

THE STANDARD BEARER

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

Also in this new year we can expect the attacks of the powers of darkness. We and our children will be tempted in thousands of different ways this year to forsake the Lord our God and to walk in darkness. These temptations will be very deceptive and powerful.

And so we must fight. We must fight to overcome the alluring temptations of the world. We must fight to remain faithful to the Lord our God. We must fight to keep our feet on the path of righteousness, which alone will lead us to Canaan's shores.

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Meditation

James D. Slopsema

God's Wisdom In Leading His Church

James D. Slopsema is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.

And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:

But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea . . .

Exodus 13:17, 18a

The Lord had devastated the land of Egypt with ten terrible plagues. Finally the hard-hearted Pharaoh was compelled to release God's people from their slavery.

God was very careful, however, as He led the church to the land of promise. He did not lead Israel along the most direct route

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to Canaan. That would have ended in disaster. God led His people rather in a most indirect, roundabout way that would take years to travel. But this was necessary to ensure Israel's possession of the land of promise.

How utterly foolish and unnecessary this must all have appeared to Israel. Yet, how infinitely wise is the Lord our God.

God is still leading His church to Canaan. And He still is leading her in a most indirect, roundabout way that often appears unnecessary and even, perhaps, somewhat foolish. Were we in the lead, we would, no doubt, take the most direct path. But then we would never reach Canaan's shores.

How thankful we can be that God in His wisdom is leading us.

And He will be leading us in this new year.

He will be leading us in His wisdom to Canaan.

* * * * *

Israel had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years.

But God had not forgotten His covenant with Abraham. He had promised to Abraham and his seed the land of Canaan. In faithfulness to His covenant God had delivered Israel from their slavery. And now He was bringing Israel to the promised land where He would live with them and shower them with all His covenant blessings.

This is a picture of the work of God in every age.

Both Abraham and Israel understood full well that the earthly Canaan which God promised them was not the final fulfillment of God's covenant promises. The earthly Canaan was only a picture of the heavenly Canaan, where Abraham and his seed would one day dwell with God in the perfection of His covenant. And the true spiritual seed in Israel looked in hope for this better Canaan.

To that higher, heavenly Canaan God leads all those who are the true seed of Abraham.

The true seed of the covenant are the elect of every age. In the Old Testament this seed was found almost exclusively among the natural descendants of Abraham. In the New Testament this seed is found in every tribe, tongue, and nation under heaven. They can be identified by the faith God has given them in Jesus Christ.

To the heavenly Canaan God leads all the true seed of the covenant. Our present life as believers is really a spiritual journey. We have been delivered from the spiritual slavery of sin. God is leading us to Canaan. Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan was merely a type and picture of this higher, spiritual journey.

To the heavenly Canaan the Lord our God will also be leading us in this new year.

* * * * *

To enter into Canaan, God's covenant people must fight and overcome their enemies.

This certainly was true with respect to the people of Israel in the Old Testament. The land of promise was inhabited by the Canaanites. For Israel to possess the land required that the Canaanites be destroyed in battle. Yes, God would lead Israel in battle and would give them the victory; for He had promised them the land of Canaan. But to gain the land, Israel must fight and overcome.

In like manner the church of every age can enter into the heavenly Canaan only after she has fought and overcome the enemy.

The great enemy of the church is the power of darkness, the devil and his host along with the

world of the ungodly. They do not possess the heavenly Canaan as the Canaanites did the earthly Canaan in the Old Testament. Yet they do stand over against us and oppose us as we travel to Canaan. They seek to lead us far away from God, far into the paths of sin so that we never reach the heavenly Canaan.

Also in this new year we can expect the attacks of the powers of darkness. We and our children will be tempted in thousands of different ways this year to forsake the Lord our God and to walk in darkness. These temptations will be very deceptive and powerful.

As so we must fight. We must fight to overcome the alluring temptations of the world. We must fight to remain faithful to the Lord our God. We must fight to keep our feet on the path of righteousness, which alone will lead us to Canaan's shores.

We must fight again also in this new year, even as we have fought in years gone by.

* * * * *

As God's people face their enemies on the way to Canaan, the victory is assured.

Certainly Israel's victory over the Canaanites was assured.

Israel, of course, could not overcome the Canaanites in her own strength. She had been a slave nation for the past 400 years. She had no military strength of her own.

Israel could overcome her enemies only in the strength of the Lord. The Lord must lead her into battle. The Lord must equip and strengthen her. The Lord must destroy the enemy with His great wonders of grace.

And this is what the Lord had promised Israel. Had He not for the sake of Israel just destroyed the world power of the day with ten terrible plagues?

