

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

...A believer must always be a willing giver. His gift must not be an extorted gift but a willing offering. Yes, more deeply, the inclination of the heart must be watched to see that there is not only a presentation of the alms, but a priestly sharing of pity; to see that there is not pride which condescends to misery, but deep mercy which knows that he is one with the poorest and most needy as a fellow brother and sister in the Lord....

Dr. A. Kuyper

See "'Translated Treasures'" —page 31

## CONTENTS

Meditation—	
In God's Holy Temple. ....	26
Editorial—	
The GKN on the Nature of the Authority	
of Scripture (8) . . . . .	29
Translated Treasures—	
A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation	
of the Church . . . . .	31
From Holy Writ—	
The So-called Proof-texts of Postmillennialism . .	33
My Sheep Hear My Voice—	
Letter to Timothy. ....	35
Letter from the Seminary . . . . .	38
All Around Us—	
Who is Jesus? . . . . .	39
"The Bible and TV Guide" . . . . .	40
Should Jews Be Evangelized . . . . .	40
Kromminga on an Alternate Seminary. ....	40
In His Fear—	
"Children, Obey Your Parents" . . . . .	41
Signs of the Times—	
Our Children: God's Gracious Gift . . . . .	43
Question Box—	
Public Confession of Sin. ....	45
Book Review. ....	47
Report of Classis West . . . . .	48

## THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.

Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.  
Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

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

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

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

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

*Editorial Policy:* Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question-Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

*Reprint Policy:* Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

*Business Office:* The Standard Bearer  
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr. PH: (616) 243-2953  
P.O. Box 6064  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

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

*Subscription Policy:* Subscription price, \$9.00 per year. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

*Advertising Policy:* The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st or the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

*Bound Volumes:* The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

## MEDITATION

### In God's Holy Temple

Rev. M. Schipper

*"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;*

*And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;*

*In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:*

*In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."*

*Ephesians 2:19-22*

The apostle is still directing his attention particularly to the Gentiles who were called the uncircumcision by them who were of the circumcision, Jews, according to the flesh. Because they had been so called, they also had been reckoned to be strangers

and foreigners in respect to the covenants of promise. They had been reckoned to be without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world.



But now this all has been changed. Though they are still Gentiles according to the flesh, they have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Christ has broken down the wall of partition, and they have been reconciled to God through the blood of the cross. Peace has been proclaimed to them who once were afar off. They as well as the Jew have access to the Father in one Spirit, the Spirit of Pentecost.

Therefore they are no more foreigners and aliens, as they had been formerly categorized by the commonwealth of Israel, and as they undoubtedly had judged themselves. But they are made to be fellowcitizens with the saints and of the household of God. And that means that they have equal legal rights to dwell in God's house. It means also that they are constituted God's household, His family, with whom God is pleased to dwell. Such is the implication, the logical conclusion to which the apostle is drawn, according to the first part of the text, and as is indicated in the word "therefore."

Important it is also to observe how the apostle makes use of figures, and how he changes these figures. In the context (verse 15) he speaks in terms of one new man. The reference, of course, is not the new man of regeneration as such but to the formation of the church. That church, so he explains, is composed now of both Jew and Gentile, and with emphasis particularly on the entirety, the wholeness of the church. Thus the church is become one new man.

But in our text the figure changes into that of a building. In our text the apostle draws the lines of God's building process. He speaks, first of all, of a household, that is a family. He also sets that family in a house built upon a solid foundation. And remarkably, according to verse 21, that building grows into a holy temple in the Lord. And so we also, as Gentiles, are incorporated, are become a habitation of God in the Spirit.

Verily we are in God's holy temple!

When the text speaks of that holy temple, the reference, of course, is to a spiritual structure. This is the general reference to the temple in the New Testament. It is not to a physical, material building. We remember that, through the Old Testament, the tabernacle (and later the temple) was such a physical structure. The tabernacle designed at Sinai was a portable sanctuary, set on wood frames, covered with animal skins, approximately forty-five feet long, fifteen feet wide, and fifteen feet high; divided into three compartments: having an outer court, a holy place, and the holy of holies; and possessing specially designed furniture: candlestick, table of shew bread, altar of incense, ark of the covenant, and, of course, in the outer court the

great altar of sacrifice.

The temple built by Solomon, which came later, was a more permanent structure, but it was also of material substance. It was constructed of cedars of Lebanon, and stones cut out of the quarry of the north country by Hiram. A magnificent structure, it was overlaid with pure gold. This building was destroyed when the children of Judah were taken into captivity to Babylon. It was rebuilt after their return by Zerubbabel, and again destroyed and rebuilt under the direction of Herod the Great. Its final destruction took place in the razing of Jerusalem, A.D. 70.

Peculiarly this temple began to pass away forever with the rending of the veil at the time of Christ's crucifixion. From this time forward the earthly, material sanctuary is replaced through the wonder of Pentecost by the spiritual house of God, which He builds in the hearts of His redeemed people—now as He is pleased to gather them out of all nations, composed of both Jew and Gentile.

Basically the temple is a covenant idea. This is expressed in the text in terms of "the household of God." Here the emphasis is not on the temple as such, but on the fact that God has a family. The fellowship, or, as it is expressed in the text, the fellowcitizens with the saints, constitutes the household or the members of God's family. God is the Father, and the saints are His children.

God's family becomes the temple in which He pleases to dwell. To be noticed here is the fact that the building is fitly framed together and grows. While the text speaks of the temple in the figure of an earthly, material building (for it is fitly framed), the temple nevertheless is not a physical building, as is evident from the fact that it grows into an holy temple. To be noticed, too, is the fact that it grows "in the Lord." The Lord is the very sphere in which the temple grows. This must mean also that, apart from Christ, there is no growth and therefore no temple.

Now according to verse 22, this growing temple becomes the habitation of God, that is, the dwelling place of God. The saints, therefore, constitute not only God's family, but also the holy temple in which He pleases to dwell.

Marvelous truth!

Much richer than the mere fact that God is the Creator, the Former of that people! To the latter wonderful truth Isaiah gave expression in Isaiah 43:21: "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise." Indeed, God is the Creator of this people, and as His creation they shall show forth His praise.

But in the text the marvelous truth is expressed



that God dwells in that people. Not only does He dwell with them or among them, but He dwells in them. And this is, as we suggested earlier, a covenant idea. The covenant God dwells in His covenant people.

A fact it is now, but so it will be throughout all eternity!

Make no mistake about it, what the apostle says in the text is reality now. As the church grows, not only in numbers, being gathered out of all nations, but also spiritually under the proper means of grace. God dwells in His people as literally as He dwelt in the holy of holies. But when the church has reached maturity, according to the counsel of God, God shall dwell in them, all of them, for ever.

So, while we dwell in God's holy temple, it is also true that we are that temple in which God pleases to dwell.

Well founded temple!

Indeed, God's holy temple has a firm foundation.

It may be said in general that every building has a foundation which supports the building, and upon which the building rests. And that foundation determines much respecting the building. The foundation determines its form and its size. A building cannot be greater or smaller than its foundation. Nor can one build a round structure on a square foundation. The foundation also determines its weight. One cannot put a large and heavy building on a weak or frail foundation, but he puts up a building which is commensurate with the foundation.

The all-wise God also builds His holy temple on a foundation which is going to determine precisely the temple He is constructing.

That foundation, according to the text, is the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone.

This must not be understood to mean that the temple of God is built upon man, not even the Man, Christ Jesus. When the Lord, for example, said to Peter (Matt. 16:16-18), "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," He could not have meant that He would build His church on Peter. That may be the doctrine of Roman Catholicism, but it is not the truth. The truth is that the rock on which Christ would build His church is the confession which Peter, standing in the room of all the disciples, made, the confession, namely, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." So it is also in the text. Not the apostles and prophets, not mere man, is the foundation, but the Word of God spoken by the prophets and apostles and written by infallible inspiration in the Scriptures. That is the im-

movable foundation of which Christ is the chief corner stone. The prophets pointed forward to Him, and the apostles pointed backward to Him. In Christ the Word of God spoken by the prophets and apostles meet.

Nor is it sufficient to say that God in Christ builds His temple on the Scriptures. The Bible, as such, is not the foundation. Nor does God build His church on the Bible, be it that the Bible contains the words of the apostles and prophets concerning Christ.

But the temple of God is built through the Word of God spoken by the apostles and prophets of which Christ is the heart and substance. And that means also that through the preaching of the Word first spoken by the prophets and apostles, through the lively preaching of the gospel concerning Christ, God forms and builds up His church. Hence, it is the preaching of the gospel concerning Christ as the God of our salvation that is the sole, divine means through which the temple of God is built, and the solid rock upon which the temple of God rests. Against that church and temple of God, resting on that foundation, the gates of hell shall never prevail.

In connection with Christ the building process has been going on throughout the ages.

It began with Paradise lost, and the so-called mother promise of Genesis 3:15. Thus Adam, according to the election of grace, fell into the arms of Christ.

It continues in the pre-deluvian world, when God establishes His covenant with Noah and his family. Significantly then in the sign of the rainbow extending from one end of heaven to the other, even the entire creation of God becomes involved. Always the Scriptures point to a new heavens and earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell, as being the site of the temple of God when it is perfected.

In the old dispensation the building process continues in Abraham and Israel. First in Abraham and later in Israel we see the typical realization of God dwelling in His people in the tabernacle and the holy of holies. In them the promise of the gospel is fulfilled: I will be your God and ye shall be My people. Even in those days the prophets, standing in the midst of the typical apparatus, sent forth the word that God had something better and greater in mind when He would realize His temple spread over all nations.

And in the days of the incarnation, when the Son of God unites Himself to our flesh, and literally dwells in the midst of His people, He sends forth His apostles, endowed with His Spirit and the mighty Word of the gospel, the good news of salva-



tion, that must go into all the world, calling and forming that people in whom God pleases to dwell. On the day of Pentecost the promise of the gospel is fulfilled in principle, when the temple of God is spread over all peoples—when God no longer dwells in a temple made with hands, but in His people gathered out of all nations. So the apostle could say in truth to the church of Ephesus, and through them to us, "In Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

That includes the church of Christ today.

