

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . The wheel of providence rolls over "change in all around I see," but it spins on the axle of immutable love. "Heav'n and earth shall pass away, Changeless, Thou shalt live for aye!" "Unchanging is the love of God, From age to age the same, Displayed to all who do His will and reverence His name."

See "God's Immutability" — page 33

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## MEDITATION

# Jehovah, My All-Sufficient Shepherd

Rev. H. Veldman

*"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Psalm 23:1*

How strikingly obvious is the connection between the Psalms 22-24! In Psalm 22 we have a typical setting forth of the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 22 must surely be borne in mind in connection with Psalm 23. Our heavenly Shepherd's care in Psalm 23 rests upon the ground of and follows from the suffering of Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, the Man of Sorrows. And in

Psalm 24 this care of our Shepherd, firmly grounded upon the cross of Calvary, attains unto its climax in the glory of everlasting and heavenly immortality, in and through the everlasting doors.

The heart of Psalm 23 is expressed in verse 1: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." The rest of this beautiful psalm is a divinely inspired setting forth of the words, "I shall not want."



How rich in symbols is the Word of God! In this text we have the figure of a shepherd with his flock of sheep. The idea of a figure in the Scriptures is always that the eternal heavenly is the reality. This text is really a parable: the parable of a shepherd with his sheep. Psalm 23 is a parable. The Lord created all the earthly a figure of the heavenly. The implication of this is that, in God's eternal counsel, the heavenly is first and the earthly is secondary to it. All of this life, including sin and this huge valley of the shadow of death, from the very beginning of the history of the world, is a divinely and sovereignly willed means to realize the Lord's everlasting kingdom of heaven. All these things, according to Mark 4:11, the things of the mystery of the kingdom of heaven and of God, are done, happen, take place in parables. The earthly is a figure of the heavenly. In the Old Testament the city of Jerusalem is a figure of the eternal City of God; the earthly bread a symbol of the heavenly bread, the earthly water a figure of the heavenly. Sun and moon, stars, sunshine, rain, plants and animals are all parables, pictures of the heavenly reality. Indeed, the earthly, as far as God's counsel is concerned, is not first, so that the coming of Christ and the kingdom of heaven are divine afterthoughts, decided by the Lord when Adam violated the "covenant of works." Christ and the kingdom of heaven are first in the will of God, and all things are symbols of the heavenly. And so it pleased the Lord to symbolize in the earthly figure of a shepherd with his sheep the blessed fellowship of Jehovah with His people, His covenant friends. This figure of speech contains three elements. The first element is that of feeding. The sheep must have green pastures which the shepherd must provide. The second element is that of leadership and guidance. The character of a sheep is that it quickly errs and wanders. This is true especially of a lamb. And when a sheep wanders away from the fold it cannot possibly find the way home. The shepherd must also guard against the proneness of his sheep to wander. And the third element is that of defence. The sheep must be defended against the wolves which constantly threaten them. The shepherd must defend his sheep, even unto death. This distinguishes a true shepherd from an hireling.

The reality of this figure is obvious. The Lord is my shepherd. The text is personal. To be sure, the Lord is the Shepherd of His church, the one church of God throughout the ages and also of every congregation. But here the psalmist speaks personally.

The Lord is my shepherd — He feeds me. He feeds me with the bread of everlasting life. God is for me eternal life. To know Him, not merely intellectually but spiritually, is for me life eternal — to experience and taste His life and light, to behold

His face in love and favor, to walk with Him in blessed covenant fellowship. The bread of this Shepherd is that which can feed and sustain me in covenant fellowship with the Lord. This feeding is indeed the first requisite of the work of this Shepherd — I must first possess and taste the living God as the God of my salvation. The Lord, Jehovah is my Shepherd. He leads me in those green pastures, gives me that bread of life.

The Lord is my shepherd — He leads me. How absolutely necessary is this leadership and guidance! How can we cope with and protect ourselves against our own errors? Sin is ever present in me, which I have learned to know and hate. Always these inner movements of sin clamor for and demand my attention. Who can cope with them? And then we must contend with sickness, misery, death, and the grave. Through all this the Lord now leads me. Always He leads His own in the paths of righteousness, preserves within me the principle of the new life, protects me so that sin may not have the victory over me. And He leads me through sickness, misery, death, and the grave, yea, causes all things to work together for my good.

The Lord is my shepherd — He protects and defends me. Indeed, God's flock is surrounded by enemies. How often the writer of this psalm speaks of these enemies, also in this psalm. There is within us the enemy of sin, who would carry us off into destruction, cause us to err and depart from the faith. There is also the enemy all about us. The world seeks the destruction of this flock of God, would destroy the people of God and deny them the City that has foundations. And this mighty enemy is led by the devil, the prince of the powers of the air, and they have a strong ally in the power of sin that is within us. And I surely cannot cope with all these powers of sin and evil. But, the Lord is my Shepherd. God protects and defends His flock. He keeps us safely in the paths of righteousness, although we often do not walk consciously in the same. And He is constantly preserving us in connection with the powers of the world. The Lord assures my safety in the midst of the world. There is no enemy who can really do me any harm. Even as the three friends of Daniel were perfectly safe in the fiery furnace, made seven times hotter, so that their hair was not singed, their clothing was not changed, and the smell of fire was not even upon them, so the people of God are safe throughout the ages. No harm really befalls them. Whatever affliction they must endure is a means of this Shepherd to lead them into everlasting life and glory, prepare them for that which the Lord has laid away for them. Indeed, the Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. Never will I be in want, in any need. All things are for me, nothing is against me.



The Lord is an all-sufficient Shepherd.

Psalm 23 reminds us immediately of John 10. In John 10 the Saviour declares of Himself: "I am the Good Shepherd." Hence, the Shepherd of Psalm 23 is the same as in John 10: God in the flesh, Immanuel. Jehovah is our Shepherd, in Christ Jesus.

The Lord is our Shepherd in Christ Jesus, first of all, as centrally upon the cross of Calvary. Does not the Saviour say in John 10 that He lays down His life for His sheep? How wonderful this is! No shepherd, in earthly life, lays down his life for his sheep. The enemy takes his life from him. He does not give his life; on the contrary he fights for his life to the very end, although it is true that he fights for his life in behalf of his sheep. The Shepherd, however, gives His life for His sheep. His death is an act of the will, an act of voluntary obedience to the will of His God. He dies atoningly, pays for all the sins and guilt of all the elect throughout all the ages, completely satisfying all the justice of the living God. His death seals the condemnation of the world and merits everlasting life in heavenly immortality for all His own. Indeed, the Lord is my all-sufficient Shepherd, centrally upon the cross of Calvary.

Besides, throughout the ages, this Shepherd is all-sufficient. He imparts everlasting life to His own. He preserves me in that salvation once bestowed upon me. This principle of the new life in me can never perish. He gives me all that I need. I shall not want, never be in want. What we receive, also affliction, is exactly what we need. Always He is preparing me for the glory once laid away for me.

I shall not want, also in the subjective sense of the word. When I may stand by the grace of God consciously in the faith, with the eye of faith focused upon my God, may thus behold the power of sin within me and the power of sin all around me, also all the fearful elements of nature all about me, also sickness, misery, death, and the grave, I shall not want. I can view all these things without fear. Peace of heart, rest of soul, the awareness of the full, everlasting good — the Lord is all-sufficient and gives me peace and rest in my soul. Then I can sing through the tears, rejoice in the midst of all my misery, never disturbed although sorrowful. The Lord fulfills all my needs. And now I know that the Lord, objectively and subjectively, whether in my consciousness or in my unconsciousness, will always give me all good. What a wonderful knowledge in which to stand and rejoice!

And do not ignore the certainty of this all-sufficiency — *I shall not want*. The poet does not merely refer to the present, not knowing what the future will bring. But we read: *I shall not want*. What a wonderful word! This is the issue in this psalm. He

speaks in this psalm of the valley of the shadow of death. We read in verse 6 of all the days of our lives. Hence, whatever may befall me and be my lot, whatever my sorrows and troubles and afflictions, always I will possess only the good. Fact is, I shall not want, never be in want. This does not depend upon you or me, upon my subjective inclination of heart and mind. God shall provide for me every moment, and if we may stand in that faith, then we take this blessed assurance, with the poet, upon our lips: *I shall not want; my Shepherd is the Lord*.

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The ground for this wonderful assurance? This: the *Lord* is my Shepherd. The Lord here is Jehovah, the I AM THAT I AM, the Rock, the Unchangeable One. He is that in Himself, never dependent upon anything outside of Himself. Were the heavens and the earth to disappear, the Lord remains. Hence, He is unchangeable in relation to all His virtues, such as His wrath and indignation, also His love and grace and mercy. He is therefore also unchangeable in relation to His people. Loving them He loves them forever and unchangeably. Being their Shepherd, in Christ Jesus, He is their Shepherd forever. Thus Jehovah loves His own with an unchangeable love. He is also almighty, able to provide and care for His sheep. And He is all-wise, the Omniscient One, using the highest means to glorify Himself and to save His own even unto the uttermost.

Shall we say this with the psalmist: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want? We can. The *Lord* is my Shepherd. Jehovah, the I Am, the Rock, everlastingly the same, cares for me. He loved me eternally. He loved me in Christ Jesus, even in the depths of hell upon the cross of Calvary. He will surely love me even until the end. Indeed, I shall not want, never, even forevermore.

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



## EDITORIALS

# The Calling of Our Protestant Reformed Churches to be Specific

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

A few months have intervened since we last wrote on this subject (cf. June 1 issue, No. 17, Vol. 59), and it may be well that we review a bit.

We are in the process of answering the question: in what sense are we called to be specific?

Let me remind you that to be specific is not the same as being distinctive. It rather implies and presupposes that we *are* distinctive, that we do occupy a singular position (and I use that term *singular* literally) as churches. To be specific means that in clear, pointed, unambiguous, exact, and antithetical language we give expression to our distinctive Protestant Reformed position.