Victory over the enemy, therefore, was a matter of faith. All

Israel had to do was to cling by faith to the Lord's promise of victory. By faith in God's promise she would have the courage to engage the enemy in battle. By faith in God she would be strengthened to fight valiantly. By faith she would overcome.

In like manner is the victory also ours over the powers of darkness.

Our victory over the devil and his hosts is assured in Jesus Christ. Jesus has secured our inheritance in the heavenly Canaan through His suffering and death at the cross. And He has also promised to lead us to our inheritance, in the power of the cross. The powers of darkness may strive to keep denying us what is ours in Jesus Christ. But Christ will lead us in battle against our foes. He will preserve us in the face of every temptation. He will lead us in the way of righteousness.

Victory over our spiritual enemies therefore is merely a matter of faith. Clinging to Jesus Christ by faith we receive the power of the cross to triumph over our enemies. By faith in Jesus Christ we go from victory to victory. We need not fear the battle before us. All is safe and secure in Jesus.

Also in this new year we can expect to march from victory to victory by faith in our Lord.

* * * * *

God led Israel to Canaan the roundabout way.

The shortest way to Canaan was in a northeasterly direction from Egypt through the land of the Philistines. This was about a hundred-mile journey that would have brought Israel to the borders of Canaan in a matter of weeks. But God led Israel in a southeasterly direction through the wilderness of the Red Sea, requiring Israel to cross the Red

Sea and travel through the terrible wilderness of Sinai.

God did this "lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt."

Had the Lord led Israel to Canaan on the most direct route, Israel would most certainly have had to defend herself against the Philistines.

But Israel's faith was not strong enough at this time to confront and overcome the Philistines.

The Philistines were a very warlike people. Even the great power of Egypt had not been able to bring the Philistines under control. Should Israel face the warlike Philistines at this time in her history, she would have in weakness of faith cowered in fear. She would have changed her mind about entering Canaan and would have fled back to Egypt to her slavery.

And so the Lord led Israel the roundabout way through the great wilderness. In the wilderness He would place Israel in situations that would not overcome her in her weakness of faith. Through many trials and afflictions and over many years, He would slowly strengthen her in her faith, so that eventually she could face the inhabitants of the land of Canaan and overcome them in the Lord.

In like manner does the Lord also lead us.

Our faith is not strong enough to withstand every trial and temptation. There are certain situations and circumstances that are too great for us, and would overwhelm us. There are battles for which we are not yet ready, which at this point would mean horrible defeat.

And so the Lord is very careful as He leads us to the heavenly Canaan.

His providential leading may at times puzzle us. Were we in charge of the course of our life, our wisdom would often dictate another direction.

However, the Lord is leading us with a wisdom that is infinitely greater than ours. In His great wisdom He controls the course and circumstances of our life so that we are never overcome by the enemy. He brings us again and again into battle with the powers of darkness. We are tempted on every hand. But the Lord will never allow us to be tempted above what we are able. In all the temptations of life, God always provide a way of escape. Also, through the trials and temptations into which the Lord leads us now, He is strengthening our faith for greater battles to come.

But always God is leading us infallibly to the heavenly Canaan where His covenant with us and all of Abraham's seed will be perfected.

In this way He will also lead us again in this new year!

Let us commit our way unto the Lord! □

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

Editor's Notes

Standard Bearer Recordings. If I remember correctly, this has been mentioned in our News column some time ago. However, recently I had occasion to follow up on it and to obtain further information. The Evangelism Society of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church makes available cassette recordings of *The Standard Bearer* for the blind and those who have poor eyesight. These recordings are free, and no postage is necessary. If you are among those who could benefit from this service, send your request to: Mr. Ken Rietema, P.O. Box 8343, Grand Rapids, MI 49508. Or telephone: 616/455-2791.

* * * * *

Children's Treasures. The Hope Male Quartet (Hope P.R.C. of Walker, Michigan) has filled a need expressed by more than one family for a cassette recording of good children's songs. The quartet (Messrs. John N. Dykstra, Gerald Kuiper, Mike Lotterman, and Roger King, with Bonnie Kuiper at the organ) sings a well-chosen series of children's songs. This is a quality tape, with the words so plainly enunciated that your children can readily sing along with the recordings. The recording includes some songs for little children, some hymns, and some psalms. It can be obtained for \$5.00 from Reformed Book Outlet, 3505 Kelly, Hudsonville, MI 49426. □

HCH

From Holy Writ
George C. Lubbers

Exegetical Sketches on Micah 6:1-8 (1)

*George C. Lubbers is a minister emeritus
in the Protestant Reformed Churches.*

This portion of the prophecy is very "profitable for reproof, for doctrine, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work!" For it is indeed a part of the sacred Scripture,

which is given by inspiration of God. The prophet Micah belongs to the holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Indeed, it is the more sure word of prophecy whereunto we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shines

in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts (II Tim. 3:16, 17; II Pet. 1:19-21).