In the sphere of the Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, and His working power, the preaching of the gospel forms the temple of God.

In that sphere you and I and our generations stand. In us and our generations the growing process will go on, until all the saints are gathered by the pure preaching of the gospel.

The apostle Peter (I Peter 2) also envisioned that building process when he addressed the church with these words: "Ye also as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to

offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." And he concludes with: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Indeed, by the mighty impetus of the gospel, preached in all nations, the temple of God is steadily being erected. The saints, as living stones, are being fitted into an holy temple in the Lord. As the stones of Hiram's quarry were cut out of the rock, measured and fitted into Solomon's temple, so by the preaching of the gospel and the power of the Spirit of Christ the saints are being formed and placed into the habitation of God.

Presently, when the last saint, according to the election of grace, is called, saved, and fitted into the holy temple, then God will come and take up His abode in us forever.

Then God shall be glorified in His people, world without end!

And we shall abide in His temple forever!

Amen!

---

## EDITORIAL

# The GKN on the Nature of the Authority of Scripture (8)

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

We are still busy, in this discussion, with the first section of Chapter IV of the Report/Decision of the Gereformeerde Kerken concerning the authority of Scripture. Last time we began to show how this segment of the Report/Decision goes about eroding the Reformed doctrine of the inspiration and authority of Scripture. The last item mentioned in our previous editorial was the introduction by the Report of the idea of a dual element and then dual authorship (divine and human). This, we saw, is a very old and commonly held position: the Bible is the product of dual authorship, divine and human. Now it is true, of course, that this idea has not always been put forth with evil intentions. And it has not been uncommon even among Reformed theologians to attempt to avoid the evident problem presented by this view by speaking of the Primary Author (God the Holy Spirit) and the secondary authors (holy men moved by the Spirit). In this way some have attempted, with every good motive, to

maintain the idea of what is called "organic inspiration." However, in the view of this writer, not only has this attempted distinction never been completely successful, but also the distinction has more often than not been used to go through Scripture culling out and separating between those elements which are human and those elements which are divine in the contents of Holy Scripture.

It is in the latter sense that the Report/Decision of the GKN uses the distinction. Only, the Report attempts to refine this old error by means of its so-called relational concept of truth, and thus to make it more palatable—and, we may add, more deceptive.

Let us follow the Report a little further, and see how this is done.

First the Report tries to leave the impression of maintaining the divine authority of Scripture—although even at this point its statements are, to say



the least, woefully weak:

The Holy Scripture derives its *authority* however not from any human being. On the contrary, its authority rests exclusively on the fact that it is God Who speaks. Therefore, we confess that the Scripture is the *Word of God*. And yet it must immediately be added that although in making this confession we have said that which is most *important*, we have thereby not yet said *enough*. God spoke, but He gave His Word through fallible people in a certain historical situation. The reliability of the Bible lies in this, that in the Scripture written by people the infallible Word of God comes to us; that is the unlimited treasure of all that which we need for our praise of God and our salvation (cf. Belgic Confession, Article 2).

Notice that the Report never makes the unqualified statement that Scripture is the Word of God—period. Always more must be added; and that “more” always detracts from the truth that Scripture is the Word of God.

But there is in the Report/Decision a certain refinement of the notion of a dual, divine and human, element in Scripture. It is a refinement which, on the one hand, makes it more difficult to discern the error of this view; but it is a refinement which nevertheless does not succeed. Let me try to explain by way of illustration. The RFPA has published a paperback entitled *The Five Points of Calvinism*. Two chapters were written by Prof. Hanko, two by Rev. Van Baren, and one by me. Even if the names were not attached to the chapters, a reader would readily be able to discern which segments are Hanko, which are Van Baren, and which are Hoeksema. But if the three of us somehow had managed to compose all five chapters together, it would become much more difficult to detect the Hanko, the Van Baren, and the Hoeksema elements in those chapters. Now perhaps the illustration is not completely appropriate; yet it will serve, I think, to illustrate the idea of a divine-human mixture of elements which the Report proposes. This becomes plain in the following paragraph:

There is thus a close relation between the divine and the human in the Scripture. One cannot sort these two out. Whoever will not accept the humanness of the Scripture, overlooks the fact that the Spirit wants to direct Himself to people in that particular way, in those forms, words and circumstances. Therefore it is so important to make certain which elements in the text could be partly determined by the time-bound background and the character of the writers of the Bible. Key questions are: What were the historical circumstances of their time? What ideas did they share with other people of the ancient world?

And yet the Report wants to convince people that “the search for an answer to such questions.... should not be seen as an attack upon the divine truth.”

But what do we find when the Report attempts to illustrate its meaning? We find an example appealed to, in the first place, which as such has nothing to do with the fact that the Bible was written through the agency of men and which would allegedly make it “so important to make certain which elements in the text could be partly determined by the time-bound background and the character of the writers of the Bible.” Instead, the example is taken from those laws for Israel which were directly given by God through Moses. And what does the Report say? Notice:

If we for example find various laws in the Old Testament which seem to us to be inhuman (e.g. Deut. 21:10-14), we are simply unable to reconcile this with the Biblical testimony that God loves the people of this world; not, that is, unless we carefully note the time-and-place-relatedness of such stories and laws. Then it often appears that in comparison with the usages and laws of the world at that time the laws of the Bible were much more humane, and in that way gave expression to the love of God. Whoever places the Bible above and outside the historical world of humankind could easily wrongly construe the intention of the Holy Spirit.

Here you have an illustration of the application of “relational truth” to Scripture. Men place themselves above Scripture in order to pass judgment on what is loving or not, and then in terms of what is “humane” or not. But how foolish! If we take the argumentation of the Report at face value, it does not mean that the laws of the Bible were “much more humane,” but rather that the laws of the God of love were *less inhumane* and “in that way gave expression to the love of God.” Here, therefore, you have an illustration of where this entire view leads.

Nevertheless, somehow or other the distinction between the divine and the human word must somehow be maintained. This problem the Report faces in the following paragraph:

Although thus the human element in the Scripture cannot be separated from the divine, as if it would be possible after a careful sifting to retain the “authentic” revelation, one can to a certain extent make this distinction. If we say that the infallible Word of God is given to us in the Scripture, then we do not mean that where the human time-bound shines through, the Word of God cannot be found. On the contrary it belongs to the task of exegesis to search out what God wanted to reveal as His Word through these human words. Often, however, one can only discover this if one reads the text in connection with the entire Bible book, in fact, with the entire Scripture. The history of exegesis has also taught us that it often depends upon the time and circumstances in which the expositor lives whether this offers a deeper understanding of the text.



Now notice, first of all, that the Report—though in bland language—contradicts itself. First it said that we “cannot sort these two out.” Now it says that “one can to a certain extent make this distinction.” In the second place, notice how the Report really contradicts the truth of the perspicuity (clarity) of Scripture. The Word of God must be “found.” It belongs to the task of exegesis “to search out what God wanted to reveal as His Word through these human words.” Poor God! He was not able to express Himself clearly! Human exe-

getes have to search out what He wanted to reveal! In the third place, notice the ramifications of the relational notion of the truth: it even depends on the time and circumstances of the expositor whether his searching out of what God wanted to reveal offers a deeper understanding of the text!

Small wonder, then, that the Report goes on to reject the classic Reformed view of infallibility and accuses the Belgic Confession of teaching mechanical inspiration!

## TRANSLATED TREASURES

# A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

*Dr. A. Kuyper*

(As Kuyper is discussing the deterioration of the church, he discusses how this deterioration or deformation takes place in various aspects of the church's life. He has spoken of this deterioration in the confession of the church, in the walk of the church, in the administration of the means of grace, and in the work of the office bearers. He continues to discuss this deterioration in the following paragraphs.)

### 45. Concerning Deformation In the Works Of Love And Mercy.

In the church of Christ, love for the miserable among the brethren and mercy toward the miserable among outsiders wells up of itself and irresistibly as water bubbles up from grooves and fissures which a fountain finds in the rock. There is thus in that church an interfering cause present which suppresses the natural expression of her life if covetousness, the root of all evil, dries up this fountain of love and mercy, and the miserable who cry to God are sent away empty by the church of Christ. This is an enormous guilt before the Lord, before Him Who in the judgment of the great day shall measure the love of His bride for Him, the Bridegroom, according to the warmth or coldness with which they feed the hungry and clothe the naked. He must turn in anger against the church which even pushes Him out of the sanctuary to set up again the idol of mammon, and no “light of His friendly countenance” can shine in His church if coldly calculated selfishness and covetousness take the place of mercy in His holy house. We do great wrong to be silent concerning the deformation of the church with respect to this horrible abuse. Indeed, it must be conceded that this deformation does not touch the essence of the church, but rather the expression

of her life. Just as a drying up and shriveling up of the blossom and fruit is not yet proof that the tree has died in its root, yet blossom and fruit seldom are missing if the life and the root are not ill. Therefore we do well to pay closer attention to this, and that in a threefold way. In the first place, as far as the diaconal office of all believers is concerned, believers must see to it that the impulse to offer their gold and silver works with sufficient zeal in the members of the church of Christ. A believer must always be a willing giver. His gift must not be an extorted gift but a willing offering. Yes, more deeply, the inclination of the heart must be watched to see that there is not only a presentation of the alms, but a priestly sharing of pity; to see that there is not pride which condescends to misery, but deep mercy which knows that he is one with the poorest and most needy as a fellow brother and sister in the Lord; also that there is not a Phariseeistic show of liberality, but a giving of alms in secret because the Father Who sees in secret shall reward such people openly. In the second place, it must be investigated whether the church, not only in her members, through the office of all believers, but also in her central office of love, namely, through the office of deacons, maintains her calling; and indeed especially if the deacons feel their calling to develop the art of giving in the church of God; or if they realize, according to the high significance of their office, that they must walk in the footsteps of Christ in the feeding of the hungry and in the healing of the sick; and finally whether they, far from being satisfied to distribute the money which comes in with coldness and lack of mercy, on the contrary, set their hearts



on it and do not rest until they have helped all whom God has made needy and done this through the love of God which the Holy Spirit has shed abroad in the church. And in the third place, finally, they must carefully see to it that the church of God, in connection with this work of love and compassion, does not operate on the basis of feeling but always seeks her stability in God's Word; does not limit her task to extending alms to the beggars, but also seeks the miserable whose need cries out to God in secret; and above all, to see whether, according as the waters of need increase, they know how to reveal the measure of their love also as church by bearing the need of those who are sick and infirm, forsaken and maimed. And thus in the name of the Lord Jesus they must show mercy to those who are deaf or blind, idiots or insane, crippled or leprous, or those who are visited with any other suffering. And if one notices now, alas, that this powerful work of love and mercy languishes; that the art of giving is no more understood; that the church prefers to leave her task of honor to others; and that the miserable and needy turn away their face from the church of Christ knowing that there is no ear there for their complaint; then the consequence must and will follow from this withering of the truth of love that such a church becomes diseased also in her root. "In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me," is her threatening judgment.