It is necessary, therefore, that we understand clearly what that distinctive position is. In this connection, we have already emphasized that we are called to be specific, in the first place, in distinction from and over against all modernism and the modernistic church. And when last we wrote on this subject (June 1 issue) we emphasized the distinction between our Protestant Reformed position and that of what may be termed orthodox Christianity in general. We stressed the fact that in distinction from orthodox Christianity in general we are *Reformed*.

In this connection, we pointed out that this means that we stand historically in the line of those great churches of the Reformation which trace their doctrinal and spiritual descent from the Reformation as it took place under Calvin, and that our distinctiveness lies in the truth of the absolute sovereignty of God in the salvation of His people (fundamental to which truth is the truth of sovereign, double predestination) and in the truth of God's covenant. Parenthetically I may point out that I called attention to this distinctive position, though in a different setting, in my Seminary Commencement address, "At The Point Of The Wedge" (cf. July 1 issue).

We belong, therefore, to the Reformed family, to what is sometimes called the "reformed community," although in our day it bears less and less the character of a community, except in name.

And that brings us to the third aspect of our

distinctive position, namely, that even in the midst of Reformed churches, the so-called Reformed community, we occupy a distinctive position. And in the term "Reformed" in this connection I include not only all those churches which are of continental European origin and which actually use the name "Reformed," but also those Reformed churches which have their historical roots in the United Kingdom and go by the name of Presbyterian. Among them all, to a greater or lesser degree, we occupy a distinctive position as Protestant Reformed Churches. And it is from that distinctive position that our calling to be specific stems.

Historically, this distinctive position stands connected with the very origin of our churches in 1924. Ever since the Christian Reformed Church in 1924 cast us out, we stand as churches in principal distinction from that denomination. We stand in distinction from those who hold the doctrine of common grace. The latter, according to the Three Points of 1924, includes the doctrine of the general, well-meant offer of salvation. But it also includes the doctrine that God shows grace to the reprobate in the gifts He bestows upon all men in general. It also includes the doctrine that God by a non-regenerative operation of the Holy Spirit restrains sin in the heart of the individual and in the community. It also includes the doctrine that the natural man can do good in the affairs of this present life. Our distinctive position as Protestant Reformed Churches consists in the fact that we deny this entire theory of common grace and maintain that it is contrary to Scripture and to our historic Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions.

But our distinctive position is not merely negative and does not merely consist of denials. No church can exist by negatives and mere denials, however true it may be that the truth is antithetical and always implies the No of the Yes.

Our distinctive position as such is positive and positively Reformed. The positive aspect of our historic distinctive position may be stated as follows:

- 1) The preaching of the gospel, while promiscuous, is grace only for the elect.
- 2) Men have all things in common in this present



world, except grace.

3) Sin is not restrained by an operation of common grace, but develops organically with the development of the human race, and that, too, according to the counsel of God.

4) All the deeds of the natural man, the man who is by nature totally depraved, are sin. The single exception to this total depravity is the wonder of regeneration.

This is our historically distinctive position as it arises out of our very origin as Protestant Reformed Churches. And it is this historically distinctive position which gives rise, in the deepest sense, to our calling to be specific.

There is more to be said about this, but that must wait for the next issue.

## *The Christian News Encyclopedia*

This is the title of a large two-volume set which the Rev. Herman Otten, editor of *Christian News* was kind enough to send me for review. Usually we do not include book reviews in this department; but since our book reviews appear somewhat sporadically, in order to expedite the appearance of this review, we are including it in the editorial department.

I mentioned a large two-volume set, and that is probably an understatement. The pages are 10½" x 16", and the two volumes include nearly 1800 pages. The hard-cover edition, which I received, is sturdily bound (priced at \$31.95 plus \$4.00 postage). There is also a soft cover edition for \$24.95 plus \$3.50 postage. These are available from: The Christian News Encyclopedia, Box 168, New Haven, Missouri 63068.

This is no ordinary encyclopedia. It contains a mass of writings on a wide variety of subjects which have appeared during the last ten years in the paper of which the Rev. Otten is editor, *Christian News* (formerly *Lutheran News*), a paper with which we have had an exchange arrangement for many years. This means, of course, that to a certain extent this encyclopedia has a rather limited scope. But having said this, I also want to stress that this rather limited scope is nevertheless wide-ranging. *Christian News* has always been a paper which has by no means been limited to things Lutheran, but carries a vast variety of news items and articles of interest to conservative and evangelical Christians in general. Naturally, the viewpoint from which many items are expressed and/or criticized is that of a very conservative Missouri Synod Lutheran stance.

Meanwhile, it should be kept in mind that *Christian News* is not an official voice of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. In fact, while Mr. Otten is pastor of the church in New Haven, Missouri, he is not on the roster of Missouri Synod pastors, due to the fact that already in his student days he was

critical of liberal trends at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. His paper is an independent paper, not church-controlled. And while it is broader in scope today than when it was known as *Lutheran News*, it still concentrates to no little extent on issues of significance in the LCMS. In fact, Mr. Otten and his paper could probably be characterized as the "gadfly" of the LCMS. In the battles about liberal trends which have raged in the LCMS in recent years, *Christian News* has undoubtedly been very influential not only in keeping people informed but also in maintaining or returning to a more conservative stance in the LCMS. And while a Reformed man can, of course, find many points of disagreement with Lutheran theology, one can only have admiration for the untiring battle of Herman Otten and *Christian News* against the forces in the LCMS which, for example, trampled the truth of the infallibility of Holy Scripture.

Nevertheless, as I said, the scope of this encyclopedia is wide-ranging. Even as one always finds items of interest in *Christian News*, so there is a vast amount of information of general interest to the Christian reader. Here is a sample of some general categories included in the 9-page Table of Contents: Abortion, Africa, America, American Translation of the Bible, Apologetics, Baptism, Baptists, Bible, Bultmann, Campus Crusade, etc. Also enhancing the usefulness of these volumes is an extensive index (of subjects and of writers) at the end of Volume II.

While admittedly an encyclopedia of this kind has limited value, it is nevertheless both useful and interesting as a reference work. *Christian News*, a relatively small publishing organization, is to be commended for this undertaking.

**Take time to read  
*The Standard Bearer***



## ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

### Signs of the Times

Some months ago I read several magazines which quoted an article on earthquakes and their frequency. If the report is correct, and I have no reason to doubt it, this makes for some interesting proof that the end of the age approaches rapidly. In *Outlook*, May 1983, this report is presented:

Among the "signs" which our Lord mentioned as signalling His approaching return were "earthquakes, in diverse places" (Matt. 24:7). An article in the January, 1983, issue of *Getrouw* by Alexander Seibel on "The Background of Terrorism Illuminated from the Bible" calls attention to these signs mentioning especially the increasing frequency and intensity of earthquakes in our time. Citing as authority a book, *The Cosmic Conspiracy* by Stan Dyo, he points out that from 1897 to 1946 there were 3 earthquakes registering above 6 on the Richter scale. From

1946 to 1956 there were 7; from 1956 to 1966 there were 17 of that degree of violence. But in the year 1967 alone they numbered 17; in 1968, 19; in 1969, 21; in 1970, 24; and in 1971 there were 34 above 6 on the Richter scale. From 1967-1976 there were according to other statistics a total of 180 earthquakes registering above 7 on the Richter scale. Should we let these increasingly frequent and violent catastrophes pass without noticing what they tell us of the Lord's approaching return and our need to be ready for it by believing in and serving Him?

Another reminder, this is, of the nearness of Christ's return. He who would close his eyes to the clear evidences would be a fool indeed. Let us watch — and labor, knowing that the night is far spent and the day is at hand.

### World Council of Churches

This past summer the W.C.C. met in Vancouver, Canada — its sixth assembly since the founding. Many reports have been given about this assembly. Some have found that it appears to have become more conservative and spiritual. Others, while conceding that the evangelicals have had a louder voice at this assembly, believe that the W.C.C. continues down the steep road of apostasy. *Christianity Today*, Sept. 16, 1983, contains a lengthy and positive report about the assembly — but includes also a short comment from one who dissents from this positive assessment. The positive report states:

After its Uppsala, Switzerland, assembly in 1968, the World Council of Churches (WCC) espoused liberation theologies, sent money to liberation movements, and acutely criticized Western failures. This, combined with comparative silence about Communist societies, convinced many evangelicals that it was controlled by the political and theological Left. But the Sixth Assembly of the WCC in Vancouver, which concluded last month, may significantly alter that perception, and may introduce stronger evangelical currents in the council.

Vigorous Trinitarian theology with a strong emphasis on eternal and supernatural life in Christ

permeated this assembly. The *theosis* motif — the special Orthodox emphasis on our vital union with Christ in His death and resurrection, and our salvation through participation in the divine life — especially lent itself to the theme of this assembly, "Jesus Christ — the Lord of the World."....

...The majority of evangelicals who caucussed at the assembly were also enthusiastic, so much so that they produced a statement commending the World Council and inviting evangelicals to add their gifts to its process. The main drafter of "Evangelicals at Vancouver: An Open Letter" was Arthur Glasser, who reflected the contributions of a group of about 40 others, including Waldron Scott and Orlando Costas, who was an advisor at the assembly. The evangelical statement made the front page of the assembly newspaper. Emilio Castro, head of the WCC Division of Mission and Evangelism, was ecstatic about the support provided for evangelical concerns in the council, and predicted that the open letter would turn out to be the most important event at the Sixth Assembly. More than 200 persons signed the document, and many others thanked us for it.

Not all evangelicals at the assembly affirmed this statement. A counterstatement produced by Peter Beyerhaus was signed by American missiologist



Arthur Johnston and a Korean Presbyterian professor, Myung Yuk Kim. The Beyerhaus statement admitted some of the progress noted by the other evangelicals but called attention to theological vagueness, a neo-Marxist "theology of the poor," feminist neopaganism, the presence and counterwitness of spokespersons for non-Christian religions, unbalanced criticism of the West, shallowness in perceiving sin, and a lack of eschatological perspective. It concluded by warning evangelicals to stay clear of the WCC process, just as the open letter called for their involvement....

