a lifeless way. He prays with ardor, but with a cold heart. He sprinkles water and breaks bread, but with an apathetic soul. And so, all depending on his nature, he is wound up in a false ex-

citement or is withered in a mechanical routine. If, through this sin, the lie has once crept into his ministry, then the process of sickness goes over into its second form and becomes a misuse of authority. The minister must speak in the name of the Lord. He does not only advise, but he handles the key of the kingdom. He may and can do this as long as he allows the authority of his King and Lord to be absolutely dominant over him. If, on the other hand, a perfunctory routine creeps into his ministry, then he himself slips away from under the authority of the Lord and proceeds to put his own authority in place of the Lord's Word. There is no preaching any more of the Word of the King, but only preaching of his own idea. The third form is taking what does not belong to him, the so-called minister-idolatry. He is called to arouse love for Jesus only, and, behold, he himself becomes the center of the sphere of his work. This flatters and stimulates him. He enjoys this. And he does not know that the arrow of Satan has already pierced his heart. "I will give my honor to no other," the Lord says, and,

behold, such a minister still takes it for himself. And thus, finally, sickness comes to its end, and that spiritual disease is born which is called clericalism. This disease has as its sinful rule, not that the shepherd should be *for* the sheep, but the sheep *for* the shepherd. Then it is no longer a giving of his life for the sheep, but a standing up for his own rights. He occupies a position not for the power of the Lord, but for his own honor and consideration. His office is no longer a mutual binding by an oath for the salvation of the church, but a mutual plotting as bearers of one and the same office. Then tyranny rises. Then the most intolerable egoism rages. And with "Ichabod" on her lips, the church complains that her glory is departed.

And because this egoism stimulates the members to mutiny, and as the authority of the Word is undermined from two sides at the same time, this clericalism becomes very really a cause for the church's being filled with turmoil and entering a state of deformation.

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

A New Presbyterian Church

I have read in several religious magazines in past weeks of the formation of another Presbyterian denomination. At a time when several Presbyterian denominations are making plans of uniting, it appears that at least one new Presbyterian body will be formed—this time out of the United Presbyterian Church. I quote from the *Presbyterian Journal*, April 8, 1981:

America's newest Presbyterian denomination was born in a two-day convention here (St. Louis, Mo.), as some 43 ministers and elders, both men and women, representing 15 churches, signed a covenant binding themselves to walk together as a church.

An equal, perhaps larger, number of representatives and churches stood by as observers, unable or unwilling for a variety of reasons to commit themselves in the organizational meeting of what will be called the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC).

Leaders of the new church indicated that perhaps as many as 30 or 40 additional congregations have shown an interest in what was being done here.

Without exception, congregations of the EPC are former United Presbyterian (UPCUSA) churches that have lately withdrawn. While some have women on

their governing sessions and others do not; and while some are frankly charismatic and others are not, all are committed to a central plank in the new church's government: "constitutional freedom" in all these areas.

...A large part of the time here was spent in small-group discussion of three basic documents: *The Westminster Confession of Faith in Modern English...*, a Proposed Book of Government; and a Proposed Book of Worship.

The steering committee chose not to recommend adoption of the Larger and Shorter Catechisms as part of the doctrinal package.

...Two major issues represent the unspoken concerns which led the group to believe a separate denomination would best meet their needs: the ordination of women and liberty in respect to gifts of the Holy Spirit.

While no more than two or three of the congregations have women elders and/or consider themselves charismatic, the freedom to make local determinations in these areas was a major concern.

The mood of the organizers would have to be described as more self-consciously evangelical than Re-

formed, although all believe they stand in the mainstream of the historic Reformed tradition.

Evidence of the stronger evangelical orientation appeared in a number of forms. In the small-group discussions, Chapter 3 of the Westminster Confession, "Concerning God's Eternal Decrees," frankly raised a number of eyebrows.

Referring to the discussion in a brief devotional moment before the whole group, the Rev. Dean H. Wolf of the Faith Presbyterian Church, Aurora, Colo., said, "The Lord Jesus said little or nothing about the importance of predestination or of infant baptism, but He had much to say about the importance of a living relationship to Himself."

Judging from the above report, one would conclude that there is not much hope of a denomination unified in the historical Reformed confession and faith. Surely "constitutional freedom" in the areas mentioned, can only lead to disaster. How can transfer of membership take place if one church maintains the right of women to serve in office, and another does not? What of the charismatic who transfers to a church which does not allow that in its fellowship? A new denomination which starts on this basis, can not long maintain even the semblance of a Reformed character.

A Second C.R.C. Seminary?

Reports have been given in the secular and religious press about the possible founding of another seminary, probably to prepare men for the ministry in the Christian Reformed Church. The *Calvinist Contact*, April 24, 1981, writes:

A group of Christian Reformed Church members near Orange City, Iowa have purchased the former Harmony Youth Homes near that city with the intention of turning it into a Reformed seminary.

The home was owned by Bethany Christian Services, headquartered in Grand Rapids, MI and was sold to the Christian Reformed group on April 6....

There seems to be no connection between the proposed new seminary and nearby Dordt College in Sioux Center. At present the Christian Reformed Church has only one seminary, in Grand Rapids.

The same paper contains a "Viewpoint" about this which was written by Keith Knight:

Word is out that a new Reformed seminary is being established in Iowa, designed to provide an alternative to those who want to enter the ministry within the Christian Reformed Church.

Calvin College is the officially supported college of the denomination and Calvin Seminary is the official educational institution for the ministry within the denomination. There has never been any expressed need to offer more than one seminary to the young men who enter the ministry.

It seems as though a group of ministers in Iowa mutually agreed that Calvin Seminary was not doing its job. That in itself is not improper. What seems hard for me to fathom is that these men have seen the need to create a brand new seminary with a faculty and facilities to attract students into the ministry.

There are other alternatives to Calvin Seminary for those who want to enter the ministry. Westminster, Reformed Theological Seminary, Western, and the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary all provide

excellent programs for prospective young ministers. Each provides its unique perspective and has its individual strengths.

