

The **STANDARD BEARER**

— A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE —

. . . we should remember that doctrine and ethics, faith and practice (lifestyle) go hand in hand. They cannot be separated. And they affect one another. There is a reciprocal relation between them. Doctrine affects practice, and practice affects doctrine. Departure in doctrine bears fruit in departure in life; and sometimes the relation is reversed, so that departure in practice bears fruit in departure in doctrine.

See "Crisis of Doctrine or Ethics — or Both?"

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MEDITATION

Behold the Lamb of God

Rev. M. Schipper

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29b

He was John the Baptist who uttered these words.

He was a man sent from God for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe (John 1:6, 7).

He was a man who, a little more than forty days before, when he baptized the Lord Jesus in the Jordan, had heard the witness from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased"

(Matthew 3:17). Not only so, but he also witnessed the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him (Matthew 3:16), leaving John with no doubt but that Jesus was the Son of God Who should come into the world to save His people from their sins, and Whose way John had been commissioned to prepare.

Such wonderful happenings could not occur in secret, but they were noised abroad, and came to

the ears of the Pharisees and rulers of the people in Jerusalem, who, in turn, sent priests and Levites to John with the question: "Who art thou?" (John 1:19). It was while they were interrogating him as to his identity, that Jesus, returning from the temptation in the wilderness, came once more to John, evidently now with the intention that John should point Him out. Thus we read: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and then he uttered the words of our text: "Behold the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29b).

All the questioning by the priests and Levites as to John's identity could draw out of John but one answer: "I am not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that prophet, but I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord, as saith the prophet Esaias." And when they were concerned with respect to his baptism, he replied: "I baptize with water, but there standeth One among you, Whom ye know not; He it is, Who coming after me, is preferred before me, Whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose" (John 1:25-27). At that moment Jesus appeared, and John seeing Him said:

"Behold the Lamb of God!"

The figure was well-known in Israel.

Not only was the lamb the symbol of meekness and passivity among all the creatures in God's creation, but it was judged worthy by God to stand out among the clean animals fit for sacrifice. It was not Israel who designed the lamb for sacrificial purposes, but the God of Israel Who gave commandment for its use. All typology was divinely prearranged and imposed upon Israel. And among the types, the lamb stands preeminent in Israel's ceremonial service. Hence, it appears in the morning and evening sacrifice. It was predominant in the great day of atonement as the paschal lamb. It served in the redemption of the firstborn of man and beast.

Typically Israel was taught from its historical origins to look to the lamb for its redemption. More particularly it was to the blood of the lamb that the Israel of God had to look for the remission of sin. Revolting as blood theology may appear to the natural man, it was precisely this theology that God from earliest times taught His people Israel and us. Without the shedding of blood there is no redemption, and the only blood that could possibly redeem was to be found in God's Lamb, of which the creature lamb was a fit symbol.

Behold the Lamb of God!

He is God's Lamb!

Israel could not produce Him. O, indeed, Israel

in obedience to God's command could bring for sacrifice the lambs of their flocks, and they did. But with all the shedding of blood, Israel had to learn two important things. First of all, they had to learn that not all the blood could wash away one sin. Secondly, Israel must look beyond the type to the Antitype, the prefigurement as well as the fulfillment of all the lambs, as it would be realized only in the Lamb of God. Israel's redemption lay not in all the sacrificial rites performed by Israel, but in the provision of the God of Israel, Who alone could and would redeem them. In one word, Israel had to look for the Lamb which was to come, the Lamb of God. That was the significance of the paschal lamb slain at the departure of Israel from Egypt, the house of bondage, as Christ taught His disciples in the last supper just before His sacrifice on the cross. That was also the significance of the prophecy of Isaiah 53, where the prophet in vivid terms describes the redemption of God's people: "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter . . . but He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities . . . the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed."

That Lamb, in all His significance, John now sees standing before him in the Person of the Son of God made flesh. Verily, he recognizes in Him all the fulfillment of prophecy. Here is, indeed, the promised Lamb of God.

Behold Him!

Fix your eyes upon Him! Look at Him from every angle! Do not fail to see that in Him is all your salvation! For it is in Him alone that God has prepared all of your redemption.

He it is that takes away the sin of the world.

The sin of the world? Which world?

Important it is that we pause for a moment or two to find the answer to that question.

Does the Baptist refer to the world (cosmos) of ordered things as they came into being by the word and power of the Creator? That is the meaning of the term when the Scriptures speak of the world apart from the facts of sin and grace. You find it in such passages which speak of what God did "before the foundation of the world." It is obvious that the Baptist does not have that world in mind, for he speaks of the sin of the world.

What then? Does he perhaps speak here of the world as it has come under the power of evil? Of the world of which the devil is prince? The wicked world which we are commanded not to seek or to love? The world which is passing away? Though it is true that the Baptist is speaking of the sin of the world, it should be plain to us that he cannot have

in mind the world that perishes in the way of its sin, but of the world that is saved. Moreover, to say that the Lamb of God takes away the sin of that world would militate against all Scripture which denies universal atonement, and the salvation of all men head for head.

That leaves then but one conclusion, that he must refer to the world of which the apostle John later speaks in this gospel: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). That is the world of God's good pleasure, the object of His eternal love. That is the world of which God's Son in the flesh is the firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15, 18). That is the world of the new creation of which the apostle John writes in his Revelation, where he in prophetic vision sees the first heaven and earth passed away, and a new heaven and earth, in the center of which is the new Jerusalem, and the tabernacle of God is with men, and God dwelling with His people, and wiping all tears from their eyes. Where there is no more pain, no sorrow, no death, where all the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:1-4). That is the world for which God sent His Son, which He purposed to save, and for which He prepared and sent His Lamb.

That world's sin He takes away!

To understand this, we must remember that the world of God's election historically and organically had its origin in the world of sin and death. We must also remember that it was God's eternal purpose to realize the world of His good pleasure through the way of sin and grace (Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1). Hence, the sin of the world of God's good pleasure is the sin of Adam, our first father; and the natural depravity of the world is the depravity in which each of God's elect is conceived and born. All the elect, whether Jew or Gentile, are under sin (Romans 3:9). Into that state and condition the law of God came, only to magnify and to make that sin and depravity to become exceeding great (Romans 7:18-25).

What should be clearly understood is the Scriptural truth that, though it is true that the Lamb of God came into the world which lay under the power of sin and death, He did not come to save all sinners, nor to make salvation possible for all men if only they would believe on Him. We repeat, God did not send His Lamb to redeem the world that perishes and passes away. But He came to take away the sin of the world of His good pleasure, the world which is the object of His eternal love, the world of His election.

For the sin of that world of God's good pleasure, the God of our salvation prepares and sends His

Lamb, His sacrifice of atonement. He makes Him to be sin, Who knew no sin, in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (II Cor. 5:21).

It is in this connection that we learn from Scripture that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (II Cor. 5:19).

That He takes away the sin of that world means literally, first of all, that He lifts it up, raises it from the shoulders of that world, and then bears it away never to return. And noticeably, the Baptist uses the term in its present tense, which means that, as John saw Him, He was in the very act of removing the sin. It means that from the moment of His birth to the moment of His death the Lamb of God was taking away the sin of God's world. That also explains the reason for His circumcision and baptism. Indeed, He was the holy child Jesus, Who knew no sin; but He was made sin, and the sin and guilt of His people rested upon Him. And through the way of the shedding of His blood, of which circumcision and baptism were the signs, He must enter into the world of sin and darkness, and lead out the world of God's good pleasure. Not only is He the sin-bearer of God's world, but as the Lamb of God He must take that sin away—all of it. And in its place He gives His righteousness, the righteousness of God.

How does He do that?

He does that, first of all, as the Head of His people. Mark well, precisely in the same way that people are lost in sin and death, namely through the sin and fall of our first head, Adam, so in that way God also redeems them, but now through the last Adam, the Lord from heaven. He is the Head of all the redeemed (Ephesians 1:20-23). He is that as the Lamb of God. How strikingly this is expressed by the voices of all the redeemed as the apostle John envisions them in their final glory. All the redeemed ascribe salvation to God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. 7:10-12). Verily, God's Lamb is given to His people to stand in their place.

Secondly, in the way of perfect obedience He delivers them. In the fulness of time He assumes their flesh and takes upon Him their guilt. He is born under the law, bearing their sin. He ascends the hill of the skull to suffer death in their stead. He rises from the dead, declaring their righteousness.

He ascends to the throne of God, interceding for them with the Father. He receives without measure the Spirit to fill their hearts with all the graces of salvation. He brings them at last into the tabernacle of God, a righteous and holy people, who ascribe to God all their salvation through the Lamb.

Behold, Him, then, ye people of God!

The Lamb which God prepared to take away all

your sin!

When you and I behold Him thus, then already now we begin to sing, as we will unto all eternity with all the redeemed, and all the holy angels: "Amen: Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto God for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 7:12).

EDITORIAL

Crisis of Doctrine or Ethics — or Both?

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

With what one might interpret as a note of nostalgia, the Rev. J. D. Eppinga (*The Banner*, Sept. 13, 1982, p. 25) bemoans the lack of a distinctive and Reformed lifestyle in his denomination. At the conclusion of one of his usually interesting "Of Cabbages & Kings" articles he writes as follows:

...Speaking of "lifestyle," I'm not sure we have one anymore, or at least one that is distinctive and Reformed in character. Instead, we are moving closer to a way of life that includes both church and circus. It seems, however, that others can manage this better than some of us. Drinking and dancing at our weddings seem to get out of hand sometimes. Our synods, whether in 1928 or 1982, handle such questions as "the dance" awkwardly. The film arts, some insist, need greater attention in our circles, while others disagree. There are those among us who say we face a crisis in the areas of doctrinal and biblical interpretation. I think we do. Meanwhile, we may forget that the crisis may be as great in the area of ethics.

How, then, must we live? An old cleric once said that the enemy will destroy us, not by burning us at the stake, but by serving us champagne. He spoke these words, not as a teetotaler, but as one who sought to emphasize ethics (how to live) in a world where doctrine (what we believe) was considered the only thing that mattered.