Other reports of the WCC appeared in *Christian Renewal*, Sept. 12, 1983:

Representatives of Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam told an international gathering of Christians here how their traditions view life as a gift from God. They took part in a plenary session of the sixth assembly of the World Council of Churches devoted to an assembly sub-theme, "Life, A Gift of God." and made history in so doing. Although there have been

observers from non-Christian religions at previous assemblies, the assembly here marked the first time that a plenary session had been addressed by non-Christian representatives. At the World Council's New Delhi assembly in 1961, it was not even possible for people of other faiths to be accredited as press representatives.

It is evident that the WCC has accommodated itself somewhat to the evangelicals in its midst. But this, perhaps, makes the organization more deceptive and dangerous. The reports indicate that the WCC has drawn closer to the non-Christian religions. Thus, while trying to soothe some of the fears of the evangelicals, the WCC has at the same time accommodated itself to the other "religions" of the world. How can any of the faithful churches participate with those who increasingly seek union between "light" and "darkness"? Clearly, there is continued development toward the one church and one world concept of the antichrist.

## Total Depravity

One is encouraged when reading of others a strong emphasis upon the total depravity of natural man with a clear-cut denial of the so-called free-will of the sinner. Such a statement appears in the *Reformed Herald*, September, 1983, a publication of the Reformed Church in the U.S. (Eureka Classis). The Rev. Steven Schlei writes about "Cement Shoes":

...A few years ago, a popular South Dakota evangelist visited Minot to urge the evangelical ministers of this community to sponsor him in an evangelistic crusade in the city. He wanted a guaranteed purse of \$25,000 to cover his expenses so that he could come. The ministers wanted him to come, but they were quite hesitant to make such a large commitment to cough up so much money. Sensing that money was the only issue in whether or not he could come, the evangelist rebuked and admonished the ministers, "Brethren, it has been our experience in previous crusades that for every \$25 invested, one soul is saved. We are talking here about the salvation of 1000 people in Minot. How can you quibble over such things as money?" He went on to urge the ministers to "sell" this plan to the Christians of Minot by telling them they could buy a soul for \$25 or a whole family for the gift of \$100.

My dear brethren, let me tell you that these and other similar horror stories make my blood boil.... These blasphemies come from a view of God which sees Him as having done all that He can to save sinners, and now He must await the outcome of their individual and collective decisions. This "god" has tied

His hands in the realm of salvation because He has granted a "free will" to His creatures, so that He is dependent upon them whether heaven will be populated by a few or many men. Because so many men perish in Hell, because they improperly exercise their free will, one Arminian called Hell a "colossal monument" to the failure of God in saving men.

According to this view, man's sin has left him in rough shape, but man can pull himself out of the dilemma he is in, if he will only take hold of Christ. Man is drowning in his sin. On that all Christians would agree. The common conception though is that man is yelling for help on the top of the waves, and he could find that help if only he would take hold of the life preserver floating beside him. We believe man is drowning in sin all right, but he is not floating on the surface. Instead, he is at the bottom of the sea wearing cement shoes and having his pockets filled with lead. In short, man is not merely in trouble; he is dead....

It is refreshing to find such strong emphasis on the depravity of the sinner. Indeed, he has no "free will," nor is he capable of catching the "lifeline" if he will, but he is truly dead in sin and iniquity. Salvation, then, is of God alone through Jesus Christ.

*Read and Study  
The Standard Bearer*



## GUEST ARTICLE

## God's Immutability

Rev. Robt. C. Harbach

"We all believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, that . . . God . . . is . . . immutable . . ." (Belgic Conf'n), as it is written, "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6).

God in this passage of the divine Word declares His own essential attribute of immutability and glories in it. Negatively, this means God is perpetually changeless; positively, He is ever the same. The verse begins with the preposition *for*, stating the reason for that just previously expressed (in v. 5). Here the Lord shows that He is both Judge of and Witness against evil-doers. Specifically, He identifies these impenitent sinners as sorcerers (dealers in the occult, astrology, witchcraft, and the drug traffic), adulterers (cp. the modern sex rebellion), false swearers (perjurers), oppressors. The latter include crooked politicians who get into office by perjury, lies, and deceit. When once in office, they, through their sorceries and adulteries, enslave the people who are then much easier to handle, to defraud, rob, and oppress. But God will testify against, judge, sentence, and punish these criminals. *For* He is Jehovah, the eternal, self-existent God who never changes, immutable in His being, justice, goodness and truth. He is just as much the Enemy of sin as He ever was, and evil-doers, in time and in eternity, always find Him so. The Judge of all the earth needs no new legislation passed in order to save the poor and oppressed. For His law and the judgments rendered on the basis of it are never antiquated, never out of date. They continue relevant and in full force. So also the curse of His law continues in its power against all law-breakers. God is an immutable Judge and Witness against them. "I am the Lord," the unchangeable, covenant God, faithful to His covenant, "therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Sons of Jacob are true believers, the sons of God's election, but so unworthy because they all have the deceitful nature of Jacob. Yet, because of the immutable love of God, manifested in the blood of the cross which washes away all their sins, they are not consumed.

"I change not!" The speaker, it is to be noted, is, from the first verse, the promised Messiah, "the Lord Whom ye seek," "the Messenger of the cove-

nant"—another biblical proof of the Deity of the immutable Christ. This is "Jesus Christ the *same* yesterday, and today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). It is also to be noted that the verb "to be," *am*, is in italic, indicating that it is not in the original. Therefore *Jehovah* is not the predicate of the sentence, but in apposition with the subject, *I*, and Jehovah the immutable Messiah stands in contrast to the changing sons of Jacob.

God is immutable in all His perfections, in His omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, holiness, righteousness, knowledge, goodness, and mercy. He is immutable in His counsel, decree, purposes and plans, and in His love, covenant, and promises. The changeless God created, sustains, and governs all change (including revelation, incarnation, and redemption), yet without Himself changing. So the words, "In the beginning God created" (Gen. 1:1) do not imply any change in Him. Nor does "My Father worketh hitherto" (Jn. 5:17); nor does He "worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11). This means that God's power is always the same. He gets neither weaker nor stronger. His power is never exhausted nor ever in need of renewal. His knowledge is not increased as with His intelligent creatures. His mind is not a sieve, but retentive of all things in eternity, in past, present, and future, in one divine thought. He is the unchanging, overflowing Fountain of all good, ever ceaselessly pouring out His goodness on His creatures in an abundant, unabated, steady stream continually the same. He never can change from holiness to sin, nor from righteousness to wickedness. His counsel is immutable (Heb. 6:17). His purposes none can frustrate nor annul. He never changes His mind; never has to, since His thoughts and counsels are eternally perfect. He changes His providences, yet they are all ordained and brought to pass according to His unchangeable will.

So immutability belongs to all God's attributes. Just as all the colors of the spectrum flow forth from their center in the light, so the attributes of God (all one in Him!) have their center in the sun of immutability. God's mercy could never change. (What could it change to and still be a divine attri-



bute? and not degenerate?) How could His holiness change? This is to ask, How could God cease being God? His being and His perfections are the same. He is His attributes! Of every one of them we may sing, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen!"

Only the Lord God can say in truth, "I am that which I am." Methuselah, who lived for 969 years, could not say this for one quarter of an hour. For the creature must confess, I am not what I was just a moment ago. I am this very instant undergoing change. In the future I will not be what I am now. Only God is the immutable *I Am!* God could not remain God and say anything else! It would be Barthian nonsense to make God say, "I AM that I am, yet at the same time I am something other than that." We cannot say in modern parlance, "God is 'something else.'" (Like what? Isa. 40:25a). God cannot be one thing one time and "something else" another time. "He is the living God, steadfast forever" (Dan. 6:26). God *is!* God is Himself. God is God! If He were not always God He could never be God.

Immutability is therefore not a quality which may be considered in itself, apart from other things, as though, in some sense it may be considered even apart from God. It is said that because the reprobate in hell are in the miserable state of immutable malice against God, and the elect in heaven in a state of immutable and infallible happiness that then there is immutability in the creature. But these steady states are what they are because they are utterly dependent upon *God's* immutability, and that in connection with His immutable justice and mercy. In reality there is no (dualistical) "immutability considered in itself." Holy Scripture, the only infallible rule of faith and life, is the ground of reality, not "the thing of itself."

To reject God's immutability is to reject all His attributes, deny the very being of God. God's "name is *being*" (H. Bavinck). True, for His name is "the I Am." "This name is an unchangeable name" (H.B.). True, for His name is I-am-that-I-am. His name is, I am He Who is, Who was, and Who is to come. Therefore, God never comes with a New Deal. "He has always had the one and only immutable will" (H.B.) or plan, and that is eternally perfect. "God is the I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE" (H.B.). There is no "before" or "after" for God. But there are creatures, things, which before did not exist and afterward do exist. There is no parallax in God. (Optical, binocular parallax is the apparent change in position of an object seen separately first by one eye and then by the other.)