#### 46. Concerning Deformation Of the Worship Service.

"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth," the Lord our King said. If this is to happen, then, as a result, the sacred form used in our worship must appear in visible form only as far as is necessary to make worship in the Spirit perceptible to the congregation of saints. It is for this reason that our fathers made strict demands to be sober in the style and ornamentation of our church building; preferably to avoid completely organ playing, but, if it is permitted, never to use it for more than accompaniment; to abandon all artificial singing in order to permit the singing of the congregation to be the quiet expression of the soul before God; quietly sitting, only relieved by the men standing during prayer; to prevent all movement in

bowing and turning; and, accordingly, also in the prayers, the sacraments, burials, and whatever more there may be, to strive for sober, meaningful symbolism which is an expression of the holy peace of God. In these external matters an extreme exaltation of sobriety is no more to be permitted than an extreme appeal to the senses. There is also a difference of environment and nationality. What is sober for an Italian would be colorful and excessive among us. Firm rules do not exist in this area and therefore deformation is more difficult to recognize. Yet no one ought to think that therefore no deformation can creep into the worship service. The sad example of the rituals in our English sister church proves, alas, the opposite. A large part of that church is ruined exactly by the unpruned and wild outgrowth of her worship. And although the evil does not arise to such a height in this country as in Great Britain, yet the church in our own land inclines to deformation in worship when the lack of spiritual sound in the singing leaves the church to draw from the organ pipes through artificial playing that which no longer wells up from the soul of the believer. People seek to make up for the lack of spirituality of prayer by bodily bowing, and further, by incessant standing up and then sitting down again, by all kinds of antiphonies or choir singing or choral singing, or also by solemn attire and putting up of crowns and whatever more, the attempt to display in external ways what is lacking in the heart of the matter. It is noteworthy that in our own churches the worship service remained pure and sober as long as the "My Lord and my God!" came from the heart; but it became embellished and decorated with all kinds of innovations when the Groningers<sup>1</sup> denied the divinity of the Lord and the congregation was addressed by the formalities and lifelessness of the practical Arian.<sup>2</sup>

#### 47. Concerning Deformation in Church Government.

Deformation in church government can originate from this that the church rulers are unspiritual, bureaucratic, formal members, lacking in all the gifts of the Spirit for the government of Jesus' church. Then they leave right unavenged even though heresy or lawlessness pervert it, and finally are inclined themselves to misuse their power as judges by calling just what is unjust and by harming the innocent. In the meantime this is not yet deformation of church government as such. This deformation is first present when the exercise of church government itself deviates from what it ought to be according to the Word of God. There can be a church with an excellent exercise of government, but which, when controlled by bad personnel, works badly. But, vice versa, there can also be a very bad exercise of government which

<sup>1</sup>This is the reference to a certain movement in The State Church which originated in the province of Groningen which among other things, denied the divinity of the Lord.

<sup>2</sup> The word Arian is a heresy which derives from the name Arius, a heretic in the first part of the fourth century of the Christian church. Arius also denied the divinity of Christ and his heresy was condemned by the Synod of Nicea in 325 which synod drew up the well-known confession of Nicea.



even though controlled by excellent persons, can never work well. This is like the engine room in a steamship. The nicest ship may have the most excellent engine, but it will still run aground if the engineer is either ignorant or inattentive or drunk. But, on the other hand, a bad ship with useless engines, even though a most excellent engineer is put in her, cannot possibly be sailed. It is like this with the government of the church. You do not save your church by good government if the Spirit of God has left it. But if your church government is bad, you cannot keep your church from ruin even though you put in all positions of church government people who are strictly upright. Also this deformation ought to be very sharply noted because he who harms justice paralyzes the best power, wrenches loose the braces and the cross beams of

the house, and plays games with the future of the church. This is not surprising because every deformation in church government directly concerns the question whether in the church of Christ all power shall remain in King Jesus and His Word; and further, whether in the church of Christ in which all are brothers a certain mastery of brother over brother shall be set up. Revolution through insurrection against the King, or clericalism through wielding of lordship over the brethren is the double form of illness which affects the life of the church through the deformation of its government. "One is your master, and ye all are brothers!" is the living Word which alone brings healing to this sickness. It concerns the ancient struggle between the holy ordinances of God and the false ordinances of man.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

# The So-called Proof-texts of Postmillennialism

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

### THE CHURCH EVER HATED OF ALL THE NATIONS CHAPTER IX

That the church of Christ, His holy Bride, shall ever be hated of all the nations, particularly as the nations are inspired with the wine of the fornication of the false church, the Great Harlot, is the clear and indisputable teaching of the Word of God, the Bible.

Such is the clear testimony of Jesus on the mount of Olives to His disciples, as well as in all the Scriptures.

On this point too, we, as the faithful church of Christ, must not be deceived; we must know our times in the light of the more sure Word of prophecy (Matt. 24:4; I John 4:1). Hence, we will attempt in this Chapter to show from the Scriptures that ever there are "the nations," who hate the church with a cruel hatred, and that the time will *not* come when for a season this hatred is partially removed or abated. We must indeed lift up our heads, gird up our loins spiritually, and be sober unto prayer with a holy watchfulness. Such is ever the call of the hour!

Take heed that no man deceive you!

There are those among the Postmillennial writers, who teach that there will come a time when there shall be virtually no evil nations. Although they will not go so far as to aver that "the nations" as nations will be christianized altogether, still they most avidly preach from the housetops that under the power of the preaching of the Gospel all "nations" will be so influenced by the power of the Spirit in the preaching, that they will all come to Zion. In a word: they will all be "christianized." That will be the "golden age" as spoken of in the Prophecy of Isaiah where we read, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and *all nations* shall flow to it" (Isaiah 2:2). Now we have pointed out in earlier Chapters that there can be no Kingdom of heaven except where the church is, and that the kingdom of heaven and the church of God are coextensive; that keys of the kingdom of heaven are given to the church, to wit, the preaching of the Gospel and the exercise of Christian discipline. By these the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers and shut against all unbelievers (Matt. 16:19; 18:18).

It is true that there is ever a certain regard among



the nations for orderly external deportment; yes, there are the glimmerings of natural light whereby fallen man and the nations retain some knowledge of God, and the differences between good and evil... but this natural light is such that man is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil, and, in so doing, becomes inexcusable before God (Rom. 1:18-23). God looked down from heaven upon the sons of men and found that there was none that doeth any good, that there is no fear of God before their eyes. And such are *the nations* of the world, who hate the church for Christ's sake! These nations are not changed into virtuous peoples by the preaching. The testimony of the preaching is such that it hardens their resistance against Christ and the faithful church under the inspiration of the forces of Satan and the entire demonic world (Eph. 2:2; John 12:31).

Such is the clear testimony of Scripture!

Particularly this is the clear teaching of Jesus to His disciples on the mount of Olives in Matthew 24:9, where we read, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and *ye shall be hated of all nations for My Name's sake.*"

Concerning this passage from the lips of Jesus we ought to notice the following particulars:

1. That Jesus says that this being delivered up to the authorities, with the accompanying "affliction" will be "then." We may not overlook the fact that this word "then" does not refer to a calendar date, a specific incident in a certain time, but that contextually this "then" refers to the entire period referred to in the verses 5 to 8. It is a long history, very long; it is the warlike history of the nations, where nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom shall war with kingdom. It refers to the restless life of the nations, who know not the way of peace, because there is no fear of God before their eyes. And these restless nations really have but one real enemy; they hate the Church of God in their very midst because of the great and blessed NAME of JESUS, the very Son of God in the flesh. It is in that history, in that time-period, that we see that gradually the birthpangs and sorrows of the world increase under the wrath of God from heaven. And it is "then" that the church will be cordially hated in the same measure that she preached, and that she lives the life of Christ, and is the light of the world, and is as a city upon a hilltop.

2. And it ought to be clear that this period of which Jesus speaks, and which is recorded in Matthew 24:5-8, cannot find its termination in the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem by the Roman legions in the year A.D. 70. Postmillennialists insist that such is the teaching and intent of Matthew 24:4-14. Truly Jesus includes also this period within

the compass of His prophetic word here. However, Jesus is answering a far broader question here. He is here speaking of the "sign of His coming" (the final glorious PAROUSIA, when He shall come with clouds) and of the "full-end of all time," the final harvest day of all of history (Matt. 24:26-41). Confer Matthew 13:39. How could Jesus simply have the history here in mind of the years A.D. 33-70? Exegetically, this is simply not true. We are not dealing here with a mere prediction of future events within the life-span of the disciples, but we are dealing here most emphatically with the great Word of prophecy, as spoken especially by God through Daniel. Here the word, the more sure word of prophecy, shines unto the night of the darkness of this world, and we see in the future the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in His revelation, when, in His very appearance, we shall see the sign of the Coming of the Son of Man (Dan. 12:1-4; Matt. 24:15; I Peter 1:13; II Peter 1:19).