The "orthodox" element within the Christian Reformed denomination need not create yet another seminary to train our young men. There are enough options as mentioned above.

The Iowa seminary plans to open up this September if my sources are correct. That means that it has four months to find faculty, establish a curriculum and, not unimportant, find students. It already has a faculty. Presumably those men who instigated this absurd proposal will volunteer their services for such a venture: people like John Piersma, Henry Vander Kam, Thomas Vanden Heuvel and others will be instrumental in getting the seminary off the ground. Its grassroots support seems shallow but it might attract one or two students.

Existing theological seminaries have established library facilities and a strong faculty. Their curricula are strong. It is simply beyond me that a group of well-intentioned individuals would try to create a new seminary with yet another emphasis.

One would have been more sympathetic to their cause if they had encouraged prospective students for the ministry to study at Westminster Seminary, for example. Their move is unnecessarily divisive and may be seen as another little step towards the breaking away of a small segment of the denomination. Such would be unfortunate. It would be more noble to attempt to (re)build from within the denomination than to forsake her and strike out on your own.

The above writer clearly indicates his opinion of this new venture. One can sympathize with the men who believe there is a crying need for a soundly (Christian) Reformed seminary. One will have to await further developments to see what will happen. All of this does seem to me to be too little too late. We'll keep you posted.

The Mark of the Beast

The Seventh-Day Adventist paper, *Liberty*, Jan. 1981, presents some interesting comments on the development of the computer age and what this might have to do with the fulfillment of the prophecy of Scripture concerning the end of this age. Among other things, they write:

Evangelical Christians have seen prophetic implications in the development of computer technology. Their scenarios have ranged from the ridiculous—a "beast" computer and laser-beamed numbers inscribed in foreheads or hands—to the plausible.

At the root of their concern is a prophetic passage from the book of Revelation, which describes last-day church-state events:

"And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. 13:16, 17).

Author Arthur Miller, speculating on the use of the computer in commercial transactions, sketches a scenario in which Revelation 13 would seem to fit very well:

"Checks, and perhaps cash, will disappear someday, and all purchases will be made on universal credit cards. Each transaction will be electronically

recorded in a computer network that will maintain a running account of everyone's financial activities. The tax dodger will become a historical curiosity."

The technology is available, if mankind chooses to use it. An eighty-nine page study prepared by James Rule was presented in September, 1975, to the Committee on the Right of Privacy, headed by then-Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller. It told of both the beneficial and detrimental social impact of Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), the system described by Miller, in which a person would have one computer account for all transactions. The study pointed out several situations made possible by such a system: a traffic offender delinquent in paying his ticket would not be able to make any more EFTs. And persons sought by the police could be coerced into surrender by not allowing them to make any business transactions.

Whatever one's view of Revelation 13, it must be admitted that the evangelical scenario is even now technically feasible. Given zealous church and political leaders determined to utilize economic coercion against nonconformists (not so farfetched, when one considers the stated objectives of the lobbies seeking to make America a Christian republic), what today seems like science fiction may quickly become prophetic fulfillment.

It makes one think. What will take place the next few years? Indeed, Rev. 13 may be very near its fulfillment.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Distressed But Not Depressed

Rev. John A. Heys

Step by step the divine plan is executed, and the events occur as divinely designed in inscrutable wisdom. Joseph is sold into Egypt by his brothers and bought by Potiphar the captain of the guard. He is sold because his brothers do not want his dreams to be fulfilled; and he is bought by the man whom God selected and raised up, just exactly in order that Joseph's dreams might be fulfilled. Deceitfully he is charged with evil, and, because of it, cast into the king's prison, so that he can be brought before the king to explain his dreams. The king's butler and baker are cast into this same prison, so that Joseph can meet them and, through

explaining their dreams, be brought in time before the king whom he must meet.

In Genesis 39:1 Potiphar is called the captain of the king's guard. We read, further, in Genesis 40:1-4, that the king put his butler and baker in the prison, and that the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them. We conclude therefore that Potiphar was the one who consigned these two servants of the king to Joseph. This is understandable. Potiphar did not have a change of mind about the crime of which Joseph was unjustly accused, and for which he had sent him into prison. He did not

bring Joseph out of prison, did not commute his sentence. He considered it wise to keep him there, even though the keeper of the prison had found no fault in Joseph, and had exalted him to the position of full control of all the prisoners. We may be sure that Potiphar knew all this and was quite aware of Joseph's faithfulness there in prison. The man he had trusted with all his goods before this, he still considered trustworthy in the prison. Here there were no women to tempt him. This besetting sin, as Potiphar viewed it, Joseph could not fall into in the prison—certainly not with his wife. And he agreed to this elevation of Joseph as long as he stays in prison. And, after all, Joseph must still be punished for his "crime." Yet, behind it is God, Who has His purpose in having Joseph left in prison and elevated for what must follow in the divine plan. The little chick must remain in the egg-shell till a particular moment; and Joseph must remain incarcerated in the king's prison until God's moment has come. He is not forgotten of God. But his continued imprisonment is due to the fact that God has him in mind, and is working all things together for his good.

Added now to the prisoners is one who, like Joseph, is unjustly accused of an evil which he did not perform. Even as Joseph was cast into the prison without a hearing, the butler was cast with the baker into the prison where Joseph was being held. Who offended the king was not yet determined, but in his fury the king cast both of them into the dungeon. It would seem that here too was circumstantial evidence that incriminated the butler with the baker. And what the two, Joseph and the butler, had in common was that God was using both of them for the good of His church. Both will be brought out of prison because of dreams, although God has a rather long period of time between the two releases. We would say that Joseph who had been there before the butler deserved to be out before he was. But we speak foolishly, for Joseph did not deserve to be there at all. He was there because of God's mercy, and not because of Joseph's guilt. And God's clock and calendar have the right moments for every event in history. His grace and mercy upon His church set the day, the hour, as well as the year.