The immutability of God, so far from being a comfort to the persistently wicked, is, and will be, for them a fearful thing in their thoughts and exper-

ience. For the Lord will not change His determined purpose to punish sinners and their sins in order to gratify men's lusts in continued enjoyment of their evil ways. What! God dishonor Himself to ease men in their carnal security! Must God change His nature, cease being God, so that they be undisturbed in their vileness? God invariably loves the right, and as much as ever hates the evil. He is the same unchanging Enemy to the wicked, the same Friend to the righteous. As He always has been, with a strong aversion to sin and that in justice to punish it, so He will be still. Daily He judges sin and sinners throughout all time and unto eternity. This is His immovable decree: "He that believeth not . . . the wrath of God *abideth* (is continually kept) on Him" (Jn. 3:36). The same decree declares with finality, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

But, on the other hand, what a comfort this property of the divine nature is to the Lord's people! His immutable decree has determined the bounds of the sea (Job 38:11). If this decree were not immutable, were capricious, we might well fear the devastating inundation of our land from both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. No one lives under this dread because God's decree is fixed. Also at the Cross God's face still shines upon us in mercy. There He is as ready as ever to accept any who come to Him for rest! In the Cross we see that His love never changes (Jer. 31:3), and that His truth endureth for ever (Ps. 117:2). Is there then more reason to doubt His love than His truth? For the decree of His love is, for all walkers in the Light, "the blood of Jesus Christ . . . *cleanseth* (keeps cleansing and cleansing!) us from all sin" (I Jn. 1:7). The wheel of providence rolls over "change in all around I see," but it spins on the axle of immutable love. "Heav'n and earth shall pass away, Changeless, Thou shalt live for aye!" "Unchanging is the love of God, From age to age the same, Displayed to all who do His will and reverence His Name."

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## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

# Significant Silence

*Rev. John A. Heys*

The second chapter of the Book of Esther is very revealing, if one does not approach it with a mind biased by the general notions concerning the principal characters in the book but lets the facts speak for themselves. It reveals nothing but deeds of unbelief both on the part of the Gentiles mentioned, of whom it can be expected, but also of the Jews, who knew the law and the prophets. And while this chapter already is revealing, what follows in the remaining chapters also underscores what we wrote before, namely, that not one of the persons mentioned by name in the book was a believer. Indeed some reveal that they know that there is a God, but without exception all show that they have no faith in God. Let us look carefully at what the one true God makes known to us in this chapter.

King Ahasuerus divorced his wife Vashti and did not so much as claim that it was because of adultery. Nor could he correctly do that. God, therefore, continued to consider her his wife; and all men were required to take that same position. Being an unbeliever, not heeding God's word that what God joined together no man might put asunder, the king put her out of the palace. Advised by his "wise men" he sought another wife. Note that the "wise men" who accused Vashti of "too much contempt and wrath" proceeded to show contempt for God's laws and to advise deeds rooted in wrath against God.

Shortly thereafter the king began to miss Vashti and considered restoring her. For we read in Esther 2:1 that the king's wrath was appeased. And that word appeased is the same word that appears in Genesis 8:1 where we read of the waters of the flood being assuaged. In Esther 7:10 we find it translated as pacified. There we read of the king's wrath being pacified after Haman was hanged on the gallows he built for Mordecai. What is more, we also read in this verse that he "remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her." Verse 2 also makes it known that the king revealed that he missed her. For we read that his "wise men" said, "Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king." They wanted no restoration of Vashti and were aware of the king's loneliness and regret. Now that alcohol no longer warped his thinking, the king, reviewing in his

mind what had happened, and, being sober, felt the loss.

Note that the king remembers "what had been decreed" against her. We do not read, "what *he* had decreed against her." It is true that he authorized her debasement and departure from the palace. But the decree had not originated in him. He was furious. He wanted her punished. But he was not ready to punish himself by getting rid of a wife in whom he had such pride, and was to him such a treasure, as is evident from his desire to show off her beauty at the feast. His eagerness for another beautiful wife is plain from the fact that the suggestion of his servants that there be a beauty contest, so he could have another most beautiful wife, is adopted.

Having made all this known to us the chapter introduces Mordecai. Now surely he was not the same Mordecai who is mentioned in Ezra 2:2 and Nehemiah 7:7, and was one of the men who with Zerubbabel led the Jews back to Jerusalem. Some claim, or suggest this, but the somewhat detailed description of his geneology — as well as all the acts of unbelief which he displays in the book — forbids such a conclusion. He is presented as a descendant of Kish (most likely the father of Israel's first king) and as from the tribe of Benjamin. It is not important to determine whether this Kish is actually the father of King Saul. What is important is that he is a Benjamite, and thus a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whose youngest son was Benjamin.

In a broad, general sense then we may say that Mordecai was a covenant father, that is, one born among the covenant people that in generations had been taught the law and the prophets, and knew God's covenant promises. In his eloquent plea which he makes before Esther, Mordecai reveals this to be the case. He speaks of enlargement and deliverance that *will* arise to the Jews from another quarter, if Esther does not speak to the king (Esther 4:13). Note here his significant silence consisting in this that he does not mention God's name, when there was a beautiful opportunity to use it, and a time when it was required.

But there are two matters here that must be con-



sidered. He is in Shushan long after the Jews had returned to Jerusalem and the promised land. Mordecai's heart was fixed on the world, and he had no interest in returning to Jerusalem and in worshipping God in His temple. His burning desire to see Esther become queen of a godless nation, and wife of a thoroughly corrupt heathen king, reveals that.

The other matter is that although he was, in that broad sense of the word, a covenant father, of an adopted daughter whose father also was born in and raised up in the covenant sphere, she being the daughter of his own brother, he did not bring this daughter up with covenant instruction. And what those who extol Mordecai and Esther as great heroes of faith disregard completely is that Mordecai does nothing (and that word nothing can be underscored), to keep Esther out of this sinful, immoral beauty contest, is so eager to see her win it, is not at all concerned by the fact that to become the wife of Ahasuerus is a flagrant violation of the seventh commandment, and that in order to get that position he not only instructs her but *commands* her to turn her back completely upon God's covenant. Let us look at that a moment more fully.

We will not accuse Mordecai of entering Esther into the wicked contest. We do not read that. We read that the king sent out men to look for fair virgins. Now Mordecai could have tried to hide her, for a time at least, but he makes no attempt. And even as there are ways to accentuate beauty of face and body, so there are ways, if one has a will and a mind to do so, to cover up and play it down. He makes no attempt and spoke no command to Esther to do so. More of this in a moment. But note that "Mordecai walked every day before the court of the woman's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her." That cannot mean that he was worried about her spiritual life. It cannot mean that he feared that she would fall into temptation. He knew that she had to spend a night with the king. This was not a sin she might fall into. It was a sin required to obtain the queenship. Mordecai was quite happy to have Esther pass this test of "trial marriage" and "lustful compatibility." Here too he is completely silent. No warning is given Esther, no command to refuse going in unto the king. In fact, both knew that all this "purifying" of the candidates was with a view to this fornication.

And all this fits in so perfectly with that command of Mordecai that she in no way at any time show that she belonged to the nation that served Jehovah! That is what it means that she must hide her kindred and her people. And that is what Mordecai wanted her to do. Now let me come back to that failure of Mordecai to keep Esther out

of the wicked beauty contest. There was a way which he knew would disqualify her. There was a way whereby he could keep her from all that sin. Just let it be known that she is a Benjamite, a Jewess, one whose nation professed to believe in the God Who clearly stated, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and no matter how beautiful of face, the king, if not the king's men, would have no part in entering her into this beauty contest to be the queen of their land. How, O how, can you exalt a man like this and hold him up as a hero of faith?

Consider that his command to Esther means that she might never pray to Jehovah. And for what would she pray — if she did it secretly on her bed at night in the dark? Would she pray for forgiveness of her sins in which she intended to continue to walk? She was preparing for fornication and had set her face to go that way, at her uncle's command. Could she sincerely pray for forgiveness of a sin she intended to hold on to until her fleshly ambitions were satisfied?

Not to reveal her kindred and her people meant that Esther had to desecrate the Sabbath so she could be kept on the list of candidates who would commit fornication to be joined to a godless, unbelieving king and be one flesh with him! It meant that she could not confess Jehovah and must not speak one word of faith or hope or love toward Him! It meant that, what the three friends of Daniel, and Daniel himself, would not do, she would gladly do, namely, eat and drink things offered up to idols! She was to turn her back upon the Lamb of God and declare by her works that she had no connection with Him whatsoever. There was no way in this heathen land and palace of a godless king that she could keep the Passover and manifest faith in God's wrath passing over her because of His Son's blood.

But let us concentrate for the moment on this father who commands all this of her. And later we will have occasion, the Lord willing, to point out several times when he could have used God's name, and as a believer most assuredly would have done so. Instead there comes out of his mouth not one word that indicates even a weak faith in Him. How dare anyone hold him up before his children as a hero of faith, a man after God's heart who ought to be emulated and praised for what he did for God's church?

Mordecai was interested in Israel as a nation, but not as the people of God. He was interested in having one of the seed of Abraham in the king's palace, but he was not interested in having the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob confessed and praised in that palace. Not only did he with interest watch to see whether his daughter would succeed



in this immoral night of "sleeping" with the king, he taught her also to break the ninth commandment. O, yes, you can bear false witness by silence. Silence can speak louder than words, as well as actions often speak louder than words. And Mordecai's unbelief becomes manifest not only in what he did but in what he did not do; in what he said, but also in what he did not, would not, and could not say. Indeed we have significant silence here in this book. A silence that loudly speaks of unbelief?

Consider that in New Testament language what Mordecai commanded Esther was, "In no way, at any time, let anyone think that you are a Christian. Be sure all think you are one with the world. Let your speech be in every way the speech of the world."

But also in New Testament language take careful note of what Jesus said in Matthew 10:32, 33: "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven." That holds true also for those who teach their children not to confess Christ.

You can extol Mordecai, though he never uses God's name and forbids his daughter to use it. But the point is that Jesus in no uncertain terms teaches that such He will not confess before His Father in heaven. How terrible that silence is, and what significance it carries!

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## FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

### Nicene Creed

*Rev. James Slopsema*

Article 2 of the Nicene Creed reads as follows: "And (I believe) in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by Whom all things were made." We have already discussed much of this second article. We have discussed the confession of the church that there is one Lord Jesus Christ by Whom all things were made. We have discussed too the confession of the early church that Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds. There remains yet to be discussed the truth that Jesus Christ is "Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father." These expressions were inserted in the Nicene Creed especially against the followers of Arius. You recall that the controversy with Arius and his followers was the historical occasion for the writing of this creed. It was especially to settle this controversy that the Council of Nicea was convened in A.D. 325 and this particular creed was formulated. It was especially through these expressions which we now consider that the early church set forth the truth of God's Word over against the error of the Arians.