3. Furthermore, we should take notice of the fact that Jesus speaks here very really and most succinctly of a hatred which is long-lasting, which spans the entire New Testament Dispensation, even to the very end of the world. In all the Synoptic Gospels the words of Jesus are recorded identically. The form of the verb is the passive present participle with the future of the verb "to be." The verb is very truly and expressively translated by Lenski: "*Ye shall go on being hated* by all nations because of My Name" (Matt. 24:9; Mark 13:13 and Luke 21:17).\* It is well to read carefully what Jesus says, employing these very words in Matthew 10:22 in which He predicts what will befall the disciples. From these very words of Jesus it is quite evident that He is referring to some *durative* action, and also *linear* action. It is the unbroken line in the future. It is the order of the day, as Jesus says in John 16:33, "In the world ye shall have tribulations."

4. It is quite evident from the Greek, too, that this will be a hatred by the *direct agency* of the nations. The preposition "hupo" is the direct agent whereas "dia" is the intermediate agency. The saints in the earth will be hated *directly* by the nations, constantly, duratively, without cessation to the very end. These nations *are hateful* nations; they hate Christ because they hate God, and they hate the church because they hate Christ. That is Jesus' interpretation of this hatred, as the One Who knows and tries the reins and hearts of men (John 15:18, 19). This world, these nations cannot love the church, because they hate God and His Christ. But God has them in derision; He laughs at them with a holy laughter in His serene and glorious majesty. But have no doubt or fear! The gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed in all the inhabitable



world, in this very world of the nations. And it is a testimony to them. Postmillennialists make light of this truth and really think that this "testimony" is not sufficient. It must be a positive power to save the "Nations," to Christianize them. They label such "testimony" as belittling Christ to a potential Victor, rather than to an actual Victor, Who goes conquering and to conquer. Only where the "nations" are "Christianized" do we have an "Eschatology of Victory" it is claimed. However, when Christ triumphs in the hearts of the unbelievers who hate Him, hate God and hate His church, by convicting them as He did the evil men in the days of Enoch and Noah, convicting them of sin, righteousness, and judgment, then that is placing them under the power of His glittering sword of the Word. He leads them behind His victory chariot, triumphing over all His foes (I Cor. 2:14; II Cor. 10:4, 5). It is the victory which announces in calm majesty, "And he that believeth (obeyeth) not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). This is the victory which proclaims, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accused you, even Moses in whom ye trust" (John 5:45). Thus we see here the prelude of the great victory of the Son of God over the nations. Yes, they are hated continually; all the day long in every generation; they did this directly by all the power and riches and learning which they can muster, but the Lord Jesus, the glorified King of kings shall destroy them, consume them with the breath of His mouth, and shall destroy them with the brightness of His coming!

So Christ very really triumphs over every foe. He

causes the very demons to cry out in fear. When He cast out the "legion" of demons from a very wretched man in the land of the Gadarenes, under the influence of these "demons" the victim cries out, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God. I adjure Thee by God that Thou torment me not" (Mark 5:7). Are these demons saved by the power of Jesus' word? Not at all! These are destroyed in their evil work, and assigned to their place of torment, awaiting the great day when they shall be cast alive into the lake of fire and brimstone (James 2:19; Rev. 20:10, 15). And when finally God calls the birds to His great supper, these will then feast on the flesh of kings, and flesh of captains, and flesh of the mighty men (Rev. 19:17-21).

Such are they who treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Who will render to every man according to his work (Rom. 2:1-6).

Yes, the "nations" will hate the church to the very end!

Let no man deceive you with vain words!

\*In his *Word Pictures* A.T. Robertson says the following concerning the verb form in the Greek, translated "shall be hated"; "Periphrastic future passive to emphasize the continuous process of the linear action." In his *The Greek New Testament In The Light Of Historical Research*, A.T. Robertson writes concerning the Periphrastic Future: "the very failure to express the durative action clearly leads to the present participle with (the form of) 'I shall be,'" He refers to Matt. 10:22; 24:9, Mark 13:13.

## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

### Letter to Timothy

October 15, 1981

Dear Timothy,

Hebrews 13:17 is a very interesting and instructive passage of Scripture in connection with the subject we are presently discussing. In my last letter we talked about various aspects of the instruction of Scripture in this passage, particularly the admonition to obey our pastors and yield to them. It is the last part of the text ("that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable to you") that still needs to be discussed.

A minister can do his work in the Church of Christ with grief. That is entirely possible, and it happens all the time.

It is interesting to notice that the minister still does his work—even though it is with grief. This is, of course, not always the case. It happens many times that the work of the ministry becomes too much of a burden for a man to bear. He simply cannot go on and the result is that he leaves the ministry for a secular vocation. This is a great tragedy.



dy. Sometimes, of course, the fault lies with the minister himself. He went into the ministry with some wrong notions about what an easy life he would have. Or, perhaps he did not realize that the work of the ministry is filled with sorrow and disappointment, with trouble and opposition, with difficult problems and heavy responsibilities. And when he discovers that this is the case, he becomes discouraged and downhearted and finds that he is unable to continue in the work. Sometimes even he brings many of his problems and troubles upon himself by foolish conduct and by unfaithfulness in the work. But this is not always the case. There are other times when the congregation itself makes his life in the ministry almost unbearable. There are those in the congregation who are constantly opposing all that the minister does: sometimes by overt opposition, but more often by innuendo, subtle remarks which bring into question the minister's integrity, sincerity, dedication, orthodoxy, etc. There is overt or covert undermining of a minister's work and there is effort put forth to influence others in the congregation to resist what the minister does. This kind of activity manifests itself in gossip within the congregation about the minister and his preaching and labors. It manifests itself in efforts to get others to question the minister's sermons. It becomes evident in the attitude which some take towards the preaching on the Lord's Day when they sit in Church, or when they talk with the minister, for they show a certain attitude of disrespect. But if this continues long enough, the result is that a minister can be driven to despair. He can be driven right out of the ministry under the burden of opposition.

Nevertheless, all other things being equal, usually a minister continues his work even when he does it with grief. He is called by God to the work and he endures in the work even when it becomes very difficult. And this passage in Hebrews presupposes that.

When ministers do their work with grief this is because there are those in the congregation who will not submit to the Word of Christ which he brings. It is not surprising that this should be so. A minister labors out of love for the sheep over which the Lord has placed him. He finds his joy in the ready acceptance of the Word of Christ by the people of God entrusted to his care. It is a grief to him when the opposite is true.

There is no question about it that ministers also are human and burdened with the same weaknesses and sins which afflict us all. And because there is always sin, there is always the tendency on the part of a minister to take the criticism and opposition which come to him, in a personal way. He feels personally slighted; his pride is lacerated; his

own person is attacked; and he becomes angry because of the personal element which he has introduced into the matter. But a serious and dedicated minister of the gospel nevertheless shrugs these personal matters off insofar as that is possible. His grief is really due to the fact that there are those in the congregation who jeopardize their own souls by refusing to obey and submit to the Word of Christ. The minister comes not with his own word; he is the spokesman of Christ. What he says, Christ is speaking through him. And the congregation is not asked to bow before him, to accept his word, to yield to what he says; the congregation stands obligated to bow before and receive with humility the Word of Christ. When there are those in the congregation who will not do this, the grief of a minister is exactly because Christ is mocked and slandered and Christ's Word ignored. By doing this, the people put their own souls in jeopardy.

But when a minister labors with grief, this is unprofitable for the congregation. It is significant that the Scriptures should put the matter this way. We would almost expect the text to say that when a minister labors with grief, that is unprofitable for *him*. But the text stresses that this is unprofitable for the *congregation*. The congregation brings suffering and trouble upon itself; it cuts its own throat, so to speak, when it causes grief to the minister. It brings harm to its own congregational life.

How can this be?

When a minister of the Word performs his work with grief, it inevitably affects that work.

The opposite is suggested here in the text. A minister can also perform his labors with joy. There is joy in his work when the congregation submits to the instruction of the Word of God. You can readily understand this. The congregation comes together in eagerness on the Lord's Day to hear the Word of God proclaimed. The needs and work of the minister are constantly in the hearts and prayers of God's people. When that Word is preached on the Lord's Day, the congregation readily and eagerly receives that Word as from Christ Himself. When instruction is given in the truth of Scripture, the congregation listens attentively, searches the Scriptures whether these things be so, and rejoices in the knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. When the minister brings the warnings and admonitions of the Scriptures to the congregation, the people of God humble themselves under the Word of Christ, repent of their sins, turn from their ways of evil, flee to the cross for forgiveness and pardon, and look to Christ for the spiritual strength they need to walk as God's people in the midst of the world.

When these things happen in a congregation, the minister does his work with joy and gladness. He



sees the fruit of his preaching in the congregation and rejoices in his work. And the result is that he labors more diligently, works with joy and eagerness, looks forward to the Lord's Day, bends every effort to make his sermons and his labors yet more fruitful. There is growth in him and in his preaching, progress and development, spiritual advancement.

In an atmosphere such as this the Spirit works mightily. The Spirit of Christ Who brings the Word of Christ preached to the hearts and consciousness of the congregation brings also the great and mighty blessings of salvation. There is peace and unity, joy and blessedness, spiritual growth, a love for God and for one another, a bearing of one another's burdens, a spirit of encouragement of one another and of helping one another in the difficult pathway of life. It is not difficult to see that all this is for the spiritual profit of the congregation.

The opposite happens when there is no determination to obey and yield on the part of the congregation. There is instead a spirit of criticism and disparagement of the preaching. Under such circumstances as this, the minister labors with the greatest difficulty. He wonders whether his sermon will be received or whether it will be once again subjected to the intense scrutiny of critical minds. He wonders whether there will be any reaction to his preaching at all, or whether the congregation will remain cold and unmoved. He wonders whether it is worthwhile to make a sermon because no one seems to listen except to find fault. The joy goes out of his work. He dreads Sabbath. He dreads climbing the pulpit to speak to the people. He cannot and does not do his best work for he is caught in a web of criticism which stifles his enthusiasm and kills his excitement in his calling. How can he, under these circumstances, do his best work?