Jesus prayed that we be "in the world but not of it" (John 17). In theory, we may have this straight. It is in practice that many of us still do not have the hang of it.

It would seem, therefore, that the Rev. Eppinga is among those who are disturbed by the 1982 decision of the Christian Reformed Synod concerning dancing and concerned about the loss of a distinctive (or antithetical) lifestyle among the constituency of the CRC. Others have openly wondered how they can instruct and admonish and warn their

children and young people against the movie (1966 synodical decision) and the dance (1982 decision) when mother church officially condones these.

I have no solution for the CRC. Once decisions of this kind have been taken, it becomes a practical spiritual impossibility for a denomination to stem the tide of worldliness and to turn the clock back. In general the membership of the church is not concerned about any principles (whether of doctrine or of ethics) which lie at the basis of such decisions, nor even about any guidelines which a synod may lay down (witness how little the guidelines about the film arts have been observed). They are interested only in the practical fact that the restrictions have been lifted and the doors (floodgates?) have been opened to worldly practices. On this score there should be no illusions. It is simply a fact of church history that once a certain course has been set, there is no turning back.

But there is some instruction to be gained here.

And I do foster the hope that some Christian Reformed brethren and sisters might at last begin to see (by way of bitter experience) the devastating effects of the doctrine of common grace which lies at the root of the movie and the dance decisions.

In the first place, we should remember that doctrine and ethics, faith and practice (lifestyle) go hand in hand. They cannot be separated. And they affect one another. There is a reciprocal relation between them. Doctrine affects practice, and practice affects doctrine. Departure in doctrine bears fruit in departure in life; and sometimes the relation is reversed, so that departure in practice bears fruit in departure in doctrine.

In the second place, the loss of a Reformed lifestyle, as connected with the dance and the movie,

indeed involves a crisis of both ethics and doctrine, practice and faith. Only the doctrine involved in this instance is not that of doctrinal and biblical interpretation. It is the doctrine of common grace which the CRC adopted in 1924. More specifically, it is the doctrine of the restraint of sin and the good of the natural man set forth in the Second and Third Points of 1924.

Do I hear someone say, "There you go again! Why do you always try to blame everything on 1924 and common grace?"

My reply is: I am speaking of *facts*, not merely presenting my own conclusions. The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church itself, both in 1966 and in 1982, laid the foundation of the film arts decision and the dance decision in the doctrine of the restraint of sin. Here is the proof:

1) In 1982 the Synod adopted this point, among others, "With Respect to the Relationship of the Christian to the World:" "2. Because sin entered the world, even the best works of man are defiled with sin (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 62), but *sin is being restrained by God's grace.*" (italics added) (Acts of Synod, Art. 90)

2) The point just quoted was first adopted in 1966 in the same context in connection with the film arts (movie) decision. (Acts of Synod, 1966, Art. 61)

3) The 1966 Report on the Church and the Film Arts (Acts, 1966, Supplement 32, p. 332) makes specific reference to 1924 as follows: "The world has not returned to absolute chaos, however, for God restrains the power of sin and bestows many good gifts and talents upon man in general. These gifts are common to both the regenerate and unregenerate man. God 'giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.' (Acts 17:25) In Acts 14:17 we are told that He fills our hearts with gladness. This is 'a kind of favor or grace of God which He manifests toward His creatures in general.' (Acts of Synod 1924, Article 132) It would be highly ungrateful to God to despise or reject these gifts and their results in human society. Sinful man, in his effort to be autonomous, may boast of his accomplishments and idolize his culture; but the Christian will accept whatever God has made possible with gratitude and will dedicate it to God's glory."

4) The 1982 Report (33) on "Dance and the Christian Life" similarly finds elements of good in the sinful world: "We also need to recognize that even in a fallen and sin-ridden world God's gifts are not always or uniformly misused, and human motivations are not always completely corrupt. Even in a fallen and sinful world it may be possible to find some creational ingredients of healthy celebration and a wholesome use of the God-given capacity of

the human body to relate to music and rhythm." (p. 565)

There is, of course, a history behind all of this.

It took some fifty or sixty years, but finally the doctrine of common grace won out in what the Rev. Eppinga refers to as a crisis of "ethics," and the doctrine of the antithesis was shunted aside.

Principally, of course, that took place in 1924. The Three Points of Common Grace were adopted at that time. But a fact that few remember is that the same Synod of 1924 in a wholly contradictory action adopted a "Testimony" in which it insisted that the antithesis must be maintained 'tooth and nail.' That "Testimony" was never sent to the churches, however; it was locked away in the Acts of Synod.

Then, starting already in 1926, the "problem" of worldly amusements was brought to synod.

At first the various synods who spoke on this issue tried to come down on the side of the antithesis, or, if you will, on the side of a distinctive and Reformed lifestyle. And, while even in the 1928 report on the amusement-question reference was made to common grace as a basis of fellowship between believers and unbelievers, nevertheless the 1928 decisions sought to maintain the antithesis. The method, of course, was wrong: the attempt was made to *legislate* worldly amusements out of the churches, and the result was what were often referred to as the "three no-no's." Over the years the same problem kept cropping up. I can remember from my own college days in the early 1940s that it was a problem in both student body and faculty at Calvin College. As late as 1951 the attempt was still made, though more weakly than in 1928, to come down on the side of the antithesis and to maintain the stand of 1928.

But since then the tide has turned.

And now the door is officially open to both movie and dance.

The doctrine of common grace has borne its fruit in the area of ethics. The Rev. Eppinga speaks of having things straight in theory, but not in practice. He is mistaken. The CRC has things wrong both in theory and in practice; and the two go hand in hand.

But here is a concluding question: how is YOUR practice with respect to worldly amusements, with respect specifically to the movie (whether at the theater or on the television screen in your family room)? Is your practice consistent with your denial of common grace and your insistence on the antithesis? Or do you deny in deeds what you confess in words?

TRANSLATED TREASURES

A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

(In this paragraph which is continued in this article and in the preceding paragraph Kuyper has begun a discussion of reformation by means of a break with the church. He has only introduced this subject, but has emphasized in the preceding material, that such reformation must be: 1) a work of God; 2) a work that begins in the consciousness of sin and guilt which arises in the heart of the believer.)

A Christian must not act out of a motivation for success. He must act only out of the obedience of faith. The question is not whether he shall succeed, nor whether others shall laugh at him; but only the command of God may be the guide for his path. His calling is not to execute the counsel of God, but to walk in the law of the Lord. Entirely apart from the question of what others do, or of what shall be the end of the matter, or even of what is determined in the Lord's counsel, he must do what he is commanded and he must witness where he is commanded to witness. If it pleases God to break my heart by making my dearest child waste away with fearful illness so that death is waiting to take its prey, what Christian father is there who would not feel the fearful judgment of God on his own guilt and sin? But also, what would you think of a father who is bowed down under the conviction of guilt, but left his helpless child to his own illness without putting forth any effort to bring about a cure?

A sound and good principle, therefore, includes the precept: no reformation apart from the conviction of guilt in the Lord's people; no genuine conviction of guilt other than by means of the convicting inner work of the Holy Spirit; no inner working of the Holy Spirit other than according to God's hidden counsel. But if that counsel is different, if that work of the Spirit is not present, and if the conviction of guilt with the Lord's people is lacking, even then duty, pure duty, requires of us all that we keep all unholiness from the Lord's altar. And even if there is only one who receives that conviction of guilt from the Spirit, he can and must not hesitate to act according to the will of the Lord regardless of what he himself may have to suffer, yes, even if it brings him naked into the street.

God's command is unconditional and penetrates into the joints and marrow of the soul. Every failure

to obey this command, no matter how small, brings eternal death. Only the infinite sacrifice of Christ can, because He is God, wipe out the guilt of sin against that command. Just because the command is absolute, any excuse which appeals to past virtues or good works which we have done to escape the severity of that command, is no more than a speck of dust in the scales of God's justice.

Let everyone consider and ponder that any departure from and attack against the existing church structure is a dreadful matter; and that no one can possess the holy courage for this unless he knows and understands: God wills it! Disobedience to human ordinances can and must be carried out only out of a higher obedience to the ordinances of God. The over-spiritual members, who by all sorts of reasonings talk away that voice of obedience, cut the sinew of the Christian life.

No, no, it is not as if in the matter of church reformation one thinks this way and another is of that opinion, and that now each, according to his own insight can do as he pleases. It is not a matter of personal opinion. If the obligation of obedience does not urge, induce, and compel one to action, then any activity is sin. But it is also true that if that obligation of obedience to God concerns one person, then it is also of concern to all. The command is general.

The reformation which this paragraph treats we define as: the ecclesiastical return to obedience to God and His Word because the church was disobedient to God and His Word.

He who has set up rules in his own house and has introduced practices which in hindsight he sees as militating against God's Word, ought to change those rules and reverse those practices so that he once again becomes obedient to God. Neither an appeal to the authority of those rules nor any reference to the firmness of those practices can make him or anyone else innocent, even for a moment, if he continues to be disobedient.

A break with the existing rules and practices, or, if one wills, with the existing church, is allowed us, but then also without doubt commanded us, only if

this organization prevents us as church from being obedient to God the Lord.

It follows from this that not only must spiritual awakening by conviction of sin precede all reformation by means of separation from the church, but also one must never proceed to such separation until he has first tried the way of gradual renewal and reformation within the church.

There is a spirit of caution in the child of God. He abhors the passion which would seek separation, and he ponders means to avoid the break. Only hard and painful necessity presses and forces and compels him to it. He wants to do differently, but he cannot.

First of all, other means must be carried to their very end before he engages in the action of separation or permits such action to take place.

Gradual renewal within his present church must therefore first be desired, sought, and prayed for. When the ecclesiastical assemblies from which this gradual church renewal alone can proceed, seek it apart from the honor of God, without adequate principle, and stubbornly refuse to bring the ecclesiastical organization back from its disobedience towards God; yes, stronger yet, when these assemblies oppose and punish every attempt to be obedient to the Lord; then, definitely, the moment has come when that separation neither can nor may be put off any longer.