What were the teachings of Arius? Arius began with the transcendence of God. To Arius, God the Father was a far away, unknowable, inaccessible God, hidden in deep mystery and separated by an

infinite chasm from man and the creation. Beginning with this concept of God, Arius could not imagine the possibility of God directly creating the universe. Due to His highly transcendent character it was possible for God to create the universe only through an intermediary. Hence, He created the Word, or Logos, as His Son. And it was through this Word that God in turn created the universe. According to the view of Arius therefore the Son of God is not eternal. Certainly He existed before the universe; for the universe was created by Him. Yet He has a beginning. There was a time when He was not. He is therefore not eternal. Nor is He of the same essence or being as the Father. Arius did contend that the Son is divine. However, His divine nature is different from that of the Father. Being a created God, the Son is to be viewed as a lower God, a subordinate God to the Father. In turn therefore He is limited in knowledge and power and wisdom. The Son is able also to sin so that He constantly needs the grace of God the Father. Nevertheless, because He is the Son of God, He is the proper object of our worship. Finally, Arius taught that this Logos or Word was incarnate. Through the virgin birth the Son of God came into our flesh, the Logos or Word taking the place of the reasoning human spirit. Such in brief were the views of Arius.

To contradict especially these views and to confess the truth of God's Word over against them, the early church confessed that Jesus Christ is "Light of



Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father."

First then we have the expression that Christ is "Light of Light." Now the word "of" in the expression "Light of Light" has the idea of source. Hence, the meaning is that Jesus Christ is Light out of or proceeding from Light. And this is Scriptural. It is true that we do not find this expression as such in Scripture. Yet the idea expressed here is definitely in the Scriptures. For, first of all, Christ is identified in the Scriptures as Light. This we read for example in John 1:6-9. Here we are told that John (the Baptist) "came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light . . . He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." And according to the context this Light is Jesus Christ. But, in the second place, we also read that God is Light. "God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). Now the point of the expression "Light of Light" is that the Light of Christ finds its source in the Light of God and is therefore identical to the Light of God. There are not two Lights which shine and radiate in the creation. There is only one. This Light is the pure perfection of God's very being. That Light Christ also possesses. And through Christ, the Light of God's infinite perfections is manifest to and in man. Hence, Christ is not essentially different from God the Father but essentially the same. This idea is certainly expressed in Hebrews 1:3 where Christ is called "the brightness of His (i.e., God's) glory." God's glory is the radiation or manifestation of the perfections of His divine being. It is the shining forth of God as "the Light in Whom is no darkness." And the brightness of that glorious Light of God is Christ. Even as the rays of the sun are the brightness of the sun, so is Christ the brightness of the glory Light of God. He is "Light of Light," one with the Father.

What was expressed figuratively in the expression just considered was expressed outrightly in the next phrase of the Nicene Creed, viz., that Christ is "very God of very God." The word translated "very" could perhaps better be translated "true." It is a Greek word meaning "real and true, genuine." Hence, Christ is "true God of (out of) true God." The Scriptures designate both God the Father and Jesus Christ as the true God. Thus for example in John 17:3, Christ praying to God the Father proclaims, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only *true* God." In like manner we read of Jesus Christ in I John 5:20, "This is the *true* God, and life eternal." Now following the idea that Christ is Light of Light, the early church continued to confess that He is true God out of true God. That is, He is truly God even

as the Father is truly God. And as true God He finds His source in the Father.

It is rather interesting to note that in its original form as adopted by the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, the Nicene Creed simply confessed that Jesus Christ is "God of God." But as you recall from previous articles, the controversy concerning the identity of Christ still raged in the church after this council, so that another council was called in Constantinople in A.D. 381 to settle the question once and for all. At this latter council the original creed was altered somewhat to deny the position of Arius any room whatsoever in the church. One such revision was to strengthen the phrase "God of God" to "very God of very God." The reason for this change was that the followers of Arius found that they could very well live with the idea that Jesus is "God of God." For they too proclaimed that Jesus is God. They simply reserved the right to add that Jesus was not God in the same sense that the Father is; that He is a subordinate God. Hence, to rule out any idea of subordination of the Son and to emphasize that Jesus is God in the same sense as is the Father, the early church amended her creed to confess that Jesus Christ is "very God of very God."

The next phrase inserted in the Nicene Creed to contradict the error of the Arians is that Jesus is "begotten, not made." It is rather striking that in this second article the early church already confessed that Jesus Christ is the "only-begotten Son of God." Why then the addition that Jesus is "begotten, not made"? The answer is to be found in the fact that the Arians also claimed that Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God. However, they did not give this term the content that the Scriptures do. We have seen in a previous article that the title "only-begotten Son of God" given to Jesus indicates that He is brought forth by the Father in such a way that He possesses the whole of the divine nature with the Father. He is co-eternal, co-essential, and co-equal with the Father. Any honest study of this term in light of the whole of Scripture will reveal this fact. However, the Arians did not interpret this title in this manner. Nor could they and still maintain their teaching that Jesus was created of the Father, is essentially different from the Father and is subordinate to the Father. Hence, they interpreted the expression under consideration in a figurative sense. That Christ is begotten of God means that He was created of God. That Christ is the *only-begotten* means that He was the first creature of God through Whom God created all things. To rule out this erroneous and unbiblical interpretation of a most important and beautiful expression in Scripture, the early church proclaimed that Jesus was "begotten, not made." The effect of this insertion therefore was to emphasize that Jesus is not



begotten of God in the sense of creation.

Finally, there is the phrase "being of one substance with the Father." It was this phrase that especially marked the defeat of Arianism in the church. This particular phrase was not incorporated into the original creed as formulated and adopted by the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325. It was added later by the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381 which made minor revisions on the creed. The inclusion of this phrase reflects the controversy that continued after the Council of Nicea and which we considered some time ago at the beginning of our series on this creed. You recall that the Council of Nicea failed to settle the controversy in the early church concerning the identity of Christ. Afterward especially three camps emerged, each with its own watchword. There were first the Arians whose watchword was *hetero-ousion*. By this they meant that Christ was different in substance or being from the Father. Then there was the middle camp which spoke of *homoi-ousion*, that is, Christ has a like substance or being with the Father. Finally, there was the orthodox camp whose watchword was *homo-ousion*. By this they meant to emphasize that Christ is one in substance

or being with the Father. And this is the expression we find here in the Nicene Creed. The expression "being of one substance with the Father" was the watchword of the orthodox camp. Its inclusion into the creed of the church by the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381 marked the complete victory of the Orthodox party and the truth of God's Word on this particular issue!

This truth the true church of God confesses even today. The trend today in the church world is to view Jesus as merely a man. He is essentially no different from any one of us. We call this Modernism. However, this is essentially the same error that prevailed in the early church. It may come in a little different form. But it is essentially the same lie. The ago old lie of the devil to deny the true identity of our Saviour has never really died. And over against this lie the church of Jesus Christ must still confess with the early church her faith "in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten-Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by Whom all things were made."

## STRENGTH OF YOUTH

# The Christian and Dancing

*Rev. Ron Cammenga*

In the past dancing was primarily an activity in which the world engaged. It was an activity upon which the church frowned and against which office-bearers and parents warned their young people. Those who did dance had not the courage to do it openly, but for the most part did it "on the sneak."

Recently, however, the dance has begun to receive official approval as an acceptable activity for the Christian, especially the Christian young person. Now church synods approve of the dance, and call upon the members of the church to redeem the dance. Dancing is approved at Christian colleges "...as an acceptable and wholesome, on-campus, recreational activity..." More and more there is dancing at the receptions of Christian weddings. Even the parties that the young people of high school age attend are likely to include dancing. And there is even a movement to introduce dancing into the worship services of the church, liturgical dancing.

This movement to approve the dance is a threat to us and to our young people. The churches that have given official approval to the dance are churches that are close to us. The Christian colleges that allow and sponsor dances are Christian colleges which many of our own young people attend. The weddings and parties that include dancing in their festivities are the weddings and parties of our own Christian friends and relatives. What are we going to say to them? Are we going to approve of their dancing? Are we ourselves going to begin dancing? How are we going to defend our traditional disapproval of the dance?

By the dance we have in mind social dancing. We are referring to the mixed dancing of men with women for the purposes of entertainment and recreation. Usually this dancing goes on to the accompaniment of fitting music, the loud, raucous, and sensual rock music. And usually it is done in the context of a party, often a wild party, where there is a great deal of frivolity and boisterous



merriment.

One thing that cannot be denied, even by those who are promoting the dance in the churches today, is that their approval of the dance runs counter to the traditional position of the church with regard to dancing. One thing that cannot be gainsaid is that, for the most part, the church in the past has always condemned dancing. One thing that cannot be refuted is that at least the Reformed churches have always in the past reprobated dancing.

This all by itself ought to cause us to sit up and take notice. This had better cause us to stop and make careful evaluation. Were our fathers before us really such simpletons and so naive when it came to their judgment of the dance? Was their life such a sheltered life that they really did not stand in any position to condemn the dance? Any young person who has a healthy respect for the work of the Holy Spirit in the past, and who has his eyes open to the worldliness that inundates the churches today, ought to be leery of this sudden reversal of position that now gives approval to the dance.

The attitude of the church of the past against dancing is overwhelming. Already the ancient church fathers spoke out against the dance, especially as it was practised in pagan society. Already in the fourth century Ambrose, an early champion of Christianity against paganism and the heresy of Arianism, a man who exercised a great influence over Augustine, condemned the dance. In one place he wrote, "Dancing belongs to the adulterous, not to the chaste." In another place, commenting on the words of Jesus in Luke 7:32, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced," Ambrose says, "And so one must be on one's guard, lest, deceived by any common interpretation of this saying, one should suppose that the movements of wanton dances and the madness of the stage were commended; for these are full of evil in youthful age."