And so also the congregation suffers. There is a kind of vicious circle. The preaching becomes less and less enthusiastic, and the reactions of the congregation grow more and more critical or the congregation increasingly doesn't care any more about what is happening in the pulpit. And so, doctrinal preaching becomes a bore because it is proclaimed in a flat, monotonous, dry, and boring way; and the truth is lost. Admonitions are ignored as people set themselves against anyone who dares to presume to criticize their pet sins and point out to them where they need repentance and conversion.

But, worst of all, the Spirit is grieved. And when the Spirit is grieved, then the whole work of the preaching suffers. The Spirit withdraws Himself from the congregation so that His presence is there less and less. And when the Spirit withdraws Himself, instead of a spirit of joy and happiness, eager-

ness and love, growth and blessing there is a spirit of coldness and formality, of joylessness and disunity, of internal bickering and scrapping which robs the congregation of the communion of the saints. As this vicious cycle continues, the situation gets worse and worse until the congregation loses its identity as the Church of Christ.

And so, by this, the congregation jeopardizes its own salvation. And it puts in jeopardy the salvation of the children of the congregation who are born and grow up in such an atmosphere.

The Word of God is very powerful in this passage. It summons you and me, in our respective congregations, to self-examination. The issues are very serious and the consequences devastating. The welfare of the Church of Christ and the salvation of our souls is at stake. Let us then hear this Word of God, repent of our sins, and learn to submit to those whom Christ has given to be our instructors and pastors in the Lord.

Fraternally in Christ,  
H. Hanko

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)			
1. TITLE OF PUBLICATION <b>THE STANDARD BEARER</b>		2. DATE OF FILING <b>SEPT. 18, 1981</b>	
3. FREQUENCY OF ISSUE <b>SEMI-MONTHLY (EXCEPT JUNE, JULY, AUGUST)</b>		4. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE <b>\$9.00</b>	
5. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF KNOWN OFFICE OF PUBLICATION (Street, City, County, State and ZIP Code) (Not printers)		6. COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF THE HEADQUARTERS OR GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHERS (Not printers)	
<b>1047 ALTO AVE., S.E., GRAND RAPIDS, KENT, MICHIGAN 49507</b>		<b>1047 ALTO AVE., S.E., GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49507</b>	
7. FULL NAMES AND COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS OF PUBLISHER, EDITOR, AND MANAGING EDITOR (This item MUST NOT be blank)			
PUBLISHER (Name and Complete Mailing Address) <b>REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASS'N. P.O. BOX 6064, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49506</b>			
EDITOR (Name and Complete Mailing Address) <b>FRUP. H. C. H. E. S. E. A., 4975 IVANREST S.W., GRANDVILLE, MI 49418</b>			
MANAGING EDITOR (Name and Complete Mailing Address) <b>H. VANDER WAL, 1047 ALTO AVE., S.E., GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49507</b>			
8. OWNER (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual must be given. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, its name and address must be stated.) (Item must be completed)			
FULL NAME <b>REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASS'N.</b>			
COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS <b>P.O. BOX 6064, GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. 49506</b>			
9. KNOWN BONDHOLDERS, MORTGAGEES, AND OTHER SECURITIES (If there are none, so state)			
FULL NAME <b>NONE</b>			
COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS			
10. FOR COMPLETION BY NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AUTHORIZED TO MAIL AT SPECIAL RATES (Section 411.3, DMM only) The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes (Check one)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (1) HAS NOT CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS <input type="checkbox"/> (2) HAS CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS (If changed, publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement.)			
11. EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION		AVERAGE NO. COPIES EACH ISSUE DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS	
A. TOTAL NO. COPIES (Net Press Run)		<b>1,950</b>	
B. PAID CIRCULATION 1. SALES THROUGH DEALERS AND CARRIERS, STREET VENDORS, AND COUNTER SALES		<b>0</b>	
2. MAIL SUBSCRIPTION		<b>1,751</b>	
C. TOTAL PAID CIRCULATION (Sum of B. 1 and B. 2)		<b>1,751</b>	
D. FREE DISTRIBUTION BY MAIL, CARRIER OR OTHER MEANS (SAMPLES, COMPLIMENTARY, AND OTHER FREE COPIES)		<b>56</b>	
E. TOTAL DISTRIBUTION (Sum of C. and D.)		<b>1,807</b>	
F. COPIES NOT DISTRIBUTED 1. OFFICE USE, LEFT OVER, UNACCOUNTED SPOILED, AFTER PRINTING		<b>143</b>	
2. RETURN FROM NEWS AGENTS		<b>0</b>	
G. TOTAL (Sum of E, F. 1 and 2; should equal net press run shown in A.)		<b>1,950</b>	
12. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete		SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF PUBLISHER, EDITOR, OR BUSINESS MANAGER <i>H. Vander Wal</i>	



# THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

... OF THE ...

## PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

4949 IVANREST AVENUE, S.W.  
GRANDVILLE, MICHIGAN 49418  
PHONE: (616) 531-1490

October 15, 1981

Dear People of God and Fellow Saints:

It has been some time since we have written to you via the pages of our Standard Bearer; and now, with a new school year well under way, we thought it best to give you some news about activities on "Seminary Hill."

With one exception, all of our students of last year are back. This includes seven in the Seminary Program and four in the Pre-Seminary Program. Of the seminary students, four will be finishing their work, the Lord willing, this coming June. One of these is our brother from Singapore, Lau Chin Kwee, who will return to Singapore next summer to take up his labors in Christ's vineyard there. The other three are Thomas Miersma, Jon Smith, and Deane Wassink. Our pre-seminary students are in their last year of pre-sem, and will graduate, therefore, this coming spring, in order to take up their seminary work, D.V., a year from now.

All of this ought to impress on the minds of our people the abiding need of new students. We have no new students this year; and there are at present no students in the first three years of the pre-sem program. It may seem that there is no pressing need for students either, but we remind you that the words of the Lord Jesus remain always true: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:37,38)

Most of you know by this time that the Synod of 1981 granted Prof. Hoeksema a partial sabbatical. The fact that it is "partial" means that Prof. Hoeksema is still in Seminary several times during the week. He teaches his course in Hebrew Grammar and participates in the weekly practice preaching sessions. While this enables him to remain a part of Seminary life, it also frees him to do some of the writing he has long wanted to do. His first major project is an update and rewriting of the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches.

Speaking of practice preaching, we have begun something new this year. Many of you know that Wednesday mornings we regularly had chapel exercises. In the past the professors led these chapels. This semester the students are in charge of chapel; but chapel is combined with practice preaching, so that the students deliver their assigned sermons. In this way we have our regular devotions but also give to the practice preaching sessions a somewhat less mechanical and somewhat more devotional atmosphere. So far this experiment has worked out well.

Because we have no new students this year, the regular loads of Profs. Decker and Hanks were somewhat lighter. This enabled them to take the subjects which Prof. Hoeksema was scheduled to teach. This semester Prof. Decker is teaching Medieval Philosophy, and Prof. Hanks is teaching Dogmatics III.

We also take this opportunity to thank all of you who have contributed so generously to our Library Fund. Because of this generosity, we have been able to continue buying books for our ever expanding library. We may also report that our student librarians have almost completed the work of switching our library from the Dewey Decimal cataloguing system to the better and more commonly used Library of Congress system--a great improvement. We remind you, too, that our library is open for use to all our people. Even those from out of town may borrow by mail. We ask only for prompt return of borrowed books. Our space is about filled. We bid you all farewell, coveting your prayers and wishing you all the Lord's richest blessing.

Fraternally in Christ,  
The Faculty



## ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

# Who is Jesus?

The United Presbyterian Church faced, this past summer, a question concerning the deity of Jesus. One of their ministers refused to say that Christ is God. After heated debate, the UPCUSA adopted a resolution which seems to be very orthodox and Scriptural—but when some would insert important and clarifying words to this resolution, the Assembly turned that down. The whole action indicates the apostasy within the churches today. *The Presbyterian Journal*, June 10, 1981, reports on the General Assembly:

One question above all others tantalized commissioners to both the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church (UPCUSA) and that of the Presbyterian Church US (PCUS), meeting concurrently (at Houston): Would the United Presbyterians defuse a potentially explosive situation by agreeing to say that a declaration of the full deity of Jesus Christ is required of officers in the church?

The issue developed out of the contest over the Rev. Mansfield M. Kaseman—a minister who refused to say that Christ is God....

And one of the church's honored historians, the Rev. John H. Gerstner, had flatly declared that if the Assembly did *not* take a firm position on the matter, the church could legitimately be declared apostate.

At the appointed hour, the commissioners were tense and the press tables packed. After brief but intense debate, the court adopted, with only two dissenting votes, a pastoral statement which said to United Presbyterians:

"We believe that God came to redeem this world of lost children, and to open the way to eternal life, through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth...one with us in our common humanity (and) one with God as the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. Therefore, we confess that Jesus is one person, truly God and truly human...."

One would think that the statement was very orthodox and would firmly establish the Reformed character of the Presbyterian Church. However, at the same meeting, one minister tried to add three words to the statement by way of amendment. But the three words were rejected.

When the issue came to the floor, the Rev. M. Dudley Rose of North Sewickley, Pa., offered an amendment in behalf of a group of mostly younger ministers

who call themselves Concerned United Presbyterians. The debate which ensued, in the opinion of many observers, said more about the church's answer to the question than the subsequent final vote.

Mr. Rose's amendment would have added three words to the positional statement: *sinless, atoning and bodily*—so that the line would have read, "...through the birth, *sinless* life, *atoning* death and *bodily* resurrection...."

Said Mr. Rose, "These truths are mandated by Scripture and appropriate to our confessional position."

So then, why reject the amendment? Some of the explanations are extremely disturbing:

..."These words can produce divisions among us," said (Rev. William P. Showalter, chairman).

"I urge you to respect the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit as He led us to omit these words from the statement," he added.