We do well to keep this in mind as our guiding star.

We must be as the scribe, who, instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is as a householder, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old (Matt. 13:52).

Our purpose in writing these exegetical studies is to avoid a lengthy series. These studies, which I prepare for publication, no longer appear in semi-monthly installments so that they can be followed with any degree of reading continuity. Hence, our concerted effort to write short series of articles.

This series is composed of four installments.

* * * * *

Let us notice the verses 1 and 2 of Micah 6. We read, "Hear ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel."

Let us also give heed to these words of Jehovah. These are words which are already echoed in Micah 1:2-5. Please read these verses from your own Bibles.

We should notice the following elements in these verses.

1. That the prophet speaks here about the LORD and his words as being the mouth-piece of God. He is truly a prophet. He is, as it were, the official in the court of God, summoning Israel to have their day in court with the Lord. And we should notice that Israel cannot fail to heed this summons with impunity. To do so will be accounted contempt of court, disobedience to the Most High God. We should observe that the arena of the Lord's court

is such that all creation is called to stand at attention and to witness. Yea, the very mountains and hills must take heed; they must hear the LORD'S controversy with his people, Israel!

2. We should also observe carefully that in "controversy" it is not Israel that pleads her cause and case in court, but that it is the LORD, who comes down from his place, who comes and treads the high places of the earth. This case in court really is the question: whether the LORD'S righteousness is based on Israel's works of merit, or whether God's righteousness is solely sovereign love and grace to Israel. This will become evident in the verses 3-5 of this Chapter.

* * * * *

We read here:

"O my people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee?" (verse 3).

What a challenging question we hear in this verse from the mouth of the LORD! However, it is also a very loving and endearing question, which is rooted in the fact that God loved Jacob. Do we not read in Deuteronomy 10:15, 16: "Only the LORD had delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart and be no more stiff-necked".

What has the LORD done to Israel which was not purely saving and forgiving love? Come, now, Israel, for it is the golden opportunity to testify, that is, to marshal all your evidences against the LORD! Step forward, be very truthful, and mention just one deed of God in all of Israel's history, which will indicate that God gives reason for us to be

weary of his doings. Wherein has the LORD proved Himself unfaithful to His promises? Was the word of God ever such that he spoke and that he did not perform it? Is God a man that He should lie? Should we consider it unfair of God to thus confront Israel and/or us, too? Verily, here every mouth is stopped. All Israel stands guilty and speechless before a righteous and just God!

The LORD gives His bill of particulars. Listen to what he says in verse 4, "For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants: and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."

This is the first point in the LORD'S controversy. There are two kinds of people in Israel in all ages. There are those who tremble at God's word, and there are those who harden their hearts. Those who tremble at God's word, humble themselves before God and joyfully confess that He has never "wearied" them at all. They remember the Scriptures, which warn us as sons never to weary of the LORD'S fatherly chastisements (Prov. 3:11; Heb. 12:5-13). There is nothing in all of the thoughts of God's heart which is not for our peace and for our eternal salvation.

Let us look at the record as God relates it.

Notice three things which God enumerates in his court.

First, God relates his great historic act of love to Israel. Israel possessed a great promise of God as recorded in Genesis 15:13, 14. This word of promise was that He would deliver Israel after four hundred years of bondage as strangers and pilgrims in the land of Egypt. It was emphatically in Egypt that God loved Israel with a great and redeeming love. He was rich in mercy when he heard the groan-

ing of His people in the hot brick kiln. We read, "And God looked upon the children of Israel and had respect unto them." Yes, He knew them in loving and faithful fatherly care. He remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

God's loving care stands up in court. Let all the hills and mountains give heed. Where are these accusers now who had the anxious question: hath God forgotten to be kind? To be sure, the unbelieving Israel never ceased to murmur, even from the day that God sent Moses to them as their deliverer and leader. But let God be true and every man a liar. The true Israel of God confess in their darkest hour with Malachi 3:6 "it is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed. Jeremiah sings in his deepest grief over Jerusalem "... great is thy faithfulness, the LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him" (Lam. 3:24).

Secondly, He points out in His controversy with His people His great work of salvation. We read in verse 4, "I redeemed thee out of the house of servants."