Because separation from the existing church connection is to be discussed in the following paragraph, it is necessary to treat here only such reformation which leaves the church connection undisturbed, or, at any rate, does not clash with the church connection. We are here chiefly concerned with the reformation of the local church, i.e., that church which primarily concerns the individual member.¹

The church to which we belong is the body of Christ. That body of Christ is locally manifested. It is therefore through the local church that we come directly into contact with the body of Christ. Each of us bears a direct responsibility for the local church, and it is in, through, and with it that we must manifest ecclesiastically our obedience to God.

"Ecclesiastical obedience" is an expression which hardly needs further explanation. God the Lord has demanded obedience from us on every level of life. We must live in obedience to the Lord our God in our personal, our family, or societal, our political, and also our ecclesiastical life. There are

no limits to obedience to God. If anyone walks obediently in society, but neglects that obedience in his home, he is still guilty. And so also, if anyone serves his God in his home and in society but is disobedient to God in his church, that violation of God's majesty is also evident.

Thus this rule applies: even though anyone is (himself) obedient to God in his own church, he may nevertheless become corporately guilty of the disobedience of others by his cooperation with them.

If therefore the church to which one belongs lives in a state of disobedience, then each child of God is obligated to set his obedience over against that disobedience.

If the disobedient church permits this kind of conduct, makes room for it, makes this possible for him, then the result is not separation. But if, on the other hand, the church hinders and prevents this obedience to God, then the child of God may not cease being obedient, but he must go through with it even if there is the danger of punishment, yes, even if the punishment of death threatens him. This is true in two respects. First, each child of God must refuse to do anything, to have a part in anything, or to cooperate in anything which is disobedience to God. And, on the other hand, he must be obedient to what God requires even though men forbid him, hinder him, or try to make it impossible.

The cases in which something like this can occur are chiefly the following. 1) With respect to what God forbids: a) the refusal to serve images or to pray to Mary and the saints; b) to participate in religious meetings where the truth is mutilated or suppressed; c) to sing songs which are not in harmony with God's Word; d) to participate in sacraments which are not rightly administered; e) to give one's children education or to confirm them, as men say, or to have confirmation by and through ministers, who derogate the truth; and f) to give reverence to ecclesiastical persons in ways which detract from the kingship of Jesus. And likewise, 2) with respect to that which concerns obedience to God when we are hindered from it: a) hindered in our calling to possess the preaching of the Word and to seek this preaching elsewhere than in the church to which we belong, or to establish a church where preaching is restored; b) hindered in our obligation to have the sacraments of baptism and communion for ourselves and for our children; and c) hindered in our obligation to witness against sin and error in the congregation.

In all these instances each member of the church is bound to deal with these matters, and in simplicity of heart to walk in the way of duty and calling.

¹. This refers to a distinction Kuyper has mentioned before between the local congregation of which one is a member and the denomination at large.

If the consistory opposes this, then such a member must nevertheless continue. If punishment follows he must suffer this punishment, and, indeed, not even then cease for a moment from that which brings the punishment upon him. If the consistory

hinders him from obtaining through ecclesiastical channels what he must have from the church according to God's Word, then the obligation rests upon him to correct this deficiency by gathering with others who are likeminded.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

October 15, 1982

Dear Timothy,

Language is important. Without language there can be no communication between persons. And without communication there can be no fellowship.

Theological language is especially important because by it the gospel is preached, the truth is proclaimed, God's people are instructed in the faith and given all they need to walk their sojourn from here to heaven.

Careless use of theological language has led to untold trouble in the church of Christ.

Theological language has taken something of a beating in the last years. You are aware of the fact that this has been done in different ways.

There have always been heretics in the church who attempt to smuggle their heresy into the church under the guise of the truth of Scripture. They do this in a particularly subtle and misleading way when they use the theological vocabulary of the church, but give to the terms an entirely new meaning which these terms have never had before.

Then, again, others, for the same reasons, are intent on changing the entire vocabulary of the church and substitute for time-honored terms more contemporary and relevant terms. This is done, so it is said, in the interests of making the gospel relevant to our present times. You can find this exercise taking place in a lot of preaching, but especially in the new Bible translations.

This is a very serious matter and ought to be of concern to us. The theological vocabulary of the church is important. As the Spirit of Christ led the church into the truth of the Scriptures throughout the ages, and as the church developed that truth, the church gradually developed a specific vocabulary which it used to designate particular truths of the Word of God.

Some of these terms were taken directly from

Scripture as, e.g. the terms, "justification" and "sanctification." Other terms were invented by the church to connote specific Scriptural doctrines for which no term can be found in God's Word. Examples of these latter terms are such words as, "trinity," "providence," etc.

But they have come to mean something very specific and concrete in the confession of the people of God, have been incorporated into our Confessions, and have been effective instruments to preserve the truth and to give that truth to succeeding generations.

When specific efforts are made, therefore, to alter the terminology of the church, the result is theological chaos. On the one hand, entirely new ideas are substituted for old ideas so that heresy replaces the truth; and on the other hand the new and supposedly contemporary terminology conveys ideas which are altogether false. Perhaps just one illustration will suffice to demonstrate this. In the translation of the New Testament called "Reach Out," the following is the translation of Romans 5:1: "So now, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith in His promises, we can have real peace with Him because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us." This is substituted for: "Therefore, being justified by faith. . . ." The term, "justified" has been changed into, "having been made right in God's sight." The latter is an entirely different idea not only, but is not, in any sense of the word, the truth of Scripture.

But all of this is not really my point.

It is also possible to change basic ideas and basic truths within the church of Christ by careless use of theological terminology. This too can have serious consequences and is something against which we must be constantly on our guard.

To several of these instances I want to write to you for the purpose of encouraging careful and thoughtful use of language in our preaching and writing.

There are several instances which particularly come to mind.

The first is the difference between the word "accept" and the word "receive." These two words are often used in connection with Christ or in connection with the preaching of the gospel. We "accept" or "receive" Christ; we "accept" or "receive" the gospel. It is striking that the word "receive" is both Biblical and confessional, while the word "accept" is not. And yet the latter is more and more being substituted for the former.

A little thought will show clearly the difference between the two words—even though, at first blush, they seem to be synonyms of each other. The word "receive" puts the emphasis on the one who *gives*. I receive a letter through the mail. Someone has sent me a letter and it comes to me through the U.S. Postal Service. But the word "accept" puts the emphasis on the one who takes what is given. I accept a gift which is offered to me. There is special emphasis placed upon my will, my decision, my action.

Applied to Christ and the gospel, the difference becomes crucial. Scripture and our Confessions teach that we "receive" Christ. The emphasis falls upon the One Who gives, namely, God. And this is properly where the emphasis belongs in all Reformed theology. But the word "accept" in relation to Christ puts the emphasis on me. It stresses that an act of my will is involved, a choice on my part plays a role and a decision is required of me. The word "accept," therefore, comes burdened with the whole Arminian theology of free will.

When this is applied to faith ("accepting" or "receiving" by faith the gospel), the difference is between the Reformed doctrine that faith is the gift of God and the Arminian doctrine that faith is the work of man.

Two little words which are crucial for the whole battle of the Reformed faith versus the deadly error of Arminianism.

Another example comes to mind. In years gone by it was customary to see on our bulletins from time to time an announcement concerning the sacraments. The bulletin would tell the congregation concerning a baby that was to be baptized or concerning the fact that the time had come once again for the Lord's Supper. Usually the term that was used in connection with these sacraments was the term, "administration": "the sacrament of Baptism will be *administered* this morning;" or, "the sacrament of the Lord's Supper will be administered next week Sunday morning."

It has become increasingly common, however, to find in our bulletins the substitution of the word, "celebration" for "administration." "The sacra-

ment of baptism will be celebrated;" or, "the sacrament of the Lord's Supper will be celebrated."

Now it is true, in a certain sense of the word, that the sacraments are "celebrations." No one can deny this. Nevertheless, by this alteration in terminology the emphasis is shifted rather markedly. Our Forms which we use on these occasions all speak of the "administration" of the sacrament, not its celebration.

Once again, a little thought about the matter will make this clear.

The term "administration" places the emphasis where it ought to be, i.e., on God. It emphasizes the truth that, through the sacraments, God comes to His people with His grace and confers this grace upon them. The sacrament is "administered" by God through the ordained ministry. The word "celebration," however, shifts the emphasis to man. It looks at the sacrament from our point of view, emphasizes our participation in the sacrament and ignores entirely the sacrament as a means of grace which God gives to His church. Once again the shift in terminology, seemingly so innocuous, has shifted our thinking in a very subtle way from God's work to our work.

There is one more example which we ought perhaps to notice. I refer to the loose way in which the term "theology" is used in our day.

The term "theology" has always had specific connotations in the history of Christian thought. There are especially two meanings which the term has, both of which are related to each other. It has referred either to the whole of Dogmatics such as in the expression, "Systematic Theology," or it has referred to the first part of Dogmatics which is called "Theology" in distinction from "Soteriology" or "Ecclesiology." The term "theology" therefore has come to mean, "the knowledge or doctrine of God." When it refers to the first part of Dogmatics, it refers to that part of the truth of God's Word which especially deals with the doctrine of God as it contains the doctrines of His names, His attributes, His counsel, etc. When the term is used for the whole of Dogmatics, then it refers to the fact that really all the truth of Scripture is, essentially, the knowledge of God. Whether one is talking about the work of Christ, the nature of the church, the work of salvation, or whatever, it is all essentially the knowledge of God because it is all a part of God's revelation of Himself.

But now we have the term "theology" used in all kinds of strange and unusual ways in which it is almost impossible to figure out what is meant. We hear today, e.g., of "the theology of Paul." Apparently intended is the idea that from the Scriptures is taken what was specifically taught by Paul

in distinction from, say, Peter or John. But what does something like this do? It carries with it a whole load of implications which are contrary to Scripture. It suggests, e.g., that Paul had a distinct theology from Peter; perhaps even a theology which did not agree with Peter in every respect. It suggests that what we have in Scripture is Paul's thoughts, and it implies that Paul did not receive his thoughts through divine inspiration. It tends to deny the unity of the Scriptures by denying that the Scriptures are given by the Holy Spirit as the revelation of God. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Perhaps worse yet we are confronted today with "a theology of liberation," a "theology of feminism" "a theology of social involvement," and

what have you.