The great preacher John Chrysostom, a contemporary of Ambrose, maintained the same position against the dance as acceptable Christian behavior. More than once he condemned the dance as devilish and promiscuous. In a passage that has a great application to those who promote dancing today he writes:

He who admires a dancer . . . uses every exertion and contrivance not to come off worst in any disputes concerning him, and they string together long panegyrics (arguments), as they compose their defense against those who find fault with them, and cast sneers without number at their opponents: but when arguments for Christianity are proposed, they all hang their heads, and scratch themselves, and gape, and retire at length the objects of contempt."

John Calvin's opposition to the dance is well known. Calvin not only wrote against the promiscuous dancing that was all too common among the citizens of Geneva, but publicly preached against dancing. In sermons on Deuteronomy 5:18, Deuteronomy 22:5-8, I Corinthians 10:25-30, and Ephesians 4:29, 30, for example, he condemned the dance and warned against the lusts and fornication which the dance incites. The influence of Calvin's opposition to the dance is reflected in the following decision which the Consistory of the Reformed Church of Geneva took: "Anyone who sings indecent, dissolute, or outrageous songs or dances the fling or some similar dance shall be imprisoned for three days and shall then be sent before the Consistory."

The Puritans, both in England and those who fled religious persecution in England by coming to the American colonies, condemned the dance. In 1684 a group of Puritan ministers in Boston issued a tract against the dance entitled *An Arrow Against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing, drawn out of the quiver of the Scriptures*.

This same condemnation of the dance has historically been the position of the Dutch Reformed churches, both in the Netherlands and in our own country. Dr. H. Bouwman, in a book which in English would be titled *Ecclesiastical Discipline*, speaks of this historical opposition of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands to the dance.

Some sins have been repeatedly mentioned by name as censurable sins by the ecclesiastical assemblies. So too dancing. Already the national Synod of Dordrecht in 1578 had declared that "the dance is commonly a frivolity, which is not becoming to a Christian, and is an enticing of the fleshly lusts, and thereby sanctified persons are the more threatened especially in times of the common (sexual) need," and it was judged that those persons "who clung to it, must be punished, and should they stubbornly persist, after several different warnings, be suspended from the fellowship of the Lord's Supper." Later Synods, as for example the Synod of Gorinchem, 1622, article 35, expressly decided to hold to the same position. The Fresian Synod of 1602 decided that the Lord's Supper should be denied to those parents who continued to send their children to dance schools. Also the theologians expressed themselves against the dance (p. 129).

Dr. Abraham Kuyper, whose theory of "Common Grace" is often appealed to in support of dancing, was himself a staunch opponent of the dance. In his *Lectures on Calvinism* he declares that Calvinism has placed a distinct veto upon dancing. He goes on to say concerning the dance that it is " . . . the *Rubicon* which no true Calvinist could cross without sacrificing his earnestness to dangerous mirth, and the fear of the Lord to often far from spotless pleasures."



The Presbyterian churches in our country have traditionally condemned the dance. In a *Manual of Presbyterian Law for Church Officers and Members*, issued by the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in 1937, the dance is roundly condemned and the churches are called upon to make those who participate in the dance objects of discipline.

This has also been the position, until recently, of the various Reformed churches in our country. In the past, this has been the position of the Christian Reformed Churches who, in 1928 and 1951, through the Synods spoke out against the dance, forbade the members to dance, called the preachers to preach occasional sermons against dancing, and exhorted consistories to exercise discipline against those who partook of this worldly amusement.

Even the world recognizes the traditional opposition of Christianity, and particularly of Calvinism, to dancing. A certain Richard Kraus in his book, *History of the Dance in Art and Education*, states:

Although it is commonplace today to say that the centuries-old Puritan disapproval of dance has now died out, it would be false to assume that it has disappeared completely. A number of schools and colleges, particularly those in rural areas of the country or those which are affiliated with fundamentalist Protestant sects, still prohibit any form of dancing — as instruction, entertainment, or recreation. To a degree, these attitudes are a throwback to the old Calvinist teachings, or the fire-and-brimstone religious revivalism of the 19th century.

There can be absolutely no doubt as to the historic position of the church on the issue of dancing.

With one voice, and from generation to generation, Christians have recognized the evils of dancing and have condemned the dance as immoral behavior. This entire heritage and tradition is now being set aside. Today, despite the clear testimony of the past, the churches are opening their doors to the dance. Now the dance, which for so long was to be shunned and rejected by believers, is to be embraced and redeemed.

One wonders. Is it really the case that the fathers in the past did not know what they were talking about when they warned of the wrong of dancing and the evils associated with the dance? Is it really the case that the church today, in contrast to the church of the past, has reached such a degree of spiritual maturity that now she is at long last ready to redeem the dance? Or is it not rather the case that those who are promoting dancing in the churches today are the same heretics who are busy overthrowing every doctrine and every practice that has come down to us from the church of the past? One wonders.

One of the apparently strongest arguments of those who are bringing the dance into the church today is the reference to dancing in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, and the approval which the Bible gives to this dancing. Several passages of Scripture can be cited in which the people of God dance, and their dancing is approved of by the Lord. But do these passages really support and condone social dancing? Next time we'll look at these passages and face this question.

## GUEST ARTICLE

# The Wonder of Adoption (4)

Rev. Ronald Hanko

The final phase in the revelation of our adoption as God's children takes place in the judgment day. The adoption of sons which God has predestinated in His eternal counsel and prepared in Christ, and which we possess through the Spirit of adoption is perfected when at last we leave our earthly house of this tabernacle and receive from God a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (II Cor. 5:1). Then we see our heavenly Father face to face in the face of Jesus Christ and enjoy the blessings of Father's house forever.

Proof that the judgment day and the glory which we receive in the judgment day is part of our adop-

tion is found in Romans 8:23. There we read of our adoption as something for which we are still waiting. Romans 8:23, therefore, cannot refer to our adoption in Christ's blood, the legal foundation of our sonship, since that is something that God has already revealed. Nor is the application of adoption by the Spirit the subject here, for that is something which is even now being revealed. This passage must refer to the final glorious revelation of our sonship, and this is also abundantly evident from the context. But before we look at this passage in its context and at the other parallel passages of the Word of God we ought to see the unspeakable com-



fort that there is in this for God's people. Though all the terror of God is revealed in that last day, and though the heavens and the earth burn with fire, that day is a day of hope for everyone of the saints because then finally all the glory of our sonship shall be revealed to us.

The importance of this final revelation for God's saints is explained in I John 3:2. In verse 1 John celebrates the wonder of our adoption even as we now enjoy it: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." In verse 2 he emphasizes again that "Now are we the sons of God." Nevertheless, that is not the whole story of our adoption, for John adds that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." This final revelation is necessary, then, because our sonship does not yet "appear."

John does not mean by this that our sonship is completely hidden while we are in this life. In verse 1 he even speaks of the fact that the world does not know us. Rather John is reminding us that our likeness to Christ as God's children is still hidden. Then "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is"; but now that does not yet appear. Because of our sins and because we are still "of the earth earthy" it does not appear to the world around us that we are God's sons and daughters. They see very little of the glory of God and of eternal life in us and treat our hope as only an empty dream. Nor does the glory of our sonship appear very clearly to us. We also know our sonship but in part and see its glory "through a glass darkly" (I Cor. 13:12), nor have we received our inheritance, and the result is that we ourselves are often beset with doubts and fears and need to hear the reassuring word, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters" (II Cor. 6:17, 18). Only when our Lord returns shall we see face to face as Father and children and know even as also we are known. As John says, "When He appears we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Then the glory of God's house and of His Son shall not only be within us, hidden in our hearts, but then it shall radiate forth from our faces and be revealed in our resurrection bodies, for we shall be changed and shall have passed through death into life.

All of this is true because the work of the Spirit is not yet finished. And because the work of the Spirit is not yet finished we have not perfect fellowship with our heavenly Father, nor even the full assurance of sonship. Far from our Fatherland and from our Father we wait and hope and groan.

In order to understand exactly what this aspect of our adoption involves we must turn back to Romans 8 and to the different descriptions of our final adoption that the apostle Paul gives us there.

In verses 19-23 he speaks of this final revelation of our sonship in three different ways. In verse 19 he speaks of the "manifestation of the sons of God"; in verse 21 he uses the expression, "the glorious liberty of the children of God" which shall be ours when at last we are delivered from the bondage of corruption; and in verse 23 he identifies the adoption as being the same as "the redemption of our body." Each of these verses sheds glorious light upon the truth of which we are speaking.

When Paul mentions first of all "the manifestation of the sons of God," then he is describing the character of this final revelation. There is coming a time, Paul says, when all that is now hidden of our sonship shall be "manifested." Before the holy angels, before our own consciousness, and before all creatures God shall publicly declare and make known our sonship and shall claim us as His children. This manifestation of the sons of God is described in Matthew 25:34 in more detail. There the Lord Jesus describes the judgment day "when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him," when He shall "sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations" (verses 31, 32). This manifestation or showing forth of the sons of God takes place when the King shall say to those on His right hand, "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Then the inheritance of sons shall be ours forever and we shall enter into the fulness of the joy of our Lord.

The Roman Christians to whom Paul was writing understood this very well, for the Romans had a custom which they called "the showing forth of sons." After a man had adopted a son — a very common practice among the Romans — and after he had finished with the legal process of adoption, he would call all his friends to a feast at which a public declaration of his adopted son's status would be made and all would rejoice together over his good fortune. God also does this for His children, only for them the feast and the joy never end.

In verse 23 Paul tells us how this final manifestation of our sonship shall come to pass when he speaks of the "redemption of our bodies" as part of the adoption. Now we have only the firstfruits of the Spirit, then we shall have the full harvest of blessing which God has promised. That shall be ours through the redemption of our body. The word redemption here, as always, means purchase. Now we know that we have already been purchased body and soul, in life and death through the blood of Christ. How then can the apostle speak of our still awaiting the redemption of our body? We understand, then, that he is not speaking of the purchase itself but of the application of that purchase.