The dreams of the butler and baker have one point of similarity in that both have the figure three in them. This does not have symbolic meaning as referring to the Trinity. The three branches of the butler's dream, and the three baskets of the baker's dream refer only to the three days when the king will "lift up" the heads of these two men, the one to his former position, and the other to the gallows.

Joseph concluded his interpretation of the dream of the butler with a plea to be remembered before

Pharaoh. He sought to appeal his case before the Supreme Court of the land. He knew that he must appeal to one above Potiphar who controlled the prison; and that one was the king who controlled Potiphar.

Did we not know the outcome and only Joseph's innocence, we could shed tears for him when he cried out, "Think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon." Step by step, we said, the divine plan is being executed. Event follows event in the divinely inscrutable wisdom that has planned Joseph's future. But Joseph himself was human, and he could not see and know then what we know today. His cry reveals that he was sinking ever more deeply, and his soul was being overwhelmed more and more with distress. He had fallen from the position of being a beloved son at home with his father to a slave in a strange land, from friendship unto bondage. In his servitude he had been exalted; but he had remained a slave who could not return to his father's home with its joys. Falsely accused he was debased further into life imprisonment. And though in the dungeon it went relatively well with him, to the point that he had freedom in the prison, experiencing exaltation amid debasement, having all the prisoners committed to him, he nevertheless was in deep distress. Though chief of the prisoners, he was a prisoner and not a free man. He could not get out of prison to return home. His plea shows how badly he wanted to get "out of this house."

And the days that passed by since the butler was given his freedom only added to Joseph's woes. The human mind is an active organ that causes us untold grief because, grappling with the unknown, it often makes deductions and arrives at conclusions that distress the soul further. Well could Joseph have wondered whether the king, having been told by the butler what Joseph's plight was, simply dismissed the whole matter so that now it had become a closed case, the Supreme Court having thrown the case out with no recourse left for Joseph. He did not know that the butler had forgotten completely. And even we, who know the outcome, and know that this ungrateful servant of the king did completely fail to think again of Joseph, are amazed at that fact. How could he have forgotten? Could a man forget an imprisonment that was so recent? Does one forget such an experience, when life hung in the balance for a time, and when such a happy ending was the outcome? Was there not a new baker in the king's service? And would not the presence of this new personage

remind the butler of his experiences with the other baker?

Here, too, we must remember that the divine plan is being executed. Inscrutable wisdom is here at work. God's hand is *with* Joseph. And that hand completely erased from the butler's mind Joseph's plea and request. He, the Divine Protector, Who neither slumbers nor sleeps, has His plan rooted in love and executed in tender mercy. Joseph must not go home! Joseph cannot go home! And do you not see the love, the mercy, and the inscrutable wisdom in it that gives this mental block in the mind of the butler? There is work for Joseph in *Egypt*, so that the covenant line in Canaan may survive the coming famine—of which neither Joseph, nor Pharaoh, nor Jacob and his family are aware. And that covenant family must survive because Christ is in its loins. If He is not born, because the covenant line dies in the famine, no one will ever know God's love, mercy, and grace; and all will be in a fiery dungeon that in comparison makes Pharaoh's and Potiphar's house of torture as nothing. We would still be in our sins; and the holy wrath of God would burn upon us without end! The Christ must come and, being falsely accused, be nailed to a tree so that, before God, there will never be any accusations against us, and we may eat of the tree of life in the new Jerusalem.

But, as we said, Joseph does not know this work which he must do in Egypt. He does not know the details of God's plan. And he cannot see how the things of the moment will work together for his and our good. And note that we said, Joseph does not know the details of God's plan. He did know the general lines of that plan; and that is what kept him, in his distress, from being depressed, and gave him hope instead of despair. The Supreme Court may have seemed to have thrown out his case, but he knew that God would bring him out in His own time.

How did he know this? Those dreams that God gave him, and which filled his brothers with such envy and hatred were for Joseph a source of comfort. They were God's Word to him. And, holding on to God's Word, walking by faith, the child of God is sustained in the midst of all the distress and trials of this life. When God shows the child of God who holds on to His Word that this is not His way, that child of God still believes that there is a way. And he waits for God to reveal the details of that way in his life. His soul sings,

"My soul in silence waits for God,
My Saviour He has proved;
He only is my rock and tower;
I never shall be moved.
My honour is secure with God,

My Saviour He is known;
My refuge and my rock of strength
Are found in God alone." Psalm 62

Would it have been good for Joseph to know the details in God's way? Would his faith have been stronger? Was his plea to the butler a manifestation of weakening faith? Did it contradict those words, "My soul in silence waits for God"? Not at all! To all these questions there must be an emphatic NO! Had it been good for Joseph, God would have made him know the details. It would not have served the strengthening of his faith. God strengthens faith through His Word; but knowing too much detail of His counsel will easily cause one to walk by sight rather than by faith. And that holds true for us today, when we are curious to know just how the confusion and economic, political, international, social distresses of the day will serve the coming of the Antichrist. Faith needs to know. It is essential for faith that we know what God promises, and that it is He Who promises. We need to know the broad lines of the way that sent His Son and had Him crucified, raised, and exalted in heaven over all creation. But detailed knowledge of His counsel, because we are still in this sinful flesh, would tend to less exercise of faith, and a weakening of faith rather than a strengthening of it. Joseph's cry for the butler to help him was no weakening of his faith. God uses means, and He insists that we use means. When we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" He insists that we work for it. We are not to wait for Him to put it on the table, or even in our mouths! And He insists also that we use our minds.

To wait in silence means to keep our lips from complaining when God works differently than we had planned. But it means also that we are very vocal in our words of praise to Him for His goodness.

The butler forgot because God had not forgotten either His promise to Joseph in the dreams, or us in this day and age. Keep before you always the truth that He keeps His Word, and that His way is the best way, because it is the only way. Then when distressed you will not be depressed but hopeful and patient, leaving your future to divine inscrutable wisdom and unchanging love that have never failed and will never fail.