In this act of delivering Israel out of the house of servants, God proved Himself to be their *Goel*. It is true the verb here in verse 4 for "redeemer" is not the term *Goel*, yet it is a Hebrew term which also refers to the redemption of Israel by God's gracious, powerful, and saving hand. We have but to read the Hebrew text in Psalms 25:22; 26:11; 31:5; 49:7 and several other passages, that this redemption refers to the LORD'S bringing forth of Israel because He saw the blood of the slain sacrifice on the doorposts of Israel's houses.

God never wants his people to forget this great salvation under the blood of the passover Lamb!

Without this great merciful salvation the Decalogue petrifies into a mere legal code. However, now the ten precepts of the law breathe redemptive mercy. Small wonder that, when the very essence of Israel's relation to God is a question in court, God rehearses the truth of the great covenant of grace. Here we have the confession pressed from our hearts and lips, "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Israel, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old" (Micah 7:20).

The book of Micah does not end with the solemn word "Amen". However, in effect the prophet here swears by the God of Abraham and his seed! And this God is "Amen" in Jesus Christ.

Finally, we must not forget the important reminder in this controversy of God with his people, that He adds, "And I sent before thee Moses, Aaron and Miriam" (Verse 4b.)

This brief reminder shews that outstretched arms of the LORD over Israel in sending them these two brothers and their sister as ministers for joy and safety. Through the service of these earthen vessels, God shewed that the excellency of the power and salvation was only of the LORD. Not one Israelite could base his hope and trust on the arm of flesh, but only on God's mighty outstretched arm over them, using weakest means to fulfill his purpose! Thus was the glory of the Lord enhanced.

First of all, a word about Moses, the man of God. Surely, he was no common prophet. Of him the sacred record has, in Deuteronomy 34:10-12 an epitaph on his unknown grave, "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel, who the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of

Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all the mighty hand, and in the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel."

Indeed Moses is worthy of special mention in court.

Great also was Aaron, who served as Moses prophet. He later bore the breast-plate, and he entered into the most holy place once each year, not without blood. And his priesthood, called the priesthood after the order of Aaron, served till the high priest, the king-priest after the order of Melchizedek came in Jesus.

Two great servants in the annals of Israel, buried outside of the land of Canaan on mount Hor and Nebo respectively. These were not to be forgotten as God's loving protectors of Israel, and who pronounced the blessing of God upon Israel "... the Lord make his face to shine upon thee and give thee peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

And then, never to be forgotten, Miriam. Yes, she sinned, she became a smitten leper. But she was cleansed. From her sanctified lips we hear the refrain. "The horse and his rider hath he cast, drowned in the sea." Having died, she, too, yet speaks.

A worthy threefold servant of the Most High.

This is God's faithfulness. □

The Day of Shadows

John A. Heys

Assurance For A Virtuous Woman

The first time that Ruth met Boaz she made a striking and significant confession. Boaz had told her not to glean in another field of some other Israelite; that he had charged his young men not to touch her; and that she might drink of the water which his servants had drawn for themselves. Then Ruth not only confessed that she was a stranger unto him but also that she was "not like unto one of thy handmaidens." Doing this she confessed being a Moabitess and a stranger in that sense. In other words she confessed being an outsider, a foreigner as far as her flesh was concerned. Doing this she was in no way boasting, but

instead was making a very humble confession. She said that she was less than the Jewish women who were also reaping that which the gleaners had dropped. She did not then hesitate to tell Boaz that she was not an Israelite according to her flesh. She did this because it simply amazed her that he had dealt so favourably with her. And this humble confession was also an expression of thankfulness. For to thank one is to say that this one has done a good deed. An Israelite had dealt well with her, even though she was a Moabitess.

Many days later, through the instruction of Naomi, she approaches this Boaz and asks him to marry her. What a change! She had thanked him for a rich measure of blessings, and had told him that she did not deserve such kind treatment. She was a very honest woman. And now this same woman comes and asks for a tremendously great blessing. To use the words of Naomi, it was to bring her rest and cause all things to be well with her. She came to propose to him that he take her as his wife. She reminds him of the fact that he is a near kinsman who can redeem the land of Elimelech for Naomi, and for her as the former wife of Mahlon.

Although there is nothing in the whole book of Ruth that reveals that she had fallen in

love with Boaz — although it may be conceded that such a thing was not at all impossible — yet there is nothing that undeniably speaks of such a fleshly love for this older, very rich man, who had befriended her so much. Naomi had to tell her to wash herself, anoint herself with a sweet-smelling perfume, and put on her most attractive raiment, and go to Boaz that way. She did not do this because her heart called for it. She did not ask Naomi whether it was wise to do so and whether she might go to him that way. The idea of it came from Naomi.