That is not yet finished. The whole man has been purchased, but only our hearts and souls have actually been delivered from the bondage of corruption as a result of that redemption. In the flesh we still serve the law of sin. Death still works in our bodies, and our bodies are still "vile." In the judgment day when the bodies of the saints are raised, changed, and glorified, then the price of Christ's blood shall have its final application and we shall enter with body and soul into our incorruptible inheritance. Then this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal shall have put on immortality and death shall be swallowed up in victory (I Cor. 15:53, 54).

Now our bodies are not fit for glory, for "corruption cannot inherit incorruption." Now our bodies are slow and unwilling instruments of our regenerated hearts, so that the good that we love we do not do and the evil that we hate, that we do. Then our bodies, raised in newness of life, shall be made fit and willing instruments for the service of God and for the showing forth of His everlasting glory.

In verse 20 Paul tells the wonder of that final manifestation when he speaks of the "glorious liberty of the children of God." That stands in contrast to the bondage of corruption in which we now live according to our old nature. When Christ returns we shall be made free of all corruption, free from the cause of our corruption which is sin, and free also from all the evil fruits of sin: from death, from tears, from fears and sorrow, and from all trouble. That is liberty indeed and glorious beyond what eye hath seen or ear heard. Then the freedom

which we taste now shall be our daily bread. That freedom shall be more glorious even than that which Adam enjoyed in Paradise. There he was free to serve God and love Him, but Adam's freedom depended on the choice of his own will and was lost. The freedom that we shall have in glory shall no longer be dependent on the choice of our own will, but on the will of God in Christ. No longer will there be even the possibility of sin or death, but we shall have liberty to serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of eternity.

The gloriousness of that liberty shall be the glory of fellowship with the ever blessed God. It shall be the glory of our renewal in the image of God and of dwelling in His temple, of freely walking the streets of the City and of eating of the tree of life. It shall be glorious liberty to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb before the throne in the company of all the saints. That liberty shall be so glorious that all creation shall participate in it when sun and moon have passed away.

It is for that we wait. Now we walk oftentimes with heavy step, for this life becomes a burden when we are still far from the house of our Father. And when we think of the glory that shall be revealed in us we groan within ourselves in the midst of all our cares, for we know that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord (II Cor. 5:6). Yet we also wait, and wait patiently, for we know that our Father will not forgive us; and while we wait we also labor that whether present or absent we may be accepted of Him (II Cor. 5:9).

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

Dear Brethren,

It is at the close of this another year of printing *The Standard Bearer* that we the board come to you to report on our activities of the past year. We must first express our thankfulness to our Covenant Father who has kept us through this past year and given us a year wherein we might once more witness of His glory by means of the printed page. We must never be ashamed of proclaiming, through the printed page, the glorious truth which has so graciously been given to us as Protestant Reformed Churches.

*The Standard Bearer* has now been printed for fifty-nine years and, the Lord willing, we go on into the sixtieth year of printing. A committee of the board has been busy looking into ways to commemorate this milestone.

This past year the board has spent some time looking into purchasing a new Address-O-Graph machine. Our old one is over forty years old and is not in very good condition any more. It is also rather expensive to repair when it does break down. New machines were looked at and found to be very expensive. *The Beacon Lights* informed us that we could have the Address-O-Graph they no longer use. It is now at Wobbema Printing Company ready to be used.

The board has also spent some time looking into a place to store all of our *Standard Bearer* material. For years we have used First Protestant Reformed Church, but now that the church is sold our place of free storage is gone. The day is soon approaching that all the material must be moved.

The board was approached by a committee from



one of our churches to see if there was a way in which they could use *The Standard Bearer* to inform others about the materials we as churches have to offer. This material consists of books, tapes, pamphlets, etc. The postal service will not allow us to put or staple any loose paper in our magazine, so we looked into a way of getting the last page of *The Standard Bearer* made so one could tear it out without ruining the rest of the magazine. We were informed by the printing company that this would be possible, but the cost of this project would add another third to the cost of printing each issue. We came to the conclusion that this idea was too expensive to take on.

Our business manager reports that we are now printing 1900 copies each printing, of which 775 copies go in and around the Grand Rapids area, 753 copies go to the rest of the state and all the other states combined, and 150 copies go to foreign countries. *The Standard Bearer* itself keeps 150 copies to be used in the yearly bound volumes. Our manager also reports that there are 20 new subscriptions being sent to Northern Ireland this year.

While we are reporting on our business manager we would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Vander Wal for his faithful service. He has now been the business manager of *The Standard Bearer* for fifteen years. We as board and subscribers do

not see the work that this brother does. He gives hours every day and many more hours when it is mailing time to the cause of this printed page. It is our prayer that God will continue to care for this brother and, if it be His will, to give him strength to continue his labors.

We also thank our Editor-in-Chief, Prof. Hoeksema, for his diligent labors and thought-provoking editorials in each issue, and our ministers who prepare articles for our magazine. We thank our God for giving us the truth in His Word and also for servants who are faithful to proclaim that truth.

The members of the board who retire this year are Mr. Arnold Haveman and Mr. George DeVries. Mr. Bill Lafferty would be retiring this year also, but for reasons of health he resigned earlier. We are grateful to these men for their years of labors, and our prayer is that God will continue to watch over them.

We as board ask that you as individuals and as churches continue to remember the cause of *The Standard Bearer* and continue to support it in the year ahead as you have so kindly done in the year gone by. May we as children of God of the church militant never take this great privilege for granted.

With you in Christ,

James Koole, Sec'y.

## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

# Our Order of Worship

Prof. H. Hanko

When we consider what elements belong to the order of worship in our worship services, and the place in the order of worship which each element ought to occupy, it is important that our decision on these matters be made on a sound basis and not in a willy-nilly fashion. To make proper decisions requires that we understand the true idea of worship.

We began a consideration of this in our last article and were considering the instruction which the Lord gives to the Samaritan woman in John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

Jesus was answering the question of the Samaritan woman: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus told her that, as far as the question itself was concerned, the Jews

were right; Jerusalem was the place. But this was only true in the Old Testament. When the New Testament would come with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, this question would be irrelevant, because, "the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

But this worship of God which characterizes the people of God in the New Testament is determined by the nature of God Himself: "God is a Spirit . . ."

The reference here is not to the third person of the Trinity. That is, Jesus is not speaking of the truth that God works His works through the Spirit — as true as that may be. Rather, Jesus is referring to an attribute of God's essence. God, the triune God, is spiritual. His essence is spiritual.



That God is spiritual in essence means, first of all, that God is not like this earthly and material creation which He has created and which we can touch, see, taste, handle, and examine. That which is spiritual cannot be weighed, measured, and studied with earthly senses. But the spirituality of God's essence does not mean either that God is like the angels. The angels, and the whole heavenly creation, are also spiritual. Hebrews 1:14 calls the angels ministering spirits; and they are spiritual in character in distinction from this material world in which we live. But God is not like that either. He is the transcendent God, high and lifted up above *all* His creation, the Wholly Other. God is pure spirit in His essence.

We cannot say very much about this, however, for this is a truth which defies comprehension. We cannot know the transcendent being of God. But this truth does mean that God is the absolutely invisible One Who dwells in a light unto which no one can approach. He is infinitely exalted, infinitely glorious, God alone, Who can be known only when He reveals Himself.

It is this truth which determines the nature and character of our worship. In the Old Testament, God was worshipped in a visible and material way. This was necessary because Israel could not yet come into the very presence of God in the tabernacle and temple. Worship was bound up with external forms: the priesthood, the sacrifices, the ark, the candlestick, the altar of burnt offering, etc. But with the coming of Christ, all this changed. Christ opened the way into the inner sanctuary of heaven itself. He went there as our Head and Advocate. And He pours His Spirit upon His church so that by the work of that Spirit, His people may be drawn to Him, and through Him to God in the highest sanctuary of God's dwelling place. So worship in outward forms is no longer acceptable; it must be worship "in spirit and in truth."

To worship God in spirit, evidently does not mean that we worship God by the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. This is, of course, in itself true. We cannot worship at all except we have the Spirit of Christ Who unites us to Christ, makes us one with Christ's body, and works in us the spiritual power to worship God as He commands in His Word. But that is not the meaning here. Evidently, Jesus means that our worship must be *spiritual* worship; we must worship God in a spiritual way. We must not worship God with outward forms, but spiritually. That is, we must worship God in such a way that we consciously enter into God's presence, consciously enjoy fellowship and communion with Him, consciously enter into conversation with Him. We must worship God with our hearts and minds and wills and emotions.

To worship God "in truth" means that our worship must always be an expression and confession of the truth as God has revealed it in His holy Word. God has revealed Himself in the Scriptures; this is the truth, the truth of God. Hence our worship must really be a recitation of what the Scriptures say. The Scriptures tell us that God is the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ, and that He alone is worthy of all praise and glory. We are not worthy to come before Him because of our sins, and we can come into His presence only because He comes to us and takes us to Himself through Jesus Christ and by His great grace. This must be the focal point of all worship — a confession of that great truth. Then worship is truly "in truth."

This has some important implications.

Our worship of God must never be external. This was already true in the Old Testament, although then the worship of God was bound up in external ceremonies. We know how often God castigated His people for worshipping Him outwardly while their hearts were far from Him. But this becomes even more true in the New Testament. It is very easy to come to church out of custom and habit, to go through the outward forms of worship while our minds and hearts are far from what we are doing. We sing mere words without any thought of what we sing. Our minds wander during prayer. Our thoughts are elsewhere while the minister preaches. All the motions are there, but there is no worship.