*The Standard Bearer
makes a thoughtful gift
for a shut-in.*

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Spirit of this Age

Rev. K. Koole

"...unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate."

Titus 1:15, 16

Strictly speaking the subject of this article, "The Spirit of this Age," is not a sign of the time, at least not in the sense of having been included traditionally in the lists of signs of the time. Yet it is not asserting too much to say that the spirit of this age is THE sign of the time.

Every age can be characterized by a certain "spirit." The point of this article is that the Spirit of our age is unique; it sets our age apart from those which have gone before. It is also an indicator which points conclusively to the nearness of Christ's return. It not only *shows* that the world is ripe for judgment, but it serves to *make* the world ripe for judgment. It is the Spirit of this age which serves as fertile ground for the full ripening of evil in society, such as lawlessness and lust. The frightening aspect of this "spirit" is that no one is immune to its influence, not the elect themselves. To my mind there is nothing so immediately dangerous to the Church of Jesus Christ as the Spirit of this age. It is when one considers the workings of the Spirit of this age that the solemn, sobering truth of Christ's prophetic words strike home, "Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"

The question arises, what are we talking about when we speak of "The Spirit of this Age"? The phrase, though frequently used, is not so easily defined. It is not something concrete and specific, as are for instance, the Anti-Christ, the Great Tribulation, or catastrophies in nature. It is more abstract. But it is, nonetheless, very real, and not imagined.

When one speaks of the Spirit of our age one is referring to the basic moral-ethical atmosphere of this age. The Spirit of this age is the prevailing attitude which governs and influences society in all of its life—its philosophy and its behavior. To determine what the Spirit of this age is, is to attempt to

answer the question, "What is the prevailing attitude of society in general towards what men intuitively know to be the Creator's standard of morality?"

That there is such an intuitive, increased consciousness which indicates to natural man what he is called by God to do is very plain from Romans 2:14, 15. "For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." The text speaks of the law of the conscience by which man knows that immorality is disobedience to God and that it has His severe disapproval. The question is, how do men treat this inner law which witnesses against sinful behavior? Pertinent for our purposes is the question, what today is different about man's attitude towards the inner, accusing law of that conscience? The contention of this writer is that there is a difference, a marked difference.

In simplest terms the Spirit that distinguishes this present age from the past is that our society is characterized by an appalling lack of shame. Man is not ill at ease in the performance of gross evil, not at all. Rather men glory in their shame; they flaunt it; they revel in it; they publicize their "exploits." They do not keep their excesses secret; rather they write their autobiographies, which explicitly deal with their immoralities. The public devours this pornographic pulp, and cries for more. This is one indication that shame is more and more becoming a thing of the past.

It must be understood that shame is not to be confused with embarrassment, though they are cousins, still less with repentance or some form of godly remorse. Rather, shame stems from a fear of being exposed for having committed some sin. It is the desire to cover over some wrong doing from the eye of God and man. Shame is the evidence of a conscience which speaks of one's guilt, a guilt one is ashamed to admit to.

The person who experiences shame recognizes

intuitively that iniquity demeans a man. So it was with Adam and Eve. Having eaten of the forbidden fruit, and having rebelled, their eyes were opened. They knew that they were naked. They were exposed to God and to each other in their lust, corruption, and guilt. They knew that they who had been God's prophets, priests, and kings in creation, standing at the very pinnacle of things earthly, had debased themselves. No longer were they God-like, but from the point of view of their passions and lustful appetites they had debased themselves to the level of brute beasts. And Adam and Eve's posterity gave evidence that they were even more prey to their carnal appetites than were the brute beasts. In time they would practice that which even the brute beasts themselves have no desire of doing, namely performing that which is contrary to nature (Rom. 1:24ff). So they would degrade themselves, and *delight* in it. How demeaning in light of man's former high estate!

Disobedient Adam and Eve realized how they had demeaned themselves, when compared to their past royal perfection, and they were immediately filled with shame. That is part of the reason they sought to cover themselves with fig leaves. They did not want the other to see how degraded they had become. However, in the development of Adam's posterity there came a point where men did not feel this shame in the committing of gross public sins. Boldly they boasted about them without fear of society's disapproval. What disapproval there was, was weak and inconsequential. Witness the boastful behavior of Lamech, who, having killed a man, strutted before his two wives singing a song. It is recorded in Genesis 4:23, 24. "Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold."

What is striking is how different after the deed Lamech's attitude was from Cain's. Both were murderers, yet Cain demonstrated a natural shame. He tried to cover it up. When God forced a "confession" from him, he expressed great fear as to what society (his family) would do to him when they found out. His conscience was touched with shame. Not so Lamech's. He killed a man in cold blood and sang about it. He wanted it to be public knowledge. That Moses records this song in Holy Scripture centuries later indicates that Lamech's deed and boast did become well known. Openly he boasted of his deed. He felt no shame. His conscience was untouched. His attitude was different from Cain's—markedly.*

It is significant that whereas Cain felt he needed protection from society's revenge, Lamech evidently was confident that this deed would en-

hance his reputation in society rather than harm it. Lamech's very boldness, in which he defied anyone to lay a hand on him, indicates that a different 'Spirit' prevailed in those later days of the pre-deluvian world than in the days immediately following the fall. There is no indication that Lamech was forced to become a vagabond in the earth, an outlaw, as Cain was. What Lamech did was acceptable to that day's society. And it is exactly this Spirit, which dominated society, that encouraged and fostered brazen, shameless behavior such as Lamech's. In time there is progressive degeneration of the conscience, it becomes seared, and this reveals itself in the shameless way in which wicked men deport themselves.