This does not mean that Ruth was not elated at the thought that she could again be married, and now married to this kind man. The idea of having a husband, bringing forth a child who could inherit the heritage of Elimelech, did not go against her flesh. And Naomi must have told her of the ordinance of God that a kinsman should marry a widow and strive to raise up seed. It is not impossible that Naomi even told the story of Genesis 38, how God killed Onan because he refused to take Tamar as his wife and raise up seed for his brother, who had died and left Tamar as a widow. Naomi had told Ruth, when she had informed her mother-in-law that it was Boaz who dealt so kindly with her and gave her such an abundance of

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food, that Boaz was near of kin. And Ruth certainly had a soft spot in her heart for him. She had very pleasant thoughts concerning him. She would surely consider it a blessing to have a man like that as her husband, if he would fulfill her request that Naomi gave her to present to him. She certainly had no objection to the thought of being his wife. To no degree and in no way did she present before Naomi any dislike of the idea. She did not speak one word of objection, or with her face manifest dislike of the idea. In fact Scripture tells us that to Naomi she said, "All that thou sayest unto me I will do." And that word *all* says a great deal. The rest and well-being of which Naomi spoke pleased her, and seemed very wonderful and valuable.

Then we read, "And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother-in-law bade her." Note once again the word *all*. It is also interesting to read that all this is what her mother-in-law bade her. It all originated with Naomi. And what an obedient daughter-in-law this was! She was according to the flesh, and therefore outwardly, a Moabitess. But inwardly and according to her soul she was a Jewess in the spiritual sense of the word. She was a true child of God who loved God and showed this by keeping His fifth commandment. She honoured her father and mother. She honoured her mother-in-law by doing her bidding. She honoured her father-in-law, though he were dead, by seeking to keep his name in the promised land, by bringing forth seed that would inherit his land.

There are several questions however, that do arise. Why must she go in the darkness of the night? Would she not by that sweet smelling ointment and

those dress garments in place of her working clothes expose herself more clearly and quickly than in those working clothes wherein she and others had been seen so many days before this time? Was this something immoral that Naomi ordered her to perform? Was it not deceitful to wait until he had drunk and eaten and his heart was merry before proposing to him? Was it because Naomi knew of this nearer of kin, and wanted the new husband to be Boaz?

As far as the immoral act is concerned, we may state that this was not a sinful act of violating the seventh commandment that Naomi ordered Ruth to commit. Widows in that day had a God-given right to ask the nearest of kin to marry them and raise up seed for their husbands who died. That incident in Genesis 38, to which we already referred, indicates clearly that God demanded it. If that nearest of kin did not do what was his calling, the widow might certainly approach him, remind him of it, and ask him to keep that ordinance of God, even reminding him of what happened to Onan.

Because Ruth was not a Jew outwardly, there could be strong opposition by those in that region who snubbed Ruth and left her and Naomi to go hungry, and avoided them. They could approach Boaz and remind him of God's law that no Israelite might marry a Moabite. Not seeing Ruth as a Jew inwardly (Romans 2:28, 29) they, who were only Jews outwardly, would do all that they could to prevent this marriage and brand it as evil. Ruth would be presented to Boaz as a whore, and one after his money. Boaz had his reason also for telling Ruth to leave before the sun arose, so that this would not happen, and it be reported that a woman came into the threshingfloor. This was especial-

ly a serious matter because Boaz was not the nearest of kin.

Boaz had a very good opinion of Ruth. In his eyes she was no sexual pervert. He said to her, "Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter, for thou hast showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followest not young men, whether poor or rich." He did not to the slightest degree accuse her of immorality. In the next verse he even calls her a virtuous woman.

That Boaz called her his daughter could indicate a great age difference between them. But the Hebrew word here is often used and translated as young woman. Besides, Ruth had reminded him that he was near of kin, a blood relative to her dead husband. Therefore to call her daughter, that is, a relative, was not out of place. And here again, calling her his daughter clearly reveals that Boaz was not at all ashamed at what she had done there in the threshingfloor, lying down next to him, removing the covering over his feet, and asking him to spread his skirt over her. Informing Ruth of one closer to her husband reveals that Boaz is not surprised that she came to him to request marriage and the raising up of seed for Mahlon and Elimelech. He is quite aware of the fact that Ruth was ignorant of this nearer kinsman. And there is nothing to indicate that Boaz knew that Naomi had ordered Ruth to do all this. No, she was a virtuous woman, and came to him for a good cause. In fact it all showed Boaz more clearly that she was a Jew inwardly, one interested in the things in the promised land, one interested in God's ordinances, with her back turned

completely upon Chemosh, the idol of the Moabites. She was a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, of which that land of Canaan was a type and shadow. She was interested in having a name and a place in God's — Jehovah's — kingdom.