But you see what has happened. No longer is theology the doctrine of God. It has become, through a subtle shift in terminology, a doctrine of liberation of mankind from all kinds of social ills, a doctrine of equality of the sexes, a doctrine of universal brotherhood, etc. And again all the emphasis has shifted from God to man.

These are but a few examples: but they do demonstrate how important terminology is and how we ought to use carefully our words when upon us rests the responsibility for maintaining the truth of God's Word.

Fraternally,
H. Hanko

GUEST ARTICLE

A Minister-Rabbi Conversation

Rev. Robert C. Harbach

I. About God's Oneness and Plurality

The minister and the rabbi seated next to one another on the plane introduced themselves. The one holding out his hand said, "I'm Pastor Nathanael K. Russo." The other replied with a grip of the hand, "I'm Rabbi Nathan Klug."

"A beautiful name, rabbi! Reading like Hebrew, from right to left, it means *wise gift*."

"Thank you. I'm surprised you would know that. We have something in common in your beautiful first name: it means *given of God*. Your last name is Italian?"

"Yes, but I like to think of my middle initial and last name as a New Testament Greek reminder of my business, *kerusso*, *preaching*, as in Acts 28:31, '*preaching the kingdom of God*'!"

"Pastor Russo, in our own way, and according to our own lights, we are both doing that, aren't we?"

"Since you put it that way — yes, we are! But we should define what we mean by God. Let me appeal to the Old Testament words that first occur to the minds of most Jews. Let me see — they go like this: 'Shema Yisrael, Yehovah Elohenu, Yehovah echad' (Deut. 6:4)."

"So you know Hebrew! and those blessed words come from you, a gentile. They first should have come from me. Some of us Jews begin every day repeating those words."

"I know; but Rabbi, I used to be a gentile. Now I'm a Christian, and you should know that in our church, our qahal, we begin our services every Lord's Day with, 'Ezerenu beshem Yehovah oseh shamayim va-aretz,' Our help is in the name of Jehovah, Maker of heaven and earth!"

"Terrific! but you don't actually say it in Hebrew, do you?"

"No, in English, quoting the King James Version of the Hebrew Scriptures; and I might add that I am pastor of Qahal Tiqvah, Congregation of Hope. What is the name of your synagogue?"

"Cut in stone over the portals of our sanctuary are the words, in Hebrew consonants, Beth Anshe Chesed. I'm sure you must know how to translate that?"

"Surely; it's 'The House of Good Men,' or 'The House of the Men of Mercy.'"

"How wonderful to meet a gentile, pardon me, a Christian, who knows something of Hebrew! But to go back to a moment ago — do not Moses' words, 'Yehovah echad,' Jehovah is *one*, at least approach a definition of God? and is not Moses saying there that Jehovah is a *unity*?"

"Rabbi, I concede on both counts. But aren't you pressing the point that God is one in the absolute sense? that He, therefore, is not only one in Being, but also only one in person?"

"Frankly, I am; for the Jewish doctrine, based on the Shema, teaches the solitariness of God in contradistinction to your Protestant trinitarianism. Is that not so?"

"My friend, I agree that it is 'Jewish doctrine,' but not that it is the doctrine of the Hebrew Scriptures. If you will look again at the great *Shema*, 'Hear, O Israel, Jehovah *our* God....' That's a singular-plural name, Jehovah Elohenu, literally, Jehovah our Gods; not that there is more than one God, but just to make an exact rendition of the word used for the great name of God in the Hebrew Scriptures. What the *Shema* says is that Jehovah is our Elohim, *Jehovah* being singular and *Elohim* plural."

"That may be, Nathanael — May I call you Nathanael? Good! — but the text also says, 'Jehovah *echad*,' the Lord is *one*! But please go on; and call me Nate."

"Thank you, Nate. I want to point out that the Hebrew Scriptures have three words for 'one,'—*echad*, now before us, means a united one, as you so well pointed out. Secondly, there is the word *ish*, which means an individual one, and so is sometimes translated *each*. Thirdly, there is *yachid*, referring to an absolute one, an only one, a solitary one. We agree that *echad* is a unity. It is a *compound unity*, as in Genesis 1:5, where we read that "day one" was a component unity of day and night. In Genesis 2:21 we read that Jehovah Elohim (a compound name of God, consisting of a singular and a plural) took *one* (*echad*) of Adam's ribs. Here we see that *echad* cannot mean an absolute, or only one. (But we should also note that neither does it here mean an exclusively individual one, as in 'one (*ish*) that had escaped,' Genesis 14:13, and 'one (*ish*) born in my house,' (15:3). With that one (rib) God made another one (woman), and according to verse 24 He made those two the original pair, to 'be *one* (*echad*) flesh.' According to Genesis 1:27, man is male and female. In the institution of marriage, they become a compound unity, one flesh! God, with the compound name, says in the Hebrew of 3:22 that 'the man was as one of *Us*.' God Himself is a compound unity, or a tri-unity. Hence, the Hebrew Scriptures teach that He is the triune God.

"But that third word for 'one,' *yachid*, meaning an absolute, solitary one, is used in reference to Abraham's sole and only son, Isaac. Abraham had one, solitary son. So here 'one' (*yachid*) is used in the absolute sense. But this word is never used in the Hebrew Scriptures in reference to the name or nature of God. God (*Elohim*) is not a solitary God. *Solitariness* is not one of the attributes of God! (What some theologians meant by this term was that they conceived of God as unique in His infinite transcendence, incomparable in His absolute inde-

pendence and peerless in His eternity.) God is one in Being; He is a unity of one divine essence. Yet He is a component unity of three divine personalities in the one essential Godhead. . . Now Nate, I'm rather flattered to see you still awake up to this point."

"I should fall asleep listening to the Tenach explained as I never heard it before? This gives me so much to think about! More than I can handle at the moment! But how can the Scriptures teach both the unity and plurality of God? Oh, I see your point—in '*they* (plural) shall be *one* (*echad*) flesh.' But how can the idea apply to God?"

"How? My friend, let me first show you *that* it does, and later, perhaps, you will understand *how*. You are familiar, of course, with Genesis 1:26, where we read, 'God said, Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness.' Here we have the plural form of the Divine personal pronouns. They ought to be at least thought of as capitalized since they refer exclusively to God. So also in Genesis 3:22, already noted, 'Behold, the man was as one of *Us*, to know good and evil' (Hebrew). Further, in Genesis 11:7 we find, 'Go to, let *Us* go down, and there confound their language . . . ' Then, once more, the prophet, Isaiah, testifying of God's calling him to the holy office, relates that 'I heard the voice of the Lord (Adonai, plural), saying, Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *Us*?' (Isaiah 6:8). The Lord refers to Himself and His doing in the personal pronouns *I* and *Us*."

"But, pastor, may not these plural names and pronouns be viewed as the *plural of majesty*, simply underscoring God's infinite grandeur and greatness?"

"Not at all; because these nouns and pronouns are self-distinctions which agree with other Scripture passages where God is further distinguished by 'I' (Psalm 2:7), 'Thou' (Psalm 45:6-7), 'They'/'He' (Genesis 18:1, 3, 9, 10), and 'My' (Psalm 110:1). One of the most notable sections of Scripture distinguishing three Divine personalities is Isaiah 48:12-16, where the speaker identifies himself in the words, 'I am the First, I am the Last. Yea, My hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand hath spread out the heavens; when I call unto them, they stand.' This is the Creator speaking. He further identifies Himself in verse 16, 'and now the Lord God, and His Spirit, hath sent Me.' It was Adonai Jehovah and also the Spirit who sent the First and the Last, the One Who also made all things."

"Never in my life have I heard anything like this," breathed out the rabbi.

"So you see, the words of Isaiah express not a plurality of majesty, but a plurality of persons. We

could then go back to Genesis 1:1 and render the words there, 'In the beginning, every one (cp. the plural, Elohim) of the divine persons in the God-head created the heaven and the earth.' There is the Father included in this name; then the Spirit of God Who moved over the face of the waters (1:2), and the Word Who said, 'Let there be light!' (1:3)."

"But Nathanael, God uses the singular name *Eloah* in Deuteronomy 32:15, 16, and frequently in the Book of Job. Do not the Scriptures then teach that Israel from of old held a monotheistic theology?"

"They undoubtedly do. Rabbi, I see we are soon to land. It has been a pleasure talking to you. I hope

we meet again sometime." The rabbi said he hoped so too.

The minister hoped if there were to be such an occasion, to show the rabbi from Scripture that the living and true God does not dwell alone; that a lonely God could not even know Himself, an absolutely sequestered God could not live in infinitely perfect communion and fellowship with Himself. The living God has not the attribute of solitariness. The living God could not live in solitude. For life is to live, to act and react within a relationship of love and friendly accord. This the one God does in a communion of the three divine persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

Cancer Cures Smoking

So announces the *Reformed Perspective*, March, 1982, published by Canadian Reformed Church members. In an article "About Smoking," Dr. Walter Meester, a well-known doctor to many of our people in Grand Rapids, and member of the American Reformed Church, presents a sobering article about smoking and cancer. Dr. W. Meester is in a position to know firsthand. We quote the first part of the article:

Do you smoke cigarettes? If yes, read on; you may need a "light". If no, continue reading as well; you may be able to "enlighten" someone else. Is smoking really as bad for your health as they say? And if my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, should I continue to defile it with smoking? Am I serving the Lord with my body if I knowingly harm it? Is suicide really a sin, especially if you do it slowly? Come on now, you may say; if smoking is that bad, why do so many church members smoke; even some ministers, some elders, some deacons, some Christian school teachers, etc. Aren't they all serving the Lord in their respective offices and duties? Of course they are. The question is not whether we can still serve the Lord when we smoke or whether we can still serve the Lord when we sin—we all sin—but rather, what can we do to fight our sins in order that we can serve the Lord better. It makes a big difference if we don't know whether we are committing a sin, or if we don't care when we know and live in sin. I'm afraid that most smokers stick their head in the sand like ostriches and don't want to know about the effects of smoking. And once they have developed an illness directly related to their smoking, such as lung cancer, heart disease, chronic lung disease, etc., who will tell them that they are to blame themselves for their illness?