Most significantly, in scripture the history of Lamech's brazen conduct is followed closely by the record of the flood. Genesis 6:5ff states "And God saw the the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of his heart was only evil continually.....And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth...." Lamech stands as an instance of the great wickedness of man upon the earth just prior to the flood. Scripture's point is that a society which countenances men like Lamech is ripe for judgment. A society which is composed of men to whom shame is as foreign as it was to Lamech is a society with which God will not bear any longer. When this society encompasses the whole earth, then will come the end. "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and all of their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 14, 15). Surely this arrogant "Lamechian" attitude, defiant of all law, untouched by shame, is prevalent in our day. Can the judgment be far behind?

(to be continued)

*In this connection two points should be made. In the first place, that Cain's conscience pricked him, causing him to feel shame, whereas Lamech's did not, does not imply that Cain was better than Lamech or less totally depraved. Such a notion is decisively dispelled by I John 3.

In the second place, the existence of a sensitive conscience in an unbelieving man does not enable that man to do works pleasing to God. The conscience simply declares to a man that the wrong he does displeases God. Its function is wholly negative. It does not serve to guide in a way of righteousness. God's Holy Word alone can do that.

*Take time to study
The Standard Bearer*

SPECIAL ARTICLE

Reformed, Yet Always Reforming (3)

Prof. H. Hanko

How is reform brought about?

In the first place, I cannot emphasize strongly enough that all reform in the church of Jesus Christ is the work of God, through Christ, by the Spirit of Christ, in the hearts of God's people. When we confess our faith in one holy Catholic church, according to Lord's Day XXI, Q. & A. 54, we confess, among other things, that it is the Son of God Who *preserves* His church from the beginning to the end of time. *God* reforms the church. You do not reform it. I do not reform it. Nor can any consistory or classis or synod reform the church. God reforms His church because God has promised to preserve His church to the very end, and He will. Whatever happens to the church here in the city of Grand Rapids, or whatever happens to any particular denomination in the future, there is one thing of which we may be certain: God will preserve His church! If He does not do this through us, He will do it without us. But He will preserve it unto the very end. And because the work of reformation is God's work, he who is concerned with the reformation of the church is the one who, with all his heart and mind and soul and strength, looks to God for reformation!

Luther, shortly before he died, looking back over his life, made the startling remark that from that first moment when he pounded the nails in the paper which held his theses to the chapel door of the church at Wittenburg, was carried along by forces greater than himself and against which he was helpless. He rode the crest of a wave over which he had no control. All the events of his life were a mighty force that carried him along. He in no sense determined the directions in which it went. That was his own confession concerning his life and work as a reformer.

Reformation always has two sides to it, a negative side and a positive side. To re-form the church one must get out of the church all that is bad, and put into it all that is good. Both are important. There are those who have tried to reform the church only by getting out of it that which is bad. What happens then is that after the room is swept and garnished, the devil, who was cast out, goes out and finds seven more devils, who take up their

abode in that church, and the latter end of that church is worse than the former. You cannot just simply put the devils out of the church; you have to put God into it.

All reformation which is satisfied only with the negative aspect is not reformation.

Reformation begins in the heart of the child of God. That is the way it was with Luther. The Reformation did not really begin on October 31, 1517, when Luther nailed his theses to the chapel door of the church of Wittenburg. That is the date we commemorate. But the Reformation began when God came into Luther's heart and would not give Luther one moment of peace. God did that. Luther lived in mortal terror of the judgment, wrath, and fury of God against his sin. God led Luther to try every prescription which the Roman Catholic Church offered as the solution to this problem. God made Luther go on his knees on the *Sancta Scala* in Rome. God made Luther enter a monastery and obey all the rules of a monk. God wanted Luther to understand, in the depths of his soul, that all that the Roman Catholic Church prescribed as the antidote for such fear of wrath was useless and a perversion of Scripture. But it had to be thrown out. Only then could Luther see the cross, and the power of the blood of Jesus Christ once again, and understand that it was in the cross of Christ, and in that cross alone, that he had forgiveness and peace with God. When he learned that, the Reformation was genuinely begun in principle form. Everything that happened after that in Luther's work, in Calvin's work, and in the work of all the Reformers was a development of what had already fundamentally and principally taken place in the soul of Luther. God tore Luther out of the clutches of Rome and placed him firmly at the foot of Calvary. That is where Reformation began.

The relationship is this. It is impossible to rid the church of that which is wrong and bring back that which is according to the Scriptures until this very thing takes place in our own hearts. There must be the crucifixion of the old man and the putting on of the new man. In short, there must be conversion, which is really reformation, in the hearts of God's people. And this must take place through the cross

of Jesus Christ.

This is what makes reformation so difficult. As much as we like to see reformation in the church, it is a big price to pay to reform our own wicked life. We do not particularly care to do this. Nevertheless, that is where it begins, because that is where the work of God begins: in conversion and repentance in the hearts of God's people. And it begins by repentance, which ruthlessly, but by the power of grace, roots out of our lives those idols before which we have chosen to bow; it means to put again into our lives the Word of God, in the position where it belongs, as the authority of all our life. Until that happens there will never be reformation.

That is what it means to be sons and daughters of the Reformation. It means to understand that *the* fundamental principle of the Reformation is this: to be Reformed is to be always reforming.

When the Word of God has been restored to its proper place in our life, then it can be restored to its proper place in the life of our families, so that it becomes, once again, the focal point of the life in our households. Then it can also become the Word of God which has its proper place in the church, in the life of the church, in the preaching, in the rule of the office bearers, in the distributions of the mercies of Christ, and the communion of the saints. Then the old fervor, the old excitement is restored in the church. Then the preaching comes alive and is once again filled with warmth and zeal. And doctrine is not cold, abstract doctrine, but the life of the child of God which he experiences in the depths of his own soul. It is not the preaching, then, of Jesus Christ Who died for the elect, but it is the preaching of Jesus Christ Who died for *me*! *I* am washed in the blood of Christ from all my sins now and forever. Every truth of the gospel has its echo and its response in the depths of our souls. Then doctrine becomes real and alive, and the Word of God becomes once again the focal point of all our life and of all the life of the church of Jesus Christ.