That Boaz was willing to marry her and considered it a blessing cannot be denied. He did not tell her of this nearer kinsman in order to get out of the situation, and from marrying her. Unequivocally he told her that *in the morning* he would contact this nearest of kin. He was not going to think it over for a few days or weeks, hoping that she would change her mind, since a younger kinsman could fulfill this task. He did not suggest to her that she go and ask this unnamed kinsman. In fact, we do not even read here in this book of Ruth that he even told her who this nearest of kin was. Plainly this man whom Boaz had in mind was a Jew outwardly, but not inwardly. And Boaz assures Ruth that he will marry her, if this nearest of kin refuses. Being a Jew inwardly as well as outwardly, Boaz wants to do what is right in God's sight. He will keep God's ordinance; and in no uncertain terms he tells Ruth that He will do that. And with that he sends her home to Naomi. Yes, he even sends her home with the gift of six measures of barley.

What is more, Boaz promises Ruth that he will take care of the matter. He wanted to serve God and wanted God's ordinance kept. He did think highly of Ruth as a believer and was sure that she would make a devout, spiritual wife. It was far more than love of the flesh that moved him. It was love unto God and love for the church of God, of which Elimelech was a member.

And he promised Ruth that if the nearest kinsman would not marry her, he most surely would do so. Marriage was definitely ahead for her. With that hope he sent her home.

Boaz did not know that their seed would bring forth David and the Christ of God. He was not trying to take away from the nearer kinsmen the honor of having Christ born in the line of his descendants. Boaz was interested in serving God and in keeping His ordinances. That really is what counts. And that is what lies ahead for every child of God when Christ does return to this earth. Everlasting life is far more than everlasting existence. Life is activity. And everlasting life is an endless activity of serving God in a perfect love. Much of the preaching today about everlasting life is merely an escape from the curse and an endless "good time" that even the devil, the fallen angels, and the unbelievers would like to have. No, everlasting life is everlasting activity of serving God in love. And both Ruth and Boaz were interested in doing that in this life. They were interested in more than self. They were interested in God's church and in marrying and seeking children for the growth and well-being of that church.

This explains why Boaz tells Ruth not to be afraid. Literally he said, "And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people know that thou art a virtuous woman." He tells her that marriage is sure, even though he cannot at the moment promise that he will be the one to marry her.

Naomi is also confident, after Ruth explained to her all that Boaz had said, that marriage for Ruth was sure. She said, "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall; for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day." Ruth very plainly now is eager to marry Boaz, and not this man about whom she knows nothing more than that he is the nearest of kin to her dead husband. And here is the first hint that we have in the whole story of Ruth that she manifested some agitation about remarriage. She is told to sit still, to be patient and to wait and see what God has in store for her.

The same truth is manifest here as far as Naomi is concerned. She expresses no disappointment that Boaz did not take Ruth. She commits it all to God, and would not complain if that nearest of kin would take Ruth and deny Boaz this privilege. A great change has been wrought by God's grace also in Naomi. She who left the type and shadow of the kingdom of heaven for bread, not putting her trust in God to take care of His people, now having all her hardships and bereavements applied to her heart by God's grace and Spirit, commits it all to Him, and instructs Ruth to sit still and wait and see what God has in store for her. Ruth is divinely assured of being a Jew inwardly and of having a definite place in God's kingdom. Naomi has that same assurance about Ruth and about God's grace keeping her husband's name in the promised land. □

In His Fear
Arie den Hartog

Whatsoever Ye Do, Do It Heartily As To The Lord

This is the exhortation addressed by the inspired apostle Paul to servants in Colossians 3:23. This exhortation is part of a list of such commands and practical injunctions which Paul addresses to the saints of God. Paul is speaking to those who have been risen with Christ and those whom he exhorts, therefore, to seek the things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and not the things of this earth. Paul is speaking therefore

to Christian servants, or rather, Christian slaves. Servants of the world would never follow such a command. It is spiritually impossible for them. The man of the world does all things for himself and for the glory and praise of men. The Christian is principally and spiritually different. That difference is the fruit of the mighty and wonderful operation of the Spirit of God in him. It is striking that Paul addresses slaves in this manner. In the days of the apostle, many members of the church were slaves. Much of the business and many of the farms of that day were in the hands of rich and powerful lords who owned a great number of slaves. Slaves were the possessions of their masters. They were often bought and sold on the market place. The life of a slave was not easy. Many masters were hard and cruel, and drove their slaves with threatenings and with the whip. Often the work which the slave had to do was hard. It was grueling drudgery. The slave could not, as employees today, change jobs and employers if he found his situation miserable and unjust. He simply had to continue in the situation in which he was in the providence of the Lord.