..."There is a silent majority in our churches who do not want specific theories. These persons do not believe they are saved by words, but by the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Let's not use doctrine in such a way as to exclude people."

His statement was greeted by applause.

The Rev. Lance L.M. Brown of Purcellville, Va., said: "Our unity proceeds from Christ and not from words or phrases. The proposed language presents just one of a variety of images through which we may affirm what we believe about Christ. He is the Bread of life. Some of us like whole wheat, some like rye, some like pumpërnickle. But all are nourished by bread."

A senior at Princeton Seminary wound up the debate: "We have been called to struggle with our faith. If we accept these words, I will be told what to believe and no longer will be permitted to struggle with my faith."

The vote was about four to one against saying that Christ's life was *sinless*, His death *atoning* and His resurrection *bodily*.

What does one say of a church which refuses to add these significant words? Can a faithful church truly regard such words as divisive? Though one might argue that the words did not alter the statement on Christ's *deity*, refusing to add the words



indicates the sad spiritual state of the church. What godly saint would question the truth involved in the addition of the words? All this shows up again the subtilty of heresy. Confessions can be adopted that sound very Reformed and Scriptural—but omission of key words can allow for wide variety of

views. In this case, all are ready to concede that Christ lived—but are not ready to say that His life was sinless. All would concede that He died—but not that this death atoned. All would agree that He arose—but not necessarily bodily. Beware the cleverness of heresy!

## “The Bible and TV Guide”

*The Presbyterian Journal*, June 3, 1981, contains a thought-provoking poem with the above title:

They lie on the table, side by side:  
The Holy Bible and the TV Guide.  
One is well-worn but cherished with pride  
(Not the Bible, but the TV Guide).  
One is used daily to help folks decide,  
(No! Not the Bible: it's the TV Guide).  
As pages are turned, what shall they see?  
Oh, what does it matter, turn on the TV.  
Then confusion reigns, they can't all agree  
On what they shall watch on the old TV.

So they open the book in which they confide  
(No, not the Bible, it's the TV Guide).  
The Word of God is seldom read  
Maybe a verse e'er they fall into bed.  
Exhausted and sleepy and tired as can be,  
Not from reading the Bible: from watching TV.  
So, then back to the table, side by side,  
Lie the Holy Bible, and the TV Guide.  
No time for prayer, no time for the Word,  
The plan of salvation is seldom heard.  
But forgiveness of sin so full and free  
Is found in the Bible, not on TV!

## Should Jews Be Evangelized

The *Christian News*, June 8, 1981, makes reference to a decision by the Episcopal Diocese of Ohio that the Jew is not to be the object of evangelization:

The Episcopal Diocese of Ohio has officially gone on record in enacting a policy of refusing to tell Jews that Jesus Christ said that “No man cometh unto the Father but by Me” (John 14:6). The official resolution condemning Christian efforts to bring Jews to a saving knowledge of Christ was passed by an approximately two-thirds majority at the 1981 diocesan convention in early February.

The report points out that one clergyman came to the author of the above proposal and asked to

present a substitute resolution. He did not want to betray the “central Christian message of salvation.” But when the substitute was presented (it deplored anti-Semitism, yet without compromising the Scriptural truth that one is saved only through Jesus Christ), it was soundly defeated. What a terrible thing, to ignore the salvation of the Jews under the guise of not being “anti-Semitic.” It seems that it might be fine to be a Christian—provided one does not impose these views on others, and especially on Jews. But Jesus commanded His church, “Go ye to all the world and preach the gospel....”

## Kromminga On An Alternate Seminary

In the *Calvin Spark*, September 1981, Dr. J.H. Kromminga of Calvin Seminary, presents in an open letter his reactions to the new proposed independent seminary in Northwest Iowa. He writes:

“...This movement has been initiated and promoted by eight ministers of the Christian Reformed Church, beginning in January of this year. It has progressed to the point where money has been given or pledged, a



building has been purchased, and there is talk of beginning classes in September, 1981, with P.Y. De Jong and Henry Vander Kam as professors.

Motivation for this venture is a mixture of legitimate desires for a theological education more responsive to rural needs, dissatisfaction with trends in the Christian Reformed Church, and ill-founded innuendos regarding Calvin Seminary.

We at Calvin Seminary reject the negative implications of this movement, both as to the seminary itself and as to the Christian Reformed Church. We are presently seeking ways to respond positively to the desire

for more seminary presence in Northwest Iowa. A group of ministers and elders in that area have indicated their readiness to discuss this matter with Calvin. One of the possibilities to be discussed is that of a Calvin Seminary satellite operation in that area....

Kromminga's open letter indicates a growing concern over the new seminary movement—seen especially in the suggestion that there might be established a "satellite operation" of Calvin Seminary in N.W. Iowa. We'll await further developments and try to report these.

## IN HIS FEAR

# "Children, Obey Your Parents"

*Rev. Carl Haak*

Obedience to our parents is an indication of our obedience to God. The Apostle John writes these simple but soul-searching words in I John 4:10, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" We could say with equal force, "If a man say, I love God and hateth his father or mother whom he hath seen, how can he obey God Whom he hath not seen?"

The commandments of Christ are not hard to understand. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another" (John 13:34). All our relationships one with another in the home, school, and church, toward parents, teachers, and brothers and sisters in Christ, must be governed by love. Love one another in the love of God! (Not with the false love of the world. True love is a particular and an exclusive gift. It is "out of God." It comes only from Him and is given only to those who are born of God by His sovereign grace. Only such people can love—see I John 4:7-8.)

And the love of God which we must show to one another reveals itself in one basic way: submission to one another. We read in Ephesians 5:21, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Love is a servant. To love is to deny yourself and serve the person closest to you. Did not Jesus teach us this when He washed His disciples' feet? "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14, 15). The love of God in a man causes him to submit himself to his

brother and sister in the Lord and to serve them. The love of God in a child, whether he is a child of two or of twenty, causes him to submit to his parents in godly obedience.

The subject of obedience to parents and of obedience to all in positions of God-given authority was dear to the heart of Jesus Christ. The title of this article is put in quotation marks because these words are the words of Christ. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:1 wrote the words, "Children obey your parents in the Lord." Not only was Paul inspired by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, but he was also repeating what Jesus Christ Himself said. We all remember well Christ's words to the Pharisees in Matthew 22:21 concerning our obedience to all in positions of authority: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Not as well known is the Lord's condemnation of the Pharisees in Matthew 15 where He exposed their disobedience to their parents. "For God commanded saying, Honor thy father and mother; and, he that curseth his father or mother let him die the death" (Matthew 15:4). The Pharisees raised their traditions and teaching above the Word of God. The Pharisees taught that a son may abuse his parents with disrespect, argue with them, and even curse them, providing he brought a gift to the temple. If he did this he would be free from condemnation.

But this disobedience went still farther. The commandment of God told them that they were to honor their parents not only by respecting them, but also by caring for them when they became old. This, also, the Pharisees, under a cloak of religious



piety, would not do. As Jesus put it, "But ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, it is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free" (Matthew 15:5, 6). In other words, they were piously (or devilishly) saying to their parents, "Ah, I have dedicated all my money to the Lord, therefore I cannot look after you, Father and Mother. Of course I would help you, but I have dedicated all my money to the temple and there is none left for you." The Pharisees disobeyed their parents by showing open disrespect and by refusing to care for their needs, and they taught men to do so with the excuse of religious dedication. The Lord called them hypocrites (verse 7): people who draw near to God with their mouths, but their hearts were far from Him (verse 8). A disciple of Christ is one who in the love of God submits himself to his parents for Christ's sake.

That we should attend to the teaching of Jesus Christ concerning the relationships within our homes and specifically concerning our relationship to our parents is urgent for us today. Anyone with an ounce of spiritual discernment would agree that this is a tremendously important and timely subject. We are living in a world where there is an alarming breakdown in respect and obedience. The fermentation of lawlessness works actively in the whole of society. And this is most evident in the home, in the relationship between parents and children. Although it is not my intention to leap over the fence into the next rubric, "Signs of the Times," nevertheless, how can it escape our consciousness that disobedience to parents is one of the preeminent signs of the times? Our Lord told us that there will be in the last days a breakdown in authority. A subdivision of that breakdown, in fact its source and foundation, Jesus told us, is disrespect to parents. Certainly a careful reader of the Scriptures cannot overlook that. The Apostle Paul in both Romans 1 and II Timothy 3 describes the kinds of men who will abound in the last days, men from whom we must turn away, men who are ugly and vile in God's sight. He says that these men shall be "disobedient to parents" (Romans 1:30, II Timothy 3:2). Not only that, but disobedience to parents is mentioned in the very same breath with such sins as murder, fornication, haters of God, and homosexuality. Disobedience to parents is one of the characteristics of a man whom God has "given over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Romans 1:28). Disobedience to parents is not a light thing, not an indifferent matter, not something to pass over, but it is a basic sign that the cup of iniquity is reaching its brim. The abounding disrespect seen in every sphere of society owes its origin to disrespect of parents in

the home. What kind of man is an ungodly man in whom the spirit of Anti-Christ reigns? What kind of man is part of the whole process of the increase in iniquity? It is the man who continues in disobedience to his parents.

But more, the Bible plainly teaches that, shortly before our Lord's return, the church will witness a breakdown in the home and in the family. The Devil knows his business. God's institution of the home is the cornerstone of the church and the school and the whole of society. Deliberately the Devil works his hardest and directs his most severe assaults against the home. And make no mistake about it, the Devil works against our homes! Remember the revelation given to John in Revelation 12? John saw that the beast was cast out of heaven and that the beast knows that he has but a short time. He is filled with the fury of a wounded animal; no, with the fury of most bitter hatred against God and Christ. He knows deep down in his black heart that he is defeated, and so he goes forth to persecute the woman with utterly reckless abandon. "And the Dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the *remnant of her seed*, which keep the commandment of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." This means that the Devil especially aims at the children of the church, at the children of believing parents. All of the abounding lawlessness in the world, all of the countless evil influences in the world are numerous traps which the Devil sets in order to ensnare the children of believers. The breakdown of the institution of the family and the prevailing attitudes of disrespect toward parents are the Devil's attempts to poison the children of Jesus Christ, and that means our children! As long as a family is faithful to Jesus Christ and lives as His bride in chaste observance of His commandments, the dragon will pursue that Christian family. And specifically the Devil will with fiendish fury pursue and seduce the children of that family.