But all this means, just as it does in our life, that, in the church, discipline must be exercised, and those who will not bow before the Word of God must be put out. For the sake of the cause of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the truth of the gospel, for the sake of reformation, evil, wherever it appears, must be rooted out. Reformation will not result in a return to the Word of God until evil is taken out of the midst of the church.

But if the church has reached the point where it is impossible for the faithful remnant to restore the church, there is only one course of action that is left: reformation must come about through secession. The Reformers did this when the Roman Catholic Church proved herself beyond reform.

There is only one course of action to pursue. It can happen in any church, even ours. But if we are not reformed and therefore *always* reforming, it will come to that, beyond doubt. As difficult as that may be, the cause of Christ and His Church is more important than anything else.

The Reformers were accused of the sin of schism, especially by Cardinal Sadolet, when he addressed the citizens of Geneva where Calvin had been, to try to win them back to the Romish fold. He accused Calvin and the other Reformers of leaving the church and rending the body of Christ, and of thus becoming guilty of schism. Calvin's answer, in what was a masterpiece in the defense of the Reformation, was in effect this: not those who leave the church are guilty of schism, but those who depart from the doctrines of Christ, they tear the church to pieces, because the unity of the church is the unity of her doctrine of Jesus Christ her Head. And to destroy and to deny her doctrine is to create schism. Not *we*, Calvin says, but *you*, Cardinals and Bishops and Popes, *you* have created schism in the body of Christ. *Our* hands are clean of that sin.

J.C. Ryle, a nineteenth century theologian, faced the same question in his own England. He wrote, "He who deliberately settles down under any ministry which is positively unsound is a very unwise man. I do believe when this false doctrine is unmistakably preached in a parish church, a parishioner who loves his soul is quite right in not going to that parish church. Divisions and separations are most objectionable in religion. They weaken the cause of true Christianity, they give occasion to the enemies of all godliness to blaspheme. But before we blame people for them we must be careful that we lay the blame where it is deserved. False doctrine and heresy are even worse than schism. In such cases separation is a virtue and not a sin. Controversy in religion is a hateful thing. It is hard enough to fight the devil, the world, and the flesh, without private differences in our own camp, but there is one thing which is even worse than controversy, and that is false doctrine tolerated, allowed, and permitted without protest or molestation. It was controversy that won the battle of the Protestant Reformation. Three things there are which men never ought to trifle with: a little poison, a little false doctrine, and a little sin."

It takes courage to say to mother, "You are no longer my mother, you have become unfaithful; you no longer feed me, I must leave you." But it is the courage of grace. It is the courage which begins in our own life when before God we cry out for forgiveness for all our sins and plead for grace to root them out that we may serve God in all our life ac-

according to the Scriptures. And if that courage of faith is there to restore the Word of God to its focal point in my life, then the courage will be there to do what has to be done, even to the point of separation, to restore the Word of God to its focal point in

the life of the church.

Are we children of the Reformation? Do we have the right to call ourselves Reformed? Are we a people who are always reforming? This is the only true way to commemorate the Reformation.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Two Kinds of Churches Active in China Today

Prof. R.D. Decker

Los Angeles - With all the news about the survival of Christianity in Communist China, it is important to realize that there are two kinds of churches in China today, not just one, a noted China watcher said here.

The Rev. Silas Hong, executive director of United Evangelism to the Chinese, based here, warned those trying to make contact with Christians in China that there is an official, government-sanctioned church in China which may not represent the Gospel for the purest of motives.

The Three-Self Patriotic Movement is the Chinese Equivalent of the Soviet Protestant Council for Religious Affairs which strictly controls all church matters for political reasons, Dr. Hong pointed out.

"It is common knowledge," Dr. Hong said, "that this 'Chinese Religious Affairs Bureau' is very surprised and concerned with the mushrooming of home churches all over China," churches that faithfully represent a revival of spirituality among

the Chinese.

The thousands of "house churches" remain strictly separate from the government-controlled religious movement for spiritual, not political reasons, Dr. Hong explained. In many, if not most cases, they are "religious groups organized in secrecy (or semi-secrecy) among citizens" for their own safety.

The danger to the prospect for evangelization in China is that Westerners will assume that the official church truly represents the revival of Christianity that visitors to China lately have sensed and some have witnessed. Actually, to assume that the official church is the point of contact with the underground Christian movement could result in both embarrassment and danger to that movement, Dr. Hong suggested.

(This article was taken from the Presbyterian Journal, Dec. 1980)

QUESTION BOX

Rev. C. Hanko

The Two Philips

Some time ago I was pleasantly surprised by a question from one of our high school students. Maybe this will open the way for more. The questions reads,

"In our dictionaries, they distinguish Philip the Apostle from Philip the Evangelist, or

Philip the Deacon. Now I always thought that they were the same man. I was wondering what you think about this from a Biblical point of view."

First of all, let me offer my apologies for not answering this before, because of the press of other

duties. I do appreciate hearing from our readers, especially from our young folk. The fact is, that Scripture does distinguish between Philip the Apostle and Philip the Evangelist, or Deacon. Philip the Apostle is mentioned in John 1:43, 44, where we read, "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." Later, in Matthew 10:2, 3 this Philip is mentioned among the twelve disciples. Now in Acts 6:5 we meet the other Philip. How do we know that this is not the same one? First of all, he is mentioned along with Stephen and five others as being chosen by the church in Jerusalem to serve as deacon. It is conceivable, of course, although not likely, that an apostle would be chosen as a deacon. But this is not the case, for in verse 6 we read that these seven men were set before the apostles (of which Philip was one), "and when they had prayed

they laid their hands on them," that is, they ordained them to serve in the office of deacon in the church. It is Philip the Deacon who is mentioned in Acts 7 as going down to Samaria to preach Christ unto those of Samaria. Verse 14 of chapter 7 tells us that the apostles heard that Samaria had received the gospel, and therefore they sent Peter and John there. It would not be necessary to send Peter and John to Samaria if an apostle had already been there to lay the gift of the Holy Spirit upon them. This same Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch on the way to Gaza. In Acts 21:8 he is called Philip the Evangelist, and we are told that Paul stayed at his home before going to Jerusalem for the last time. In verse 9 we are informed that this Philip had four daughters at home who prophesied. So it is quite evident from Scripture that distinction is made between Philip the Apostle and Philip the Evangelist, or Philip the Deacon.