Within the article, the doctor lists some of the health effects of smoking:

Did you know...

- that some 500,000 persons die annually in the United States and Canada because of smoking?
- that one's life may be shortened 14 minutes for every cigarette smoked?
- that cigarette smoking is the major cause of lung cancer?
- that lung cancer is now the most common cancer among men?
- that lung cancer in women is rapidly increasing?
- that smoking is also a major cause of cancer of the larynx, the oral cavity, and the esophagus?
- that smoking contributes to the development of cancer of the bladder, pancreas, and kidney?
- that cigarette smokers have a much higher incidence and death rate from heart attacks than non-smokers?
- that the incidence of coronary heart disease increases as the daily number of cigarettes smoked increases and that the incidence of heart disease decreases among those who quit smoking?
- that cigarette smokers have a higher death rate from cerebral vascular disorders (e.g., stroke) than do abstainers?
- that smoking causes constriction and narrowing of the blood vessels resulting in peripheral vascular disease?
- that smoking is the most common cause of chronic obstructive lung disease (emphysema)?
- that smoking is associated with an increased incidence of ulcers and death therefrom?
- that cigarette smoking during pregnancy has been shown to have adverse effects on the mother, the

fetus, the newborn infant, and the child in later years?

- that smoking by pregnant women increases the risk of vaginal bleeding, miscarriage, premature delivery, fetal death, and reduces the birth weight of born infants?
- that children of smoking mothers are more susceptible to some adverse health effects such as bronchitis, pneumonia, and respiratory disease during early childhood?
- that parental smoking is associated with the sudden infant death syndrome?

The doctor concludes with a proper word of admonition—which we can well heed:

If there is still an "unbelieving Thomas" among us, will he continue to smoke until he can see the devastating effects of smoking in his own body before he

will believe that smoking causes illness? What about the question which I raised before: Is smoking a sin? I trust that after reading this article and examining the facts you will agree with me that "cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health." Not only your physical health, but even your spiritual health. For if I knowingly harm my body, doesn't this constitute sin? And if I commit this sin many times day after day, year after year, shouldn't I try my utmost to break with it? How do you do that? How do you quit smoking? It is pretty hard to quit. Maybe you've tried once or twice before. But did you ever pray to God to help you fight and overcome this sin? Did you ever pray for someone else who smokes and is trying to quit? I believe that the best way to quit smoking is to realize that it is a sin and that, if I love the Lord, in thankfulness for what He has done for me, I will quit committing this sin, for *His* sake.

Woman to Woman

Most people find letters to the editor to be interesting. Many are instructive as well. A very good one appeared in the *Banner* of August 16, 1982.:

After 40 years in the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, I had to leave.

The UPCUSA has had women elders for years—many fine women. Although I was honored by being asked to serve, I had to refuse because there is no Scriptural authority granting a woman that right.

I know of many sad cases where the men lost their sense of responsibility after a few years of women on the session. When asking a man to serve, a nominating committee often heard, "Oh, the *women* love to run things. Let them do it" or "You women are doing a good job — you don't need us." Fewer men will ac-

cept the honor and responsibility. It leads to a lack of respect for the office of elder.

Please, dear Christian women, do not desire or seek this office! God has much for us to do. Let us pray for and support the men as they serve as elders and pastors, but let us not try to usurp their position.

It's a moving letter—and one which can well be taken to heart. The voice of experience shows the wisdom of Scripture in its regulation in this matter. Not only, I suspect, do men begin to refuse to serve because the "women are doing all right by themselves," but also increasingly the men find no reason even to come to church anymore. When due order is not followed, the consequences surely follow.

Government Support — and Control?

In the "Don Bell Reports", April 23, 1982, some troubling comments are made about President Reagan's proposed support of private schools through a tax credit. This report believes it would be a catastrophe if that legislation is passed—and I'm inclined to agree. Much as one would want to be assisted in paying the cost of education of our children, he must be very wary of any kind of government support. It's virtually axiomatic: with support comes also control. The above report states:

In introducing his Educational and Opportunity Equity Act, President Reagan proposed a bill that would 1) provide a maximum tax credit of \$100 per child in 1983, \$300 in 1984, and \$500 in 1985; 2) allow parents to deduct the amount of the credit from total taxes owed; 3) allow full credit to families with incomes of up to \$50,000 while families earning up to \$75,000 would get partial credits and families with incomes of over \$75,000 a year would get no tax break; and 4) families who send their children to schools that discriminate because of race would get no

tax breaks at all. This is the schedule that professing conservatives who ought to know better are promoting. Perhaps these dupes — we use the word advisedly — would know how they are being deceived if they knew how federal agencies control American education. From experts in this field who are far more knowledgeable than your reporter, we have learned that the entire process of educational control comes under the umbrella of a set of regulations called Interagency Day Care Standards. Adopted June 18, 1971, they were not printed for public sale and are difficult to obtain, the master control system hinges upon the federal government's definition of "day care". Here is the definition:

"Day care is defined as the care of a child on a regular basis by someone other than the child's parents, *for any part of the 24 hour day....*"

Day care services and programs are further defined as:

"Comprehensive and coordinated sets of activities providing for care, protection and development of infants, preschool and school age children on a regular basis *during any portion of a 24 hour day...* Comprehensive services include, but are not limited to, educational, social, health, and nutritional services and parent participation activities. A day care program constitutes a particular set of day care services."

And here are the clincher statements:

"As a condition of federal funding, agencies administering day care programs must assure that the requirements are met in all programs or facilities which the agencies establish, operate, or utilize with federal support... (An Operating Agency is) any agency, public or private, which receives federal funds directly (as an administering agency), or indirectly through a grant or contract with an agency acting as administrator of federal funds in the area, by way of reimbursement through a vendor payment made by the administering agency or *by way of a voucher given to the child's parent(s)* by the administering agency for day care services provided for the child and his family."

All of the above are excerpts or definitions found in the "Federal Interagency Day Care Requirements" with underlining added. Interested parents are advised to ask their Representative or a Senator to obtain for them a copy of the "Interagency Day Care Standards," dated 18 June 1971, from the Department of Education. The Freedom of Information Act supposedly guarantees access to such records.

The above ought to give each a serious reminder of "big brother" government and what happens when such government grants "help" to parents of private school children. The "help" can well prove to be worse than the financial burden of Christian School education.

DAY OF SHADOWS

Covenant Joy

Rev. John A. Heys

It is striking that, in the case of Isaac and Jacob, the event that manifests their faith so clearly that they are mentioned in Hebrews 11 as those whose walk of life was a confession that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth seeking the city which hath foundations whose Designer and Builder is God occurred late in life.

In both instances they are commended for blessing their seed, Isaac blessing Jacob and Esau, and Jacob blessing the two sons of Joseph. (Their lives otherwise were not exemplary in many instances, especially as far as Jacob is concerned, whose life is treated far more extensively than Isaac's.) Abel's outstanding act of faith came when he was a young man. Noah and Abraham were much older men when they displayed their great faith in deeds recorded in Hebrews 11. But Isaac and Jacob performed deeds which, for them, were of unusual

faith in the waning days and hours of their earthly existence.

There is a warning here for us, as well as instruction. It is questionable whether we, after reading all that is recorded of Jacob in the book of Genesis, would have picked this particular deed, his blessing of the two sons of Joseph, as the noteworthy deed of faith in Jacob's life that stands out above the rest. Would we not be inclined to present his blessing of his twelve sons above the blessing he pronounced on Joseph's two sons? Or would we not list as showing more faith the fact that he insisted on being buried in Canaan? But we ought not try to be judges who overrule the choice of God Himself as to the event in Jacob's life that we must see to know him to be a man of faith whose deeds we ought to emulate.

We so easily judge by hours spent in walking by

faith and by external deeds of men that do not show the true condition of the heart. For that reason we are inclined to consider the one and a half years of John the Baptist's ministry as of much less importance and value than the long and difficult ministry of Moses among rebellious Israelites, or the many years of prophesying of Elijah, Elisha, or Isaiah, to mention only a few who served for much longer periods of time. And we do this even though we know that Jesus said that John was the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. We easily overlook the fact that although the prophets before him all prophesied boldly of Christ's coming, John is the man who pointed Him out and said, "Behold the Lamb of God Which taketh away the sin of the world," and that he prepared the way for Christ.

We appreciate and think highly of the one thief who changed from railing on Christ to pray to Him, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." But we hardly expect a man like that to have a higher place in that kingdom than those who for years faithfully served and were converted, not within hours of their death, but decades before they could serve here below no more.

But God's standard and way of judging are often so different from ours. Consider that this former thief, malefactor, or evil doer, was the **ONLY** one at the cross who confessed to believe that Christ had a kingdom that was sure to come! It is not always simply a question of how long the deed takes to perform. The circumstances under which it is committed have much to do with the value of it. I fully expect that thief to have more glory than I could ever expect to have, he being one having far stronger faith and spiritual courage to stand for the truth than I ever had.

And so when this deed of Jacob is singled out while we expected some other deed in his life to show him as a man of strong faith—not a "hero of faith" but a giant of faith—we had better abide by God's judgment and try to see why God considers this such a clear manifestation of faith.

Before considering this act of faith on Jacob's part, however, we ought to take time to consider those few words that we are inclined to slide over without asking, "And why did God see fit to have this added?" I refer to the concluding statement in Genesis 47:31, namely, "And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head."

It is even interesting, as well as significant, to note that suddenly he is called Israel, Prince of God. This ought to alert us and cause us to realize that something has happened here that merits the use of this name that God gave him after he wrestled with the angel in prayer and declared that he would not let him go until he was blessed. The

name Jacob, meaning Supplanter, is prophetic. The name Israel, meaning Prince of God, is fulfillment of prophecy. And he is called by this name of Israel after he performed a deed of great faith. It is true that Hebrews 11 does not list the request of Jacob for an oath from Joseph to bury him in Canaan as the greatest evidence of his faith, but the change in name does indicate God's approval of this deed as an act of great faith. So great an act of faith it is, that the name Prince of God fits, and ought to be expressed.