Men of Israel, Awake! The enemy attacks you and your home! Grow not weary, take to yourself the shield of faith wherewith you are able to quench all the fiery darts of the Devil. Young people and children in whom dwells the spirit of Jesus Christ, remain steadfast! Stand immovable in the love of God by honoring your father and mother.

There is yet another reason why the will of Jesus concerning obedience to parents is important and needs to be taught and heard. The reason is that we are of the flesh (flesh as it is used in Romans 7). We are depraved sinners by nature. Although regenerated by God's grace through the Spirit, we need daily to battle the weakness of our flesh. May we never grow weary of hearing that! We are in the



flesh as children, as young men and women, as teachers and preachers, and as parents. The marriage form in the back of our Psalter, although criticized for its sober beginning, is good and proper. "Whereas married persons are generally, by reason of sin, subject to many infirmities...." This is not only true of the closest human tie given by God, which is marriage, but this is true of the tie between parents and their children. Our homes and schools are, by reason of sin, subject to many infirmities. You know that the trends found in the world are not just "out there," but are "in here"; that is, they are in you and in me. Human parents are weak and they fail in their calling, as any spiritual father and mother knows only too well. Children, in whom dwells the Spirit of Christ, are likewise aware of their sin and know the heart-rending sorrow of offending my God by offending their parents. The troubles and problems of the home sometimes become so deep and twisted that from the human standpoint we would almost say there is no hope. Oh, the grief of a parent whose child goes astray! That is a grief known only by a parent. Even if a parent has the faith of David, when he sees his child walk in ways of sin, then he too, as David, is bowed down in tears. Oh the grief of a child who grows up in disobedience and inevitably ends up living with the swine as did the prodigal son.

There is no defense against such problems; there is no help for a family other than the words of Jesus Christ. We look at the teaching of Jesus Christ concerning the home and the calling of the Lord to obey our parents as life in the midst of death. The

only strength and the only comfort for a family is to abide in His will. When we are filled with the Spirit, and when we are aware of the Devil and our sin, we do not look at the title of this article with the thought, "Here it comes again, the same old story"; but we say, "The only hope and comfort for me is to know the will of the Lord for my home," and we pray, "Lord, teach me to do Thy will." The way of disobedience is the way which leads to untold sorrow and death. Heeding the word of Christ for our homes is the only way of contentment, joy, and life.

Why? Our obedience to our earthly parents is the way of joy and life because through obedience we show our love for our Heavenly Father. All of God's people are children, adopted children in the blood of Christ. God is our Father. "I believe in God, the Father" which means that I believe the eternal God is my Father. He is the perfect Father, deeply concerned about His children, wise and loving, able and willing to work all things for their good. As our Father, He gives to us one calling in life, "Obey Me! Place all your trust in Me alone, and in love submit to My will which is good for you." The child of God is called to show that love towards his Heavenly Father by honoring his human father. The child who by grace loves his human father and obeys him, is also the child who by grace knows and honors his Heavenly Father.

In the next few articles, the Lord willing, I would like to look at this more closely with you in the light of Ephesians 6:1-4. May the Spirit guide us and open our hearts.

---

## ***SIGNS OF THE TIMES***

# **Our Children: God's Gracious Gift**

*Rev. R. Flikkema*

There are many evidences of the fact that the days in which we live are the last days. There is the reality of wars and rumors of wars; there is unrest in the world around us; there is famine and pestilence; there is hatred of the world for the Church manifest in the persecution of God's people, and there is the hatred of wicked men within the Church manifest in the denial of the truth of the Word of God. This article, however, does not have to do with any of those evidences, but with an evidence which is very dear to the heart of this author, and which must be dear to the heart of

every child of God. It is the evidence of our attitude towards our children.

We live today in a period of time and history the likes of which man has never seen before, as far as man's attitude toward children is concerned. In years gone by man has never had a correct and Scriptural attitude toward children, to be sure. His attitude toward children has always been this, that children are the result of some mere natural biological process in the life of a married couple. Never has man acknowledged the fact that children come



from God. The Bible is everywhere clear on that point. Children are a gift from God, and apart from God there are not, nor could there ever be children. But in the period of time and history in which we find ourselves today, man's attitude toward children has changed. It has altered somewhat. No, man has not changed his attitude in the sense that man today now finally has acknowledged the fact that children come from God. Not in the least. Indeed the very opposite is true. Man still today in horrible unbelief has no place for God in his thinking, and certainly no place for God in his attitude towards children. But when I say that man's attitude towards children has changed, that it has altered somewhat, that it is different from anything that the world has seen in the past, I mean that from this point of view, namely, that man today hates and despises children.

There can simply be no question about that. For years man has always understood that children do materialize in the life of husbands and wives; and the word of man has always been that such is the way it is. And husbands and wives are called upon to love children, if not with a love that is rooted in a love for God, at least with a love that is rooted in the flesh. But today man has removed from his thinking even the idea that husbands and wives must love children with a love that is rooted in the flesh. The word of man today is that children are a burden. They are troublesome and burdensome to have around. They are a burden first of all from the point of view of the society in which we live. The word of man today is that the world is overpopulated. The world is filled to overflowing with people, so much so that it can neither feed nor house the people in the world already, let alone the children that might be brought forth in time to come. And, in the second place, children, so the word of man is, are a burden for married couples. Married couples, if they have children, must supply the needs of children. But to do so takes time—time which could be used in the seeking of the world's pleasures and treasures. And money! Yes, money. The needs of children require money. Children need food. That costs money. Children need clothes. That costs money. Children need this and children need that, and it all costs money. Money that could be spent with a view to the realization of a married couple's dreams and plans. When a couple gets married, they have many dreams and plans. They dream of getting a new house. They dream of purchasing nice furniture for the house. They dream of owning a nice car. They dream of having a sizable bank account, so that they will not have to worry where the money is going to come from to pay for their home, furniture, and car. But if that couple has children, the dreams and plans of

that married couple are all dashed! They can not realize their dreams for a new house, new furniture, and a new car because they have to take care of their children.

So what is the answer to the whole burdensome state of affairs? The answer is planned parenthood. The answer is birth control. The answer is the preventing in one way or another, in one shape or form, that mere natural biological process whereby children come! Man today, with all his modern technology, has developed all kinds of ways and techniques to prevent the birth of children. These ways and techniques are utilized by the world today. And even the most horrible technique of all, the technique of abortion, the murder of children, even that is utilized. I do not have the percentages of children that are murdered every day by the technique of abortion. But I do not have to, to know that the figure is simply staggering! And then, to top it all off, man today has set aside a special day for the commemoration of parents who refuse to have children. Man calls it "Non-Parents Day." I became aware of this "Non-Parents Day" about a month ago as I was listening to my car radio on my way to visit a young mother of my congregation who had just given birth to a child. The announcer informed me that that particular day was set aside to commemorate those couples who did not have children. Not because they could not, but because they *would* not. And they would not because they understood that if they did, their children would be a burden to society!

But the question is: are they a burden to us? What is our attitude toward children? How do we view our children? Do we view our children as nothing more than the result of a mere natural biological process? Or do we view our children to be what they are, a gift, a gracious gift from God—a gift of which we are not worthy in the least, but a gift of God's unmerited grace to us His people? The Bible speaks of our children as being such a gift. Read for example Psalm 127. Hear the words of the Psalmist as he says, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward." Look up the words of stanza three of Psalter number 359 and sing them as they ought to be sung with joy and gladness in your heart: "Lo, children are a great reward, a gift from God in very truth; with arrows is his quiver stored, who joys in children of his youth." Listen to the testimony of Jacob in Genesis 33:5 who, when asked by Esau, "Who are those with thee?" responded with these beautiful words, "The children which God hath graciously given." And having done all of that, consider our Lord Jesus Christ Who in His earthly ministry had all kinds of love and compassion for the little children of His kingdom. So much so that



He took them up in His arms, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10).

Is that our attitude toward children? Do we confess that they are a gracious gift from God, and therefore, that they are not a burden? Or do we also, even as the world does, consider our children, God's gracious gift, to be a burden? If we are at all honest with ourselves we will have to admit that, much to our shame, we do. The attitude of the world in so many instances has a way of rubbing off on us. Sometimes we too, for very selfish reasons, use the techniques of the world to prevent the gracious gift of God's children. We do so because we very selfishly want the very same things that this world wants. We too want a nice house, nice furniture, a nice car, and all the rest. So, in order to get them, we do...no, I will not say what we do; I will leave that to your own imagination. But even if we do not do what I leave to your own imagination, and we have children, so often we consider them to be a burden. They cost us money. They need so very much of the things of this earthly life. They need food and clothes, and all the rest. And that costs money! And too, they need the most precious thing of all, instruction in God's Word in the

Church and in our covenant schools. That too costs us something. It costs our time, of which we seem so often to have so little. It costs money to send our children to our own schools. And if you take all of that into consideration, the sigh so often escapes from our lips, not what a wonderful gift of God's grace it is just to be given children, let alone the joy of using money and time which we so often call ours, but which are in reality God's, for the care and nurture of our children; the sigh so often escapes from our lips: Oh, what a burden children are. They take my time. They take so much money. They are all a burden!

But they are not. How can they be? As I said, the Bible so clearly points out to us that children are a gracious gift from God. That is God's Word. It does not lie. They are a gracious gift from God. And how in the world can something that is a gracious gift from God ever be a burden! That is simply impossible. Hence, let us be aware of this sign of the times. Let us not be a part of it, but rather in our awareness shun it and condemn it and repent of it when it becomes manifest in our lives. And in so doing let us give God thanks for His gracious gift of our children.