Liturgical Changes in our Churches

A reader asks,

There are many changes made in the liturgy of our Sunday worship services. Why? Is this a good sign or a bad omen?

It is certainly true that many changes are being introduced into our Sunday worship services. When a visiting minister steps into the consistory room on Sunday he must first ask about the form of worship, for there are hardly two of our churches that have the same form of worship. Visitors from other churches do well to check the back of the bulletin to acquaint themselves with the form used in that particular church service.

Whether these changes are good or bad is well worth considering. It is true that all change is not necessarily wrong. Change may be, and sometimes is a definite improvement. If a change adds to the solemnity of the service, enhances the service as a *worship* service of praise and adoration to our God, so that God occupies the central place in our liturgy, then certainly a change can well be recommended.

But change for the mere sake of change is definitely wrong. There is a certain sense of well-being, of contentment in knowing exactly what takes place from moment to moment, so that one can concentrate all his attention on the singing, the prayer, the reading of Scripture, and the sermon. Our fathers have always maintained that the *Word*

of God must permeate and dominate every worship service. Our thoughts must not be distracted from our fellowship with God, or from hearing Christ speak to us through His Word in the communion of saints.

In the traditional form of worship as we are acquainted with it, the fathers wanted to emphasize that God speaks to His people, and His people respond in humble prayer, thanksgiving, and adoration. Our Sabbath is a weekly commemoration of the victory of Christ over Satan, sin, death and the grave through His glorious resurrection. Therefore we also have a foretaste of the eternal Rest in covenant fellowship with God, for we have His eternal promise, "I will be your God, and ye shall be My people forever."

The tendency in the churches of today has been to move away from that. In some churches so much time is taken up by soloists, choirs, and other forms of entertainment, that very little time remains for the reading of Scripture and the sermon. In other churches congregational participation is the popular thing. Various antics are introduced to attract the attention of the children and the young people. Group discussion and movies and similar forms of entertainment are introduced, so that the emphasis is diverted from God and His Word to mere man.

Even though these evils have not found their

way into our churches, we must still be on our guard against them. A clamor for change is not a healthy sign. When members of the congregation, whether young or old, find the services tedious and dry, or complain that they are not being edified and do not enjoy going to church, they may well ask themselves, first, whether the reason may lie with themselves. Changes can never please everybody.

But a clamor for changes can only lead to ever more drastic changes. Outward stimulants do not cure the lack of spiritual enthusiasm or cold indifference.

Above all, I would make a strong plea for unity and harmony in the liturgy in our churches. Consistories should strive toward that common goal as an expression of our unity in faith and godly walk.

Demands and Obligations in God's Covenant

Another reader asks:

"Why is there always spoken of a demand in the covenant or of an obligation that we have to fulfill or do? How can this be explained in harmony with the unconditional covenant?"

Let me assure you, first of all, that no demand in the covenant, and no obligation can ever depend upon us, as if in some form or manner we become a second party in God's covenant who must somehow reciprocate to God for the blessings received, or do our part, even as God has done His part for us.

Nevertheless, our Baptism Form does speak of *our part* in God's covenant. We read, "Thirdly. Whereas in all covenants, there are contained two parts: therefore are we by God through Baptism admonished of, and obliged unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; that we trust in Him, and love Him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our mind, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life."

Our Baptism Form is speaking of and to those who are indeed members of God's covenant. They are assured through baptism that God has established an eternal covenant of grace with them, that Christ washes them in His blood and incorporates them into the fellowship of His death and resurrection, and that the Holy Spirit will dwell in them and sanctify them until they are presented without spot

or wrinkle in the assembly of the elect in life eternal.

In other words, they can and may, but also they will and *must* trust in and love the Lord their God with their whole being. Paul teaches us in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His (God's) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." And again in Philippians 2:12, 13, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, *for* (notice that 'for') it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

We can also express this in the words of Romans 6:14: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." That "shall" is the assurance to the child of God that the power and dominion of sin are broken by the cross. We are delivered from the bondage of sin and death, and therefore from the curse of the law, to walk in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. We live by *grace*, not by works.

Therefore, whenever we speak of the demand in God's covenant or of our obligation in the covenant, it must always be stressed that this is the *fruit* of grace wrought by God in us, so that we can and may offer to Him the sacrifice of our lives to His praise and to His glory.

I hope I have answered your question. If not, feel free to write again.

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

Book Review

GOSPEL AND LAW, CONTRAST OR CONTINUUM? The Hermeneutics of Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology, by Daniel P. Fuller; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980; 217 pp., \$10.95 (paper). (Review by Prof. H. Hanko)

Donald Fuller is professor of Hermeneutics at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He has written, in this volume, a rather important book in which he examines the hermeneutics of Dispensationalists and of "Covenant Theologians" on the question of the unity of the Old and New Testaments. In this examination he finds that the hermeneutics of both are wrong in important respects. It is as if he says, "A plague on both your houses." With regard to covenant theology, he argues that it is wrong because it sets grace and law in antithesis and denies that good works proceed from faith. In this way covenant theologians make a bifurcation of Old Testament law and New Testament grace.

But his biggest guns are aimed at Dispensational hermeneutics, which he examines in detail and criticizes at length. He points out very clearly that Dispensationalism teaches two ways of salvation: for the Jew, the works of the law; faith for the Gentile. This remains true even though later Dispensationalism attempts to repudiate this notion. Dispensationalism claims to keep the church free from legalism and Galatianism, but it only seems to do this by putting Israel under the law and making salvation dependent on the law. The result is that, essentially, covenant theologians and Dispensationalists make the same mistake: they both teach that Scripture runs law and grace alongside each other—alternating between them.