Never does the word of God exhort such a slave to form a union together with his fellow slaves and rise up in rebellion against their master. Such an exhortation is not found in any of the Scriptures. Rather these slaves were to do all things heartily as unto the Lord. Many of the common people of God were in this situation. Therefore almost all the letters of the apostles contain similar exhortations.

If we keep the above background in mind, we can see how forceful Paul's exhortation is. Paul is addressing the common laborer. He is speaking concerning the manner in which the common laborer must conduct himself in his daily occupation. It is legitimate, however, also to apply this exhortation to the whole of our life here on earth as Christians. Paul says; "WHATSOEVER YE DO, do it heartily as to the Lord." That is all-comprehensive. Nothing may be excluded from this exhortation.

Implied in the above exhortation is the truth that Jesus is Lord over all. As the Son of God, He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings. He is sovereign over all. He created all things and He rules over all things. The earth

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and all that it contains belongs to Him. He has redeemed us through His sacrifice on the cross. Therefore we are not our own. We belong to Him. He is our Lord. All that we are and all that we have belongs to Him; our homes, our families, all our earthly possessions. It is by His providence that we have our daily occupation. The Lord has commanded us to serve Him. He is our holy and righteous Lord. Therefore we must serve Him with fear and trembling.

Whatsoever we do we must serve Him. Our great ambition and purpose in life must be to do His will and to bring glory unto His name. All else must be subservient to this. We must be willing even to suffer loss and to endure persecution for this purpose. As children of God, our joy and delight must be in serving the Lord. We love God because He first loved us, and shed His love abroad in our hearts. We seek His favor and blessing as the highest good. With great fear we earnestly seek by all means to avoid doing those things which displease Him and bring dishonor to His holy name.

Therefore we are called to do all things heartily unto the Lord. There may be no division in our life. In all things there must be singleness of purpose. We may not divide our life into sacred and secular. We may not seek to serve the Lord with fear on the Lord's Day and in His house, while through the rest of the week we live for ourselves and seek the things of this world. There may be no such unholy inconsistency and hypocrisy in our life. There is within us because of our sinful nature a great tendency to divide our life. Especially hard it is to do our daily occupation unto the Lord. Yet this is according to this exhortation our calling. We must remember the

Lord and His commandments as we go about our daily occupation. We must often think of Him and of His great salvation. We must live in the consciousness of the fact that the Lord is watching over us. He sees all that we do. Never for a moment can we escape His all-seeing eye and all-knowing care and judgment over us. Again and again we must be reminded of the Lord. Therefore the Lord in His good and wise providence has given to us the Lord's Day at the beginning of each week. We need the special day which is consecrated unto Him in order that we might be reminded that all our days and all our life must be consecrated unto Him. It is good practice for the Christian, therefore, also to begin and end each day with a period of prayer and the study of God's word. He does that in order to help him to remember that all his day and all the activities that belong to it must be done unto the Lord. It is not good enough for us merely to have a brief time of worship at the beginning of the day, and then go on for the rest of the day without ever again thinking of the Lord. The Lord must be in our consciousness, and guide our every step throughout the day. His word must judge and determine our every work, and how we do it.

We must do all things HEARTILY as unto the Lord. There must be in all our life a singleness of purpose and desire, a zeal and devotion to the Lord. Again this must be evident in our daily occupation. This must be the great purpose of the farmer ploughing in the field and milking his cows. This must be the purpose of the laborer in the factory, and the business man in the office and on the road. This must be the purpose of the mother in the home, as she does the daily chores of the housework and caring for the children. This must be the great

purpose of the student in school in all of his studies.

There is something wonderful about this. The idea of heartily includes also joyfulness. The slave in Paul's day could do his work joyfully even though it was hard drudgery, even though he had to listen to the threatenings of his ungodly master, and often bear the cruel and unjust abuse that was laid upon him. So today some of our work is in itself hard. Some of it is drudgery all by itself. It taxes all of our energies so that we become weary. Often we as Christians must in our daily occupation suffer the injustice of wicked men. Sometimes we have to suffer great loss because of our desire to abide by the principles of the Word of God. In it all the joy of our life is that we belong to the Lord. He has redeemed us. The purpose of our life is that we serve Him. There is no greater joy and purpose for our life. Man's life without God, in all of his striving, is utter vanity. It profits him nothing at all in the end. He labors in the sweat of his face all the days of his life, only to return to the dust of the ground. And after this life, the ungodly man will stand before the judgment seat of God and be judged for all the things he has done. But for the Christian all this has been changed by the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Having been delivered from both the condemnation and slavery of sin we can now begin to serve the Lord.

What a great calling! How far short we fall of it every day of our life. Daily we need to confess our great sin and shortcoming.