Two things may be pointed out that will help us to appreciate this deed of bowing upon the bed's head. Jacob, realizing that he had but a short time to live, was deeply concerned about being buried in Canaan. This he sought to make sure by an oath from Joseph's mouth. He had at that time no intention of blessing Joseph's sons. He did not call for them to be brought to him for this purpose. Joseph, hearing that his father was sick and failing, brought them to his father for a blessing. This burial in Canaan seemed all important to Jacob. Yet God spared his life, after requiring an oath from Joseph, for a richer act of faith. He did intend to do as recorded in Genesis 49. He did intend to call his sons—not Joseph's but his own sons—before he died to bless them. But at the moment this matter of being buried concerned him above all else.

The other matter to consider is that in Hebrews 11:21 it is stated that Jacob blessed Joseph's sons and "worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff." In Genesis 47:31 we read that, after Joseph swore to bury him in Canaan, Jacob "bowed himself upon the bed's head." And it is pointed out that in the Hebrew the word bed and staff have the same consonants, and in the original Hebrew no vowel markings, so that the one word could easily be read as the other, even as the consonants *lvng* with us could mean living or loving.

Now the significance of this incident does not lie in the word bed or staff. And the whole apparent contradiction disappears if we only understand that these are two different incidents. The significance is in the bowing, which here too we may believe was a worshipping. It was a bowing in worship. Jacob, having heard Joseph swear that he would bury him in Canaan, bows his head in prayer and worships God for what he has just heard from the mouth of his son.

We may say that Jacob bows his head in a prayer of thanksgiving for a clear, unmistakable evidence of faith and spirituality in his son Joseph. This was his most beloved son, the son of his most beloved wife. He meant more to Jacob than any of the other eleven sons. For a time Benjamin occupied that place, because Jacob was led to believe that Joseph

was dead. But, as soon as he knew that Joseph was alive, that love surged forth and attached itself to Joseph even more firmly than before his sons deceived him into thinking Joseph was dead.

But this most beloved son is now an Egyptian ruler of no mean standing. He was up to his ears in politics. He was an influential man in Egypt not only but a valuable man in Pharaoh's service. He had it made as far as his natural life is concerned, being rich, in honour among the people and before the king, and married to an Egyptian priest's (or prince's) daughter. He had arrived. He was in the highest strata of that day from a social point of view. All Egypt bowed before him, respected him as a wise and capable ruler who had saved their lives and their country.

Now all these can easily turn a man from his faith in God. One can so easily set his affections on these things, and, as the wealth and prestige grow, the things of God's kingdom become dim and one does not seek first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness. He becomes worldly-minded, carnal, a pleasure and treasure seeker. He finds less and less time for the things spiritual, and his life becomes crowded with the things of this world. And let us not forget that Joseph was a sinner with a depraved nature, a man that could be tempted by all the glamor and wealth of the king's court as well as any one of us can. Yes, he stood firm in the temptation of Potiphar's wife. But how often do we ourselves not find that although we can stand firm in one kind of temptation, we fall so easily in another? Therefore Satan also varies his temptations and tailors them after our besetting sins.

What assurance does Jacob have that all this has not gone to Joseph's head? In the little contact that he has with this highly exalted son there were no doubt what seemed to be signs of faith. But were they for real? And Jacob knows nothing about

Joseph's faithfulness in Potiphar's house or in the prison. He knows that Joseph stands in a place where temptations are manifold and powerful. Well can he have questions in his mind as to whether Joseph, the ruler in Egypt, is concerned with the promises in the land of Canaan. Does he intend to become an Egyptian in the full sense of the word and settle his family here in their generations? For here they have all that their hearts could wish for as far as material things and life in that day and age are concerned.

How thankful he now is to hear Joseph swear that he will bury him in the land of promise. How thrilled his soul is to know that Joseph does consider this a serious spiritual matter and not the whim of a senile father. It is God Who kept Joseph in the faith and untainted from all the luxury and worldly honour which turns men's heads and hearts and souls from God to mammon.

As a true covenant father Jacob finds covenant joy in knowing that his most beloved son has been kept in the day of temptation by the mercy of God, and that God is continuing the line of His covenant in this son that he loves so dearly. He bows in worship. He bows in humble acknowledgment that this is the work of God. And so he prays a prayer of thanksgiving. That is what the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says when he writes that he worshipped. Jacob could not say it in the words that John uses in III John 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." But that joy was Jacob's. And that joy is every covenant parent's when he witnesses the confession of faith in his child. In the world they rejoice in earthly achievements and in what the world calls success. In the church it is what God does in and for our children to keep them unspotted from the world, and to live so that although they are in the world they manifest themselves as not of the world.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

A Pilgrim's Perspective

Rev. R. Flikkema

It is the purpose of this writer in this article and in the subsequent articles that have been assigned to him to treat the idea of the signs of the times in a rather different way.

There are different ways in which one can deal with such a topic. One can do so exegetically. By

that I mean one can take a specific passage of Scripture that speaks concerning the last days, and therefore concerning the signs that the child of God must observe in those last days, and expound it. Or one can do so thematically or topically. By taking a specific sign for his theme or topic he writes about

that sign, makes reference to specific passages of Scripture that address themselves to that sign, and applies all of that to the day and age in which the child of God lives.

But there is another way in which such a topic as the signs of the times can be treated. And that way is to view such a topic from the perspective of the child of God as he lives through the last days and experiences in his own life the various things that are coming and must come to pass. It is the perspective of faith that guides the child of God as he walks through this valley of the shadow of death and which impels him as he does so to watch for the return of his Lord and Savior. It is the perspective of hope that lives within the child of God's heart which directs him to the sure promise of God that He Who shall come will come and will not tarry to bring him with all His chosen ones to the life that is to come. It is the perspective of comfort. It is the sure and undying testimony in the consciousness of the child of God that as he travels his pilgrim's journey with all its sorrows, struggles, trials, and afflictions he belongs to his faithful Savior Jesus Christ. Such a perspective this writer chooses to follow as he addresses himself to this topic.

What is the format which will be used for such an endeavor? Certainly the format will consist of both of the first two ways mentioned above, namely exegesis and topic. This is of the nature of the case. When one deals with the topic of the signs of the times from the perspective of the child of God, his faith, hope, and comfort, one cannot ignore the specific signs of the times that he experiences along his pilgrim's journey. And too, when one deals in such a way with the above mentioned topic, one cannot and may not ignore exegesis. After all, the experience of the child of God is never one that is apart from the Word of God. The faith, hope, and comfort of the pilgrim saint is never one that is divorced from that which is his only rule for faith and life — the Scriptures. In other words, his experience, faith, hope, and comfort is never blind or governed by his own subjective feelings. But rather, it is altogether governed and directed by the light of the Word that shines in his heart and directs his footsteps in life.

But now for a few specifics with respect to the whole matter of format that will be followed. The format will consist of narrative form—a narrative of the life and experiences of a specific child of God in his covenant family and in the world in which he lives. We will see his struggles. We will observe him as he struggles against his enemies, namely, sin, the devil, this wicked world, and his own sinful flesh. We will see him as he battles the temptations of this world, fights the good fight as a faithful soldier in the army of the King of kings and Lord of lords. We

will study his weaknesses and frailties: see him to be what he is, a soldier of the cross, but a very imperfect one whose best works are polluted with sin, and even more, one who does not always do that which is his duty to do.

We will see his sorrows. For there are indeed many sorrows that he experiences in his pilgrim's journey—sorrow for sin first of all. He knows himself to be a sinner. He experiences the fact that he has not perfect faith, that his sins rise up against him prevailing day by day. We will see him, therefore, very often in prayer, praying for God to be merciful to him and take his sins away. Further, we will see this child of God experience other sorrows. The sorrows that must needs arise in the life of the child of God as a result of his taking up his cross and following Jesus and as a result of his antithetical life and walk, as on the one hand he refuses to be a part of this world, and as on the other hand he strives to manifest his citizenship in the kingdom of God and of His Christ. We will see him hated by the world, which is the realization in his life of what Jesus foretold when He said, "He shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake" (Mark 13:13). Still more, we will witness the sorrows that he experiences and the tears that he sheds as he sees within his own family what it means when Scripture says that there is appointed unto every man a time to die. We will see him face the reality of death as it strikes in his own family by means of incurable disease. We will watch him sit by the bedside of a loved one day after day beholding the weakness of man both in himself and in those who try to help him. And, in that connection, we will see the all-powerful hand of God that brings the man's loved one unto Himself in His own way and at His own appointed time.

We will narrate the life of this covenant-conscious child of God as he strives to be faithful to God's covenant. We will behold him as he longs to bring forth the seed of the covenant; watch him as he endeavors with all his heart and mind and soul and strength to bring up his covenant children in the fear of God's Name, teaching them God's Word, impressing upon them the pilgrim's calling to watch for and pray to God for the speedy return of Christ. We will see him labor to provide a good covenant Christian education, sacrifice daily to support the schools which God has been pleased to give him, both monetarily as well as prayerfully.

And finally we will witness the joys that this pilgrim experiences in life. Yes, there are struggles. Indeed, there are sorrows that the child of God experiences in life. There are many of these as the child of God finds himself on this side of the grave; as he lives the life of a pilgrim with uplifted head looking for His Savior to appear. But the very fact

that he does look for His Savior to appear provides him in the midst of all his struggles and sorrows great joy. For he sees the events in the world as well as those that occur in his own life to be so many things under the government and control of His almighty God, his sovereign Lord. He witnesses daily the fact that nothing happens by mere chance, but that all things take place by God's Fatherly hand. He believes with a certain knowledge and an assured confidence that Christ Who died for him, rose again, ascended into heaven, and sits at God's right hand wields the sceptre. Christ rules over the wicked with a rod of iron, directing all things step by step unmistakably to the end, and rules over him according to the riches of His grace with a shepherd's staff, comforting him as only the Great Shepherd of the sheep can do. We will see him rejoice under the shadow of God's wings in God's house on the sabbath day as he longs to hear and does hear, the chief means of grace—the preaching of the Word—thereby experiencing grace sufficient for his every need. We will see him as he sings songs of praise and adoration for this great comfort that he experiences, and as he lives a life of thankfulness to God now in this life and is ready to do so in the life to come.