The real meat of this book, therefore, is a lengthy exegesis of Galatians 3:12 and Romans 10:5-8. His position is that all the promises of God are fulfilled on the basis of satisfying the condition which Scripture calls the obedience of faith.

There are certain areas in the book where I would dissent from the writer's position. While his criticism of covenant theology is to the point, the fact is that his criticism is really leveled against those covenant theologians who hold to a conditional covenant. I wonder what his criticism would be of the covenant theology which was developed by Hoeksema with its unconditional emphasis. Secondly, by his emphasis on the obedience of faith, it seems to me that Fuller does not himself succeed in escaping the criticisms which he levels against other covenant theologians. Thirdly, there is insufficient attention paid to the real relation between the law in the Old Testament and the promise, i.e., that the law also pointed ahead to Christ and was the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Only within a proper understanding of this view (and there were many theologians within the Reformed tradition who had such a proper understanding), is it possible to come to a correct answer to this question. Fuller has not done this.

Nevertheless, his book is valuable in that it calls attention to a difficult problem, suggests a line of solution and points out with clarity the basic weaknesses of Dispensational hermeneutics. Because the argument is somewhat involved, we recommend this book to those who are willing to put forth some mental effort to understand what is sometimes difficult reading.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 17, 1981, our parents, MR. AND MRS. GERALD KORHORN will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for keeping them for each other and for us, their children and grandchildren.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, it profiteth me nothing...now abideth faith, hope, love, these three, and the greatest of these is love." (I Corinthians 13:13)

Jerry and Gayle Korhorn

Gary, Jeannie and great grandchild, Eric

Ernie Korhorn

Mark, Kris and Scott

Jim and Ellen Pastoor

Randy, Rob, Darlene, Todd and Michelle

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing, on June 3, 1981, our parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. LORENZ BERTSCH will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary in Loveland, Colorado.

We, their children and grandchildren thank our Heavenly Father for all the years of dedication in love and Christian instruction that we have received. It is our eternal prayer that the Lord will continue to bless and keep them ever in His care.

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. 12:11).

Roger and Peggy Kamphuis

Dale, Doug, Dennis, Paul, Ruthanne, Faith

Larry and Darlene Bertsch

Rachel, David, Jonathan

Tim Bertsch

Terri Bertsch

News From Our Churches

The calls of our Redlands and Isabel congregations to Rev. Van Baren and Rev. Slopsema respectively have been declined.

Reaching into my file of unused news items I find some order of worship changes among our churches: Since March 15 our Loveland congregation has conducted all their congregational singing while standing. Also, they have instituted an offertory, the intent of which is to "place a proper emphasis on *giving* as a separate act of worship." Hudsonville has "decided to continue recitation of the Apostles' Creed in unison as a regular part of our church service." From a Faith, Jenison bulletin we learn that, "Beginning next Sunday, February 1st, the doxology sung after the evening service will be Psalter 196 instead of 'May the Grace of Christ Our Savior.' Whereas we have sung of the grace of God in our doxology for the last several years, we now will sing of another aspect of His Being, namely, His glory." And a Doon, Iowa bulletin announces that, "the consistory has decided to sing doxology #8 'May the Grace of Christ Our Savior' at the end of our afternoon service and to the tune of Ps. #222. We will sing Ps. #197 as our doxology at the end of the morning service. These changes will be implemented next week, Feb. 1." It appears that on February 1 Doon picked up where Faith left off as far as the doxology "May the Grace of Christ Our Savior" is concerned.

Like fall, spring is a time during which many speeches and lectures are arranged by various organizations of our churches. On April 3 Prof. Hanko spoke at a lecture, sponsored by the South Holland Men's Society, on the topic, "Spiritual Feror—Why Is It Waning?" One week before that, Prof. Hanko spoke for the Southwest Men's and Ladies' Societies on, "The Proper Preparation for the Sabbath." The Loveland Men's Society arranged a special mission program on March 5 with Rev. Kamps speaking and showing "pictures

of our mission activity, especially Singapore." Back in Doon a month later Rev. Kamps spoke again, this time for the Ladies' League, on the topic "Trying the Spirits." "The Free Woman in Christ" was the topic of a speech given by Miss Agatha Lubbers, teacher in our Covenant Christian High School, as she addressed the Grand Rapids area Mr. and Mrs. League. At a May 5 Sunday School Teachers' Mass Meeting in First Church, Mr. Don Doezeema, principal of our Covenant Christian High School, presented a slide program on Palestine. Rev. Miersma spoke for the Eastern Men's and Ladies' League on the topic, "The Moral Majority Movement—Should We Support It?" Incidentally, a cassette tape of this speech is available for \$2.50 by writing to the Evangelism Committee, c/o First Prot. Ref. Church, 290 East 18th St., Holland, MI 49423. Tapes of the recent lecture "Salvation: Gospel or Offer?" by Rev. Cammenga are available by writing to Hull Prot. Ref. Church, 1204 Third St., Hull, Iowa 51239. Finally, at this writing (May 11) we have one future lecture to report: on May 14 Rev. Steven Houck, home missionary pastor at Lansing, Michigan will speak at the Jenison High School Auditorium on "Return to Historic Calvinism." A recording of this lecture can be obtained by sending \$3.00 to the RFP, P.O. Box 6064, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

At the risk of forfeiting my right to the trust of the below-mentioned pastor (who would prefer to remain anonymous) we submit the following bulletin announcement: "We would express a special word of thanks to Mr. C. Kalsbeek who so kindly returned the pastor's check which was inadvertently sent to him. Mr. Kalsbeek neither asked for nor received a reward. We trust he will be printing none of this in his column in the *Standard Bearer*." Though I was very hesitant to publish that announcement, I felt it was necessary because the incident reveals a serious misunderstanding that should be cleared up: When I made a plea for news a few columns ago, I did not have items of a personal, financial nature in mind. CK