## QUESTION BOX

### Public Confession of Sin

*Rev. C. Hanko*

The following question was sent in:

"We had a discussion in our family about sinning against the seventh commandment. The question was asked, where did it originate that you must confess your sins before the congregation. Is it not sufficient to do this before the consistory, assuming that the person or persons are sincere? Could you cast some light on the subject?"

This question obviously refers to the public announcement from the pulpit that a certain person or certain persons have confessed their sin against the seventh commandment and that this confession has been accepted by the consistory.

This public announcement is based on article 75 of our Church Order which reads,

"The reconciliation of all such sins as are of their nature of a public character, or have become public because the admonition of

the church was despised, shall take place (upon sufficient evidence of repentance) in such a manner as the consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of each church. Whether in particular cases this shall take place in public, shall, when there is difference of opinion about it in the consistory, be considered with the advice of two neighboring churches or of the classis."

Distinction is made in this article between private and public sins. Sins which are private must be treated according to Matthew 18, and when a reconciliation is attained the matter is dropped. There are sins which are public, that is, commonly known, either because of the very nature of the sin, or because the sinner continues in his or her sinful way and refuses to repent. The sin against the seventh commandment obviously belongs to sins that by their very nature are known or become known.



The synod of Emden, 1571, decided that public sins must be publicly reconciled, not according to the judgment of one or two persons, but according to the consensus of the entire consistory. The synod of Middelburg, 1581, added the requirement, "When there is clear evidence of sorrow and repentance". Our Church Order in its present form is essentially the same as was adopted by the synod of Dordt in 1618-19.

Our fathers realized that sin is a serious matter. Sin is an offence to God and also an offence to God's Church, as well as grievous wrong committed by the guilty party or parties. To mention one concrete example from the Scriptures, when Achan stole from Jericho the things which God had accursed, he caused all Israel to sin. We read in Joshua 7:1, "But the *children of Israel* committed a trespass in the accursed thing, for Achan ... took of the accursed thing; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the *children of Israel*." (See also verses 11-13, 15, 26.) Joshua and all Israel stoned Achan with stones, along with his family and his possessions, and burned them all with fire. Thus was sin taken away from Israel. Today we often lose sight of our communal responsibility as members of the same congregation and denomination, the household of faith. When one member of the family sins the whole family becomes involved, not only as individual families, but also as the family of God. Therefore the sinner is guilty, but the church is offended, even as God is offended. God demands reconciliation, but so does His church. The offence must be removed, lest we all carry the guilt. This is the basis for article 75 of the Church Order, which requires that "the reconciliation of all such sins...shall take place in such a manner as the consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of each church." It is well to add, that this applies to ALL public sins, and not only to the sin against the seventh commandment as if this particular sin were the worst of all sins.

Various practices have prevailed in the past. The determining question has always been, just how public is this sin? A consistory must not make public a sin that is not even known among the members. The sinner must not be made a public spectacle because of a certain offence. Therefore a certain public sin may not be known in a large congregation, but will certainly be known in a smaller congregation. For that very reason our fathers left it to the discretion of the entire consistory as to how this offence must be removed in the congregation and reconciliation attained. Those who are aware of a certain sin in the congregation, or will in due time become aware of it must be assured that this sin has been confessed and put away, so that the sinner is forgiven of God and is embraced by the

members of the church as one who has received mercy, even as we all must daily receive mercy in pardon. In certain instances the guilty party stood up in the congregation and confessed his sin and repentance before the whole congregation. In some instances the guilty party was barred from communion for a time to prove the sincerity of his repentance. In most instances the confession is made and accepted by the consistory, and a public announcement is made from the pulpit in the worship service. Upon sincere repentance there is joy in heaven, and there is also joy among the saints.

Monsma and Van Dellen write in "The Revised Church Order Commentary" (following the suggestions of Joh. Jansen of the Netherlands in his commentary), the following (page 310):

"This article does not specify when the reconciliation shall be before the consistory and when before the Church also. Instances and examples are not given either. Every case must be judged in its own setting and upon its own merits or demerits. In general, consistories should be guided by considerations as these: Which form of reconciliation (public or private) will glorify God most? Which is best for the Church? Which form is best for the repentant sinner? Consistories should not give needless publicity to sins committed through confessions or reconciliations before the whole Church in public meeting. Neither should the consistory permit the name of a repentant sinner to be dishonored before men, if this can be avoided. On the other hand, offensive sins greatly dishonoring God's name and the Church of Christ should be confessed openly and personally, so that all may see and know that repentance has taken place and so that the offence is removed the more effectively. A public reconciliation is very often the best also for the sinner concerned. It tends to remove barriers which otherwise may linger."

*The Standard Bearer  
makes an excellent  
gift for the  
sick and shut-in.*



## Book Review

**THE TRAINING OF THE TWELVE**, by A.B. Bruce; Kregel Publications, 1979; 552 pp., \$6.95 (Kivar). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

First published in 1871, this important work of Bruce has been reprinted by Kregel's and has gone through a number of printings in the last decade. Although it is a brief "history" of the material in the gospel narratives, it concentrates upon the twelve apostles and the work Jesus did in preparing them for their future labors. Although hailed as

containing "the lessons and patterns in ageless management principles employed by our Lord with His disciples" and as a book which becomes a "challenge to those who seek greater depth and stability in the Christian church today", it is much more than this. While not a very "Reformed" book, it contains a great deal of interesting material and is worth reading especially by those who are making the gospel narratives their particular area of study.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Ladies Aid of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church wish to express their sympathy to their President, Rev. G. Van Baren and their fellow member, Mrs. Van Baren in the loss of her father, MR. JOHN BUITER.

May the God of grace so comfort them that they may experience in their present sorrow the peace that passeth all understanding.

Mrs. George Hoekstra, Secretary

### NOTICE!!!

#### ADMINISTRATOR NEEDED

Covenant Christian High School will be in need of an Administrator beginning with the 1982-1983 school term. Applicants should contact the Chairman of the Education Committee by December 1, 1981.

Mr. David Ondersma  
6761 Brookwood Drive, S.W.  
Grandville, Michigan 49418  
(616) 457-1417

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church expresses its' sincere sympathy with Mr. William Faber and his family in the death of their wife, mother and grandmother, ANNE L. FABER.

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

Gerald J. DeVries, Pres.  
Mary DeVries, Sec'y.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

Seminarian Thomas Miersma has been licensed by the Faculty to speak a word of edification in our Protestant Reformed Churches under faculty supervision.

H.C. Hoeksema, Rector

## You Are Invited!!!

to the

Annual Reformation Day Lecture

To be held, the Lord willing, at  
The Dimnent Chapel of Hope College  
in Holland, Michigan.

The Speaker — Rev. Rodney G. Miersma

The Theme — The Reformation: A Declaration of Freedom.

October 29, 1981 • 8:00 P.M.

Plan now to attend—  
and bring your friends.

The Lecture Committee



## Report of Classis West

September 14, 1981

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in Hull, Iowa from September 2, through noon on September 4. Ten ministers and twelve elders represented the churches in Classis West. Rev. G. Lubbers, present during some of the sessions, was given advisory vote. Rev. M. Kamps led in opening devotions. He read Ephesians 1 and addressed Classis on verse 13: "...in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Rev. K. Koole, pastor of the Randolph, Wisconsin congregation, presided over this meeting of Classis—a first for him. Elder M. Van Baren of South Holland was the only elder delegate attending Classis for the first time.

Classis heard the reports of several committees. The Reading Sermon Committee requests that each minister in Classis West make one reading sermon a year. The Taped Sermon Committee asks that the Consistories in the West send tapes of their minister's sermons to the Library, so that there is variety of preachers.

Loveland had an overture at Classis concerning the manner in which Church Visitation is done in the West. Loveland proposed that "One year it be conducted by personal presence of the church visitors as is presently done" and that "The next year the church visitors send a letter to each consistory, requesting that the local consistory address itself to the prescribed questions and inform the church visitors per letter if their answers are satisfactory or if there is any area of neglect or need for counsel. If a consistory desires a personal visit by the church visitors, they can make this request of them and they will arrange such a visit." The grounds for this proposal were: "a. Spiritual supervision can still be exercised according to the spirit of Article 44" and "b. It will cut the cost of church visiting which in Classis West has escalated to over \$3,000.00 a year." The overture was turned back to Loveland, so that Loveland might investigate previous deci-

sions of the major assemblies on this matter, according to Article 46 of the Church Order.

Most of the time of Classis was taken up with deliberation of the protests of two brothers against their Consistory and against the preaching of their pastor. The Church Visitors of Classis West had been called in to help in the controversy and reported to Classis concerning their visit. The heart of the controversy was the objection of the protestants to the stand of the Consistory that there are demands and obligations in the covenant. The protestants denied that there are demands and obligations in the covenant. Classis turned down the protests, upholding the Consistory and the preaching of the pastor. Classis decided "that there are demands and obligations in the covenant which also must be preached in the congregation," adducing as proof, Ps. 78:4, 5; Luke 13:1-5; Rom. 12:1,2; II Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:22-24; Eph. 5:8-11; II Thess. 3:6; Heid. Cat., Q. 9; Heid. Cat., Q. 86; Heid. Cat. Q. 114, 115; Canons, III, IV, 17; Bel. Conf., Art. 24; besides the Baptism Form, Article 21 of the Church Order, and some Reformed theologians.

In executive session, Classis advised two Consistories to proceed with the erasure of a baptized member and to proceed with the second step of censure with three confessing members, as the Consistories had requested.

The following schedule of classical appointments was adopted for Isabel, SD and Redlands, CA. *Isabel*: Nov. 8,15,22 - Lanting; Dec. 6,13,20 - Korterling; Jan. 10,17,24 - Cammenga; Feb. 7,14,21 - Slopsema. *Redlands*: Sept. 13,20,27 - Koole; Oct. 11,18,25 - Bekkering; Nov. 8,15,22 - Moore; Dec. 6,13,20 - Kamps; Jan. 10,17,24 - Engelsma; Feb. 7, 14,21 - Kuiper.

Classis will meet next in Randolph, Wisconsin on March 3, 1982, the Lord willing.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk  
Classis West