That is the format that these articles will take.

Why have I chosen to have these articles take such a format? The answer to that question is very simple. The topic, that of the signs of the times, is not merely something cold and objective. It is not merely something that belongs to the doctrine of eschatology in a dogmatics textbook. For that matter, any topic or Scriptural truth as it relates to the life of the child of God is never cold and abstract. Such things are not presented in the Word that way. Jesus, Whose word the Word is, did not teach His disciples that way or have His disciples under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit write His Word that way. Rather, what is written in the Word, and now especially as that pertains to the subject of the signs of the times, is real and true to the experience, the faith, hope, comfort, and life of the child of God. It is real with respect to our lives—your life as you read these articles and my life as I write them. And, therefore, my purpose in using such a format is to enrich our lives as we associate ourselves with this pilgrim. Who this pilgrim is will remain a mystery until the next article. What he encounters as he lives his pilgrim's life, that too will remain a mystery. But this much I will tell you now. In him we will see ourselves, and the experiences that he will encounter will be true to our experiences as he with us observes the signs of the times from a pilgrim's perspective.

Annual Report of the R.F.P.A.

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

Looking back at the activities and accomplishments of the R.F.P.A. during the past publication year, what can be more properly said than that our God is ever Faithful, ever Sure.

Volume 58 of the *Standard Bearer* is history; but putting our hand to the plow, we go forward in the confidence that, if the Lord wills, Volume 59, page by page, issue by issue, will go forth to the ends of the earth.

Volume 58 featured two special issues on doctrine. That meant that their entire contents were devoted to one particular Scriptural and Confessional truth: March 1, 1982—The Doctrine of the Church; May 15, 1982—The Doctrine of Predestination. Unique, in distinction from many religious publications, is the fact that all the writers write spontaneously in complete unity and harmony of interpretation and understanding of these doctrines. The special issue of December 1, 1981 gave our readers a

bird's eye view of the history and makeup of the *Standard Bearer*, and also insight into and pictures of the R.F.P.A. book publishing activities. Rereading these issues would be beneficial and a joy.

The Annual Financial Report speaks for itself. A good working balance is on hand. Beginning in January 1982, the cost per issue of the *Standard Bearer* increased 11%. Our Protestant Reformed Churches, societies, and individuals both inside and outside our denomination continue to meet these increases head-on. Generously they contribute what is not met by the subscription price, the latter not being adequate even though the Board increased the cost to \$10.50 per year. Thanks to all for your continued spiritual and financial support!

Last year we reported that four young men were busy compiling an index to all the *Standard Bearer*

volumes. Their program is to make a complete textual, title, and subject index. This will probably be published in syllabus form by the end of the year 1982. Delays have been encountered, and progress has been slower than anticipated.

The Board granted a request from a Pastor Philip Rawson (in England) to act as agent for the *Standard Bearer* literature and books. Mr. H. Vander Wal, our Business Manager, is in contact with the brother. The Board hopes to establish the same type of program with Rev. Tom Reid of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

The number of *Standard Bearers* mailed each issue is as follows: U.S.A., 1557 copies; foreign, 135 copies. Cost of mailing 1692 copies is around \$125.00. Cost of printing each issue is around \$700.00. Copies of the *Standard Bearer* go to New Zealand, Singapore, Jamaica, Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, South Africa, India, South America, and the Netherlands.

From the Permanent Publications Committee, the Board reports the following: 1) 340 Book Club Members. We take this opportunity to urge and encourage anyone interested in buying good, sound, edifying books to join this Club and buy at discount prices. 2) Three books have been published since last September: *We And Our Children*, by Prof. H. Hanko and *In The Sanctuary and The Wonder of Grace* by Rev. H. Hoeksema. 3) The Church Order book revision is nearly completed. Rev. Joostens is finishing an index. 4) 1000 additional copies of *Behold, He Cometh!* were bound. 5) The Bible Story Book project is progressing well. All the stories have been completed, and the artist is working on the illustrations. The Publications Committee will

be making a concentrated effort not only to gain more Book Club members, but also to promote its fine publications.

Information has it that Wobbema Press is no longer under the ownership of Peter Wobbema. Through the years a pleasant business relationship existed. We thank him for his conscientious concern and service. We trust the new owners will continue in that atmosphere and relationship.

To our Editor-in-Chief, Department Editors, Guest Writers, Business Manager, and all others who contributed their time and talent to make possible the *Standard Bearer* and all our other publications, we extend a sincere word of appreciation.

In conclusion the Board reminds itself, its writers, and its readers of the following Scripturally based truth from the pen of an aged and faithful warrior, Rev. C. Hanko: "The pulpit and the printed page must never grow weary of sounding the trumpet, arousing the church to battle, and warning her of the foes within and outside the gate." This appeared on the cover of the December 1, 1981 issue and is worthy of repeating.

Respectfully submitted,

P. Koole, Sec'y

(Editor's Note. At the annual meeting of the R.F.P.A. recently I had the opportunity to see several pages of the computer printout of the proposed index. This is a tremendous project; and when it is completed, it will surely be a valuable asset for anyone who wants to do some study and research in the past volumes of the *Standard Bearer*. I, for one, am eagerly awaiting completion of the project.)

FROM HOLY WRIT

Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures

Rev. G. Lubbers

Chapter I (Luke 24:25)

Strange as it may sound to those who have made a study of the manifold writings of Premillennialists, particularly of those denominated "Dispensationalists," the real question is not that the latter, in particular, insist on a *literal interpretation* of the Bible in the prophetic writings, but that they do not really believe "all that the prophets have spoken." Such fail to follow the clear-cut instructions of Jesus to His disciples, and they do not interpret the

Scriptures as did Jesus on the evening of His resurrection day!

To say this requires not only courage but also the conviction that we are able to show this from the teachings of the Bible itself.

In this series of articles or essays we shall with God's help attempt to show the Scriptural teaching concerning the doctrine of the "last things" as the fulfillment of the more sure word of prophecy. This is not a mere word of man, but it is what holy men

wrote being moved by the Holy Spirit. And this is the Word which shines as a light in a dark place until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts (II Peter 1:19). And we would emphasize at the outset that, in this study, we are interested in learning from the Old Testament prophecy what God promised to the "church" in the Old Testament Dispensation concerning the greater glory which should be hers when "all nations will be blessed in thee," that is, in Abraham (Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). For that will be the time of the salvation which God has prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel" (Isaiah 40:5; 52:10; Isaiah 42:6; 49:6, 9).

We will pray for grace simply to believe all the words of the prophets through whom God spoke unto the fathers in "sundry times and in divers manners" (Heb. 1:1). This means that we must allow the Scriptures to lead us into all the Scriptures. Only thus does the Holy Spirit lead us into all the truth. An academic argument concerning the proper method of interpretation and the correct application of the science of Hermeneutics has great merit in the Seminary, but we are writing and unfolding the Scriptures. We shall point out what we consider the proper method of interpreting a given passage when we come to discuss the salient points which must be faced in this study of Dispensational theology concerning the doctrine of the last things. This doctrine is called Eschatology. Yes, we do have a doctrinal bias. So does the Premillennialist and the Dispensationalist, be he a Pre- or Post-Tribulationist. The basic question is: who believes *all the Scriptures* as the Old Testament is unfolded and interpreted by Jesus and the Apostles in the New Testament Scriptures?

In these articles we will take issue with various proponents of Dispensational theology and with the position also of what is called historical Premillennialism. The difficulty of a fair presentation of Premillennialism is that there is no official, ecclesiastic, confessional statement of the Eschatology which it teaches. Many able writers can be cited, but there is no unanimity between these writers on certain points of teaching. The Pre-Tribulationist battles very elaborately with the teaching of the Post-Tribulationist. This difference is on the question whether the church of Christ will need to pass through the "tribulation period" as is taught by the Post-Tribulationist, or whether the church will be taken up in the "Rapture" before the Tribulation period, which they call the "seven years" spoken of in Daniel 9:27.

Now we will not be led astray at this point by entering into the pro- and con- of the exegesis of Daniel 9:27, for this would entail some rather basic

exegesis of the entire ninth chapter of Daniel. To this we shall give attention at the proper time and place. We only desire to point out that it is not so simple to give a compendium view of the various shades of Premillennialism in this essay.

However, we will need to point out that basic to all Premillennialism is that the "church" in the New Testament Dispensation is not the same as "Israel" in the Old Testament. Israel is the Jewish nation of the Old Testament. And whereas the promises spoken of in the Old Testament prophecies are given to Israel as a Jewish *nation*, and whereas these prophetic promises concerning the restoration of the glory of Israel and of her triumph over all her foes has not yet been fulfilled to Israel, and, whereas God is faithful to fulfill these promises to this historic Israel, this fulfillment lies in the future. That will be the *Millennium Kingdom* of one thousand years duration. And these advocates of this view appeal to the teaching of Revelation 20:1-6 to attempt to sustain this teaching of the future glory of the Jewish nation, the natural Israel. On this point, all Dispensationalists agree as well as historic Premillennialists.

All agree that the prophecies in the Old Testament never speak of the church as being the "Israel of God." And that the glory of Christ in the saints in the church is the realization of the restoration of Israel from Babylon all unitedly deny. There will ever be real and essential difference between the church of God and the Kingdom of Christ. And, sad to say, the number of those who hold to this position is legion. All agree that the prophets never foresaw the gathering of the New Testament church among the Gentiles at all. The "clock of prophecy" stopped at about the time of Pentecost and will not begin to run again until the time of the Rapture and Tribulation period which is the time of the ushering in of the Millennium.