We sometimes think that this spiritual ailment can be corrected by alterations in the liturgy. And so many today make fundamental changes, in the hopes that worship will become more "meaningful." But this is sadly wrong and the spiritual weakness which pervades our lives is not corrected so simply. The fault lies with us, and only deep changes in our own spiritual lives will make worship "in spirit and in truth." In fact, generally speaking, a well-known order of worship following the "old paths" is the most conducive to worship. Years ago I attended a Lutheran worship service which was filled with extensive liturgy: the minister went through countless liturgical motions — bowing, kneeling, turning around, crossing himself, and waving his arms; the people engaged in all sorts of responsive readings and congregational responses; the liturgy was complex and involved. But I could not *worship*. I had to concentrate so much on what was happening, what came next, what one was supposed to be doing, that there was no room for thoughts of God. To feel comfortable and at ease, to be at home in the liturgy, to follow well-worn paths — this is conducive to worship. Then one can concentrate on what is being said or sung or prayed. Then one can worship in spirit and



in truth.

Thus, in worship, God's speech is first and decisive. Worship is to enter into conscious covenant fellowship with God. God speaks to us and we speak to Him. But His speech is first. It is central and all-important. His speech creates our speech through the Spirit of Christ. He speaks through the vatum, through the benedictions, through the Word preached. And this creates our speech in our singing, our prayers, and our confession. We respond. He says, Seek ye My face. And our hearts say, Thy face, Lord, will we seek.

This involves the activity of our whole nature. The whole man must be caught up in worship. Even our bodies become a part of the means whereby we worship God. Not only do we see with our eyes and hear with our ears, but it is impossible truly to worship while slumped down in our seats with our knees propped up against the pew ahead of us. We sometimes sit in the presence of God in ways which would be insulting in the presence of our friends. And such posture is not conducive to worship.

But we also worship with our thoughts and desires. Our minds must be active and involved continuously in worship. It seems as if the attention span of people is very small nowadays. Perhaps this is due to the fact that people do not think very much any more. They are fed steady diets of television and pictures. And they do not learn to think through things. But we can concentrate on something, especially if it is a bit difficult, only for two

or three minutes; then our minds wander here and there. Worship is then hard work, requiring constant attention and deep concentration. But the same is true of our wills. We worship only when our hearts pant for God as a hart pants for water brooks; when we *want* the things of God — far more than the things of this present world; when we set our affections on things which are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

But even the emotions are involved in worship. This is really unavoidable, but is also important and necessary. We are humbled by the preaching when we see our sins, and our hearts cry out in sorrow for sin before God. We are filled with joy at the truths of salvation in Christ Who has redeemed us when the glorious truths of salvation are brought to our attention and applied to our hearts. We are overcome with the love of God Who has dealt so wonderfully with us. We are made conscious of our own nothingness and the greatness of the God Whom we love and serve. Worship is and ought to be profoundly emotional.

When we are caught up in worship in this way, then we worship as Christ commands us. All this requires a spiritual attitude throughout and intense concentration. It is hard work to worship, and he who goes to church to relax and be at ease will not and cannot worship. All the liturgy in the world will never change this.

But in worship is blessedness, for we enter into the full consciousness of fellowship with God.

## Book Reviews

**PRACTICAL TRUTHS FROM THE PASTORAL EPISTLES**, by Eugene Stock; Kregel Publications, 1983; 342 pp., \$12.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This is not a recent book; Eugene Stock lived from 1836-1928 in England where this book was first published.

It is not exactly a commentary on the pastoral epistles, but treats the three of them under several major topics: General Introduction, Doctrinal Teaching, False Teaching, Ethical Teaching, Conclusion. While somewhat brief, it is, in many ways an excellent little book and gives a thorough survey of the teachings of these important, though often neglected, epistles of Paul. One outstanding feature of the book is its careful analysis of the many important Greek words found in the epistle,

and many interesting insights into these words enrich the understanding of the letters. At the same time, these Greek words and their treatment do not make the book less valuable for the reader who has no acquaintance with this language. They are all transliterated and discussed in connection with their translation either in the AV or the RV. The Greek itself, though sparingly used, is relegated to footnotes. The author himself speaks of the fact that he wants the book to be of value to anyone of God's people who wishes to learn more of the epistle, and he succeeds.

There are certainly interpretations with which one will disagree—e.g., he believes that the epistles teach the need for deaconesses and he is less than sharp on the so-called "universalistic passages" in these writings. But, in general, we recommend the



book as a worthwhile addition to a Christian's library.

The value of the book could have been considerably enhanced by the addition of a textual index, because it does not treat the material by proceeding verse by verse through the books.

**THE AUTHORITATIVE WORD**, *Essays On The Nature of Scripture*; edited by Donald K. McKim; Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1983; 270 pp., \$10.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

The debate over inspiration, infallibility, and the authority of Scripture goes on. Donald McKim has brought these essays together as a kind of summary of what is called in the blurb, "a well-conceived middle position in the biblical authority debate." It is, in fact, a fierce attack against the position of those who hold to an infallibly inspired Bible and a summary of what has become the position of neo-evangelicalism.

The book is divided into three sections: Sources and Canon; Doctrine and Its Development; Current Views. The authors include such men as Paul Achtemeier, F. F. Bruce, Donald G. Miller, Donald G. Bloesch, G. C. Berkouwer, H. N. Ridderbos, Jack B. Rogers, and Avery Dulles.

We cannot review in detail a book of such diverse authorship and content, but a few summary remarks will perhaps give the reader some idea of what the book is all about.

Chapter 1, explicitly denying inerrancy, shows how traditions were altered to fit different purposes by the biblical authors. Chapter 3 sets out to prove that Paul's writings were controlled by rabbinic forms of exegesis. Chapter 4 claims that New Testament writers used the Old Testament in a way which did violence to the real meaning of the text, i.e., used the Old Testament for their own purposes. Chapter 8 speaks of the Bible as culturally and historically conditioned:

We must also bear in mind that the prophets and apostles were men of their times though the message that they attested transcended their age and every age. The enlightened biblical Christian will not shrink from asserting that there are culturally conditioned ideas as well as historically conditioned language in the Bible (p. 134).

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 10, 1983, our parents, MR. & MRS. GERALD DE VRIES celebrated their 25th Wedding Anniversary. We, their children, give thanks to God for the years they have had together and pray He will be with them in the years to come.

"But Thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever; and Thy remembrance unto all generations." (Psalm 102:12)

Carol De Vries  
David De Vries

The doctrine or message of Scripture, which alone is infallible and inerrant, is hidden in the historical and cultural witness of the biblical writers (p. 135).

For this reason Scripture is not the infallibly inspired and written record of God's revelation, but it is "a witness to divine revelation, a witness that points beyond itself to a supernatural reality" (p. 143, underscoring is ours).

In Chapter 11 the whole history of dogma to the present, including the development of the doctrine of Scripture, is interpreted in terms of a swinging of the theological pendulum between Platonism and Aristotelianism. This interpretation quite easily gives the opportunity to level some bitter attacks against the inerrantist position.

In defending literary and historical criticism, the book reduces all truth to relative statements which were appropriate and fitting at certain times—and therefore, valuable, but which have to be changed as times and circumstances change.

There are no absolutes in time. From the beginning to the end of time all is time-conditioned (p. 233).

It comes perilously close to denying the divinity of Christ:

(Jesus) can be understood adequately only when His words and actions are observed in their Jewish setting. But that in no way contradicts the Christian faith in Him as uniquely one with God or the reality of the divine action in Him for humanity's redemption (p. 233).

Arius would have had no disagreement with that description of Christ.

In this same pattern, the book defends the deuter-Isaiah position and the old (and discredited) documentary theory of the Pentateuch (p. 236).

So we cannot recommend the book as an important and worthwhile contribution to the debate over inerrancy; it is the opposite. But we can and do recommend the book as a summary of current neo-orthodox views on this question, something which all of us ought to know.

### NOTICE!!!

#### REFORMATION DAY RALLY

Topic: "The Reformation: A Battle For The Bible"  
Speaker: Rev. Ron Cammenga  
Date: Mon., Oct. 31, 1983, 8:00 P.M.  
Place: Hull Protestant Reformed Church  
1204 Third St., Hull, Iowa

THE PUBLIC IS CORDIALLY INVITED!!!



# Report of Classis West

September 19, 1983

The long Classis of Edgerton, Minnesota, having convened on Wednesday morning, September 7, finally adjourned, about 9:00 P.M., on Saturday evening, September 10. Much of the work of the Classis was done in closed session.

Rev. J. Slopsema led Classis in opening devotions, addressing Classis from I Peter 4:8: "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." Rev. J. Smith presided over the Classis. Elders T. Hugg (Houston) and F. Van Baren (Loveland) were present as delegates for the first time and signed the Formula of Subscription.

The Reading Sermon Committee (Edgerton Consistory) reported a shortage of reading sermons. It asked the ministers of Classis West to prepare more sermons; and it asked the Consistories to return the sermons that they have used.

Classis upheld a former decision, that the removing of a man's name from public nomination for office by a Consistory is subject to protest and appeal, against the protest of this decision by a Consistory.

Classis treated the appeal of a brother against his Consistory concerning the Consistory's reception of a member who works on the Sabbath as a policeman. Classis upheld the Consistory, declaring that

"because police work is a work of present necessity, it is a work in which the child of God is permitted to be engaged, if this work does not occasion the neglect of the means of grace on the Sabbath Day."

Classis responded to two requests from Consistories under the questions of Article 41 of the Church Order.

Classis will meet next in Loveland, Colorado on March 7, 1984, the Lord willing.

—Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk  
Classis West

## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 16, 1983, the Lord willing, our parents and grandparents, MR. & MRS. GORDON TERPSTRA will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. In remembrance of that day we give thanks to God for His Providential care over them and us and for His infinite goodness in providing us with instruction in the fear and love of Jehovah through them. It is also our prayer that God will bless them and keep them in His care.

"Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in His commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed." (Psalm 112:1, 2)

Dave and Sue Looyenga  
Lisabeth, Brendan, Brianna  
Tom and Luanne Schipper  
Jason, Dirk, Nicole  
Chuck and Verna Terpstra  
Corey, Amber, Kimberly  
Todd Terpstra  
Jeff Terpstra

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