All agree that there will be a period of the "Great Tribulation" which will last seven calendar years. This will be the period between the "Rapture," when the church will be taken up into the air with Jesus as taught by Paul in I Thessalonians 4:17 and I Corinthians 15:51-52, and the second coming of Christ. (Let it be well understood that I refer to these passages as quoted and interpreted by the Premillennial writers and teachers.) The first coming of Christ upon the clouds of heaven, according to Dispensational teaching, will be sudden and unannounced. That will be the time of the "Rapture." Christ will return also to assume His Kingdom in Israel on earth. That is then called the "revelation" of Christ as spoken of in I Peter 1:13. Christ will then be revealed as the King in the Kingdom of Israel, *before* the thousand years to inaugurate this reign in earthly Jerusalem, to sit on

the throne of David.

This view of the doctrine of the last things entails more than one bodily resurrection. No less than *three resurrections* are posited. First there is the "resurrection" of the righteous, the church at the time of the "Rapture." Secondly, there is the resurrection of the "tribulation saints," who are not really in the body of Christ, according to some (J. Dwight Pentecost, Scofield). Thirdly, there is the resurrection of the wicked at the end of the Millennium period, the final judgment of the wicked. After this there is the ushering in of the "eternal state." Here in the eternal state the Jews will be the kingdom under Christ, and the Gentiles, the body of Christ, will be under Christ as their Head.

As to methodology, what is basic to this entire rather elaborate view of the difference between the Kingdom and the church is that it follows what is purported to be the *literal interpretation*, particularly of the prophecies. Yet, even so, it is readily admitted that we must recognize figures of speech in the Old Testament prophecies. However, even so, always we must keep the "Kingdom" and the "church" as referring to two different purposes in the plan of God. Writes Charles Caldwell Ryrie,

...God has two distinctive purposes — one for Israel and one for the Church. In the progress of revelation there has been no change in the meaning of these words, and they are kept distinct. The "theological" principle of Hermeneutics may allow a blending of the two, but true progressive revelation does not. After all, the same hermeneutical principles must be applied to all revelation, regardless of the time in which it was given.

To pursue the illustration of Israel and the Church further, the amillennialist's hermeneutics allow him to blur the meanings of the two words in the New Testament so that the Church takes over the fulfillment of the promises to Israel. In that view Israel is the Church.... The dispensationalist studies the words in the New Testament, finds that they are kept distinct, and therefore concludes that when the Church was introduced God did not abrogate the promises to Israel nor enmesh them into the Church. This is why the dispensationalist recognizes two purposes of God and insists in maintaining the distinction between Israel and the Church. And all this is based on an inductive study of the use of the two words, not a scheme superimposed on the Bible. In other words, it is built on a consistent use of the literal, normal, or plain method of interpretation without the addition of any other principle that will attempt to give respectability to some preconceived conclusions.

Dispensationalism is the result of consistent application of the basic hermeneutical principle of literal, normal, or plain interpretation. No other system of theology can claim that.

("Dispensationalism Today" Pages 95-96)

Such then is the basic methodology of dispensationalism.

And the cited quotation contains some very challenging words. I would almost denominate them fighting words!

And we accept the challenge cast our way!

But the basic question is, do the dispensationalists with all their insistence on "literal, normal and plain interpretation" truly believe all that the prophets have spoken? When Christ comes to adjudicate of our Scripture interpretation, the question will be whether this is really clinging to the Head Christ and whether it is building upon the foundation which has been laid by Paul and all the Apostles (I Cor. 3:11-15).

The determining of a method of interpretation is not the first question. When Jesus talked to the two travelers to Emmaus, these two men believed the Scriptures, the prophets. However, they did not believe at that moment that the Christ must suffer all these things and thus enter into His glory. Yes, they really believed that Israel would be redeemed Israel, yes, *the* Israel (Luke 24:21). He would now come and raise up His kingdom in Old Testament Israel. However, they are called "fools and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken." Had they believed all the Scriptures in the Old Testament they would have understood that the Messiah must suffer all these things as a Lamb led to the slaughter, in order to save Israel, to redeem the people of God with the precious blood as of a Lamb without spot or blemish. They would not have stared themselves blind on those Scriptures which speak of the Messiah as King, but they would have recognized that He is the Great High Priest, the King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

And when all the Scriptures are preached by Jesus and their eyes are opened to recognize the Messiah in the breaking of the bread, then their hearts burn with them in holy and spiritual joy (Luke 24:32).

Now, my first objective is not to gainsay and correct Premillennialists, but that the saints who read these lines may have their hearts burn in them when all the Scriptures are opened as they were by Jesus on the way to Emmaus, to Cleopas and the other brother.

*Take time to
read and study the
Standard Bearer*

YOU ARE INVITED!!!
To the Annual Reformation Day Lecture
To be held, the Lord willing, at
The Grandville Public High School Auditorium
Grandville, Michigan
The Speaker — Rev. David J. Engelsma
The Theme — The Reformation and Christian Piety.
October 28, 1982 • 8:00 P.M.
—Plan now to attend — and bring your Friends—
The Lecture Committee

NOTICE!!!

Reformation Day Lecture

Subject — "The Reformation: A Return To Biblical Church Discipline"
 The Speaker — Rev. R. Cammenga
 Date — Wednesday, October 27, 1982, at 8 P.M.
 Place — The Hull Protestant Reformed Church, Hull, Iowa

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 30, 1982, our beloved parents MR. AND MRS. EDWARD C. OPHOFF, SR. will celebrate, the Lord willing, their 30th wedding anniversary.

We their children, thank our heavenly Father for truly blessing us with these God-fearing parents who daily instructed and guided us in the fear of His name. It is our prayer that the Lord will always continue to bless them and keep them in His care in the years to come.

"For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting and His truth endureth to all generations." (Psalm 100:5)

Eric & Marily Ophoff
 George, James & Eric, Jr.
 Edward Jr. & Elizabeth Ophoff
 Alisa & Edward III

Mark & Cindy Ophoff
 Faith Ophoff
 Joy Ophoff

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 25, 1982, the Lord willing, our parents, DENNIS AND LAURINE LANGE LAND will celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary.

With praise and thankfulness to our heavenly Father for His abiding love and mercy.

"For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory forever." (Romans 11:36)

Virginia and Elmer Bonselaar
 Harold and Donna Langeland
 Norman and Bonnie Langeland
 10 grandchildren
 9 great-grandchildren
 Kalamazoo, Michigan

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News From Our Churches

Now that candidates Tom Miersma and Jon Smith have passed their examinations at Classis, Jon will be heading to Edgerton immediately but Tom will have to wait awhile. When candidate Tom Miersma received and accepted the call from our Edmonton, Alberta, Canada congregation, he had at least three months to wait before he could move up north. By the time this news is printed, he will have one and a half more months to wait.

The life of a minister or a professor in our denomination is a busy one, not only because of the two sermons each Sunday or the daily labor in the seminary, but also all the other activities involving lectures and speeches to various organizations. Here are a few of these activities: Prof. Hoeksema has a "Canons" class that meets every other Wednesday in the Byron Center-Cutlerville area; Prof. Hanko not only has a Bible class every Monday at Hope Church but also the Sr. Mr. & Mrs. Society on alternate Tuesdays; he also has spoken by this time to Hope's PTA on "The Cost of Christian Education"; Prof. Decker has a Men's Society every Monday night; Rev. Kortering was speaker to Loveland's School Convocation; Rev. Miersma will have spoken to the Mr. and Mrs. League Meeting on "Moral Majority"; Rev. Heys spoke to Faith's Sunday School classes and showed slides of his work in Jamaica; Rev. Flikkema will have spoken to the Men's and Ladies' Society of Southeast Church on "Strengths & Weaknesses of the P.R. Churches"; Rev. Hanko preached a sermon in People's Park Church one Sunday morning on "Limited Atonement"; and Rev. De Vries spoke at the annual meeting of the R.F.P.A.

When I received the large manilla envelope containing various categories for News From Our Churches, I found nothing in the "Young Peoples" folder. After searching through the newly sent bulletins, I found this announcement in Hull's bulletin: "The Steering Committee of the 1982 Convention would like to give a big 'thank you' to everyone that helped make the 1982 Convention a success...." Six of our ministers were part of that success. Three ministers led the discussion groups. Their themes were as follows: "Modern Day Idolatry," by Rev. Kamps; "Confessing Faith," by Rev. Slopsema; and "Personal Devotions," by Rev.

Cammenga. If you want to know one reason why the Convention was successful then read part of an announcement in Hull's bulletin, "...thanks to the congregation for their support the past two years in planning and holding the 1982 Convention."

The support of conventions often comes through church offerings, and as I look at the weekly offerings of our various congregations I see many other worthy causes to support, e.g., Jamaican Ministers' Fund, our Christian Schools, *Our Guide*, our magazines, Evening Meditations of Hudsonville Church, Evangelism Committees, Reformed Witness Hour, and many others. This is evidence enough to show that our churches are busy in the cause of God's Kingdom.

It is good to see that in many of our church bulletins there is room for radio work. In two of our mid-west churches, Hull and Loveland, the time and radio frequency are given every week. In addition, Loveland provides printed copies of the radio sermons for the congregation. Kalamazoo's bulletin mentions the "Reformed Witness Hour Question Hour" maintained by Rev. Woudenberg. Hudsonville Church sponsors their own "Saturday Evening Meditations," which I believe is a taped copy of their Sunday service, and heard over WJBL-FM, 9 P.M. each Saturday. I know there must be other churches doing radio work, so how about sending me some information on that subject? Here is a quote from a radio sermon by Rev. R. VanOverloop that was used as a thought for reflection in Loveland's bulletin: "Let me ask you some questions concerning that. How worn is your Bible? How often in each day do you meditate upon it?...How well do you *know your Bible*? How full are its margins with your notes? Is there any time or any place or any activity that is of more value to you than godliness, which is profitable unto everything?" I understand that the Reformed Witness Hour will be sending out a newsletter very soon to all the churches and in it will be a list of all the present radio stations and their broadcast times.

There is not enough space to mention other news, so I will leave that until next time. You can count on looking for news about Sunday School and our various school activities past, present, and future, the next time.

DH