Daily we need to pray for grace to change and to turn again unto the Lord. Never may we imagine that we have already attained. Constantly the Lord Himself has to turn us away from the vanity of this world and from our own sinful self-centeredness. Each day we need to begin with the earnest prayer: "Lord help me to do all things heartily unto thee."

By His grace we begin in all our life to live unto Him. Living unto the Lord, we suffer persecution and hatred from the world. Often our work is hard. We have to toil day and night to make enough money to feed our families, support the church, and pay Christian school tuition. But the Christian who does all things heartily unto the Lord looks unto

the reward of His grace. Our daily occupation here on earth does not have its final goal and purpose in this life. We look for the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the hope of the new heavens and earth. It is in this hope also that we can and do all things heartily unto the Lord. □

Question Box

Cornelius Hanko

Some Questions About Liturgy

One of our faithful readers asks some questions about liturgy and liturgical practices.

Question # 1

When the invocation is spoken, the minister addresses the congregation as "you", but at the end of the service when the salutation is given, some ministers conclude with "you all". Is the "you all" correct?

Reply

Obviously our reader, who is a good listener, has more in mind than might appear on the surface of his question. He seems to imply that when the congregation meets in public worship on Sunday as church institute, it is not all Israel that is called Israel. All are not necessarily believers in Christ Jesus, elect from before the foundations of the earth and redeemed by the blood of Calvary. The carnal element is likely still present, even though we do not recognize them.

Therefore the question can very well arise: Is it proper to say "you all" in the final benediction, as if the carnal element is also included under that blessing?

There are two things that should be considered here.

First, that the invocation is taken, at least in part, from the epistles of the apostle Paul. Moreover, the salutation is also literally taken from the Scriptures, namely from II Corinthians

13:14, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." You will notice that Paul includes the "you all."

Secondly, this can well be understood when we bear in mind that when the minister addresses the congregation at the beginning of the service, he follows the practice of the apostles in their epistles by calling them the "Beloved" in Christ Jesus. He also does that when he calls them "Beloved Congregation." Thus the Word is directed to "the saints in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:1), "the called of Jesus Christ, beloved of God" (Rom. 1:6, 7), "faithful brethren" (Col. 1:2), "church . . . which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 1:1), "Elect according to the foreknowledge of

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God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit" (I Peter 1:2), and "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us" (II Peter 1:1). Therefore at the conclusion of the service the minister pronounces God's blessing on the congregation as a part of the true church, the body of Christ, consisting of believers and their spiritual seed. As ambassador of Jesus Christ he wishes them the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which is bestowed upon them by the love of God through the communion, or fellowship, of the Holy Ghost.

The reason why I, and possibly others, have left off the "all" is because this fundamental principle, so clearly expressed in Scripture, is not always understood, and therefore the "all" could be confusing.

Question #2

This reader also makes the following inquiry. Some ministers will occasionally use some passage in the salutation that is taken directly from Scripture which is not a benediction upon the congregation. He has in mind a passage taken from Jude, verses 24, 25: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." His question is: Since this is not a benediction directed to the congregation, should the minister pronounce this benediction with uplifted hands extended toward the congregation?

Reply

The reader is assuming, and I think correctly so, that the uplifted hands extended toward the congregation are an expression of God's blessing upon the church of Jesus Christ in the name of Christ Jesus Himself.

This reader is not only a good listener but is also very observant. I have often wondered about this myself, and therefore have been a bit hesitant to use this form of benediction.

The question is not so much whether it is proper to use this form of benediction at the conclusion of the service. There is much to be said in favor of expressing praise to God as a doxology at the end of our worship together. Some texts lend themselves to a sermon that necessarily proclaims the wonders, praises, and glories of our God. There can be times when we marvel at the grace of the God of our salvation revealed to us in Scripture as a living reality in our hearts, so that the congregation often gives expression to that in the manner in which the last Psalter number is sung. I can well remember one occasion when I was in the audience and it could well be said that the rafters rattled because of the fervent response to the preaching of the Word.

But the question is: should a minister in pronouncing a benediction of praise to God have his hands extended toward the congregation when this benediction is not extended as a blessing to them, but rather as an expression of praise?

Maybe the minister in this instance should extend his hands in such a way, as some do before the congregational prayer, that he expresses that the entire congregation is included in this expression of praise to God.

It is something worth thinking about.

Question #3

A final question from the same reader: In our Apostolic Creed as we confess it in our worship service on Sunday we say: "His only begotten Son." In our Communion Form this same confession appears, but there as "his (God's)

only Son." Is this an error, and should this be corrected when we publish a new Psalter?

Reply

It is interesting to note that the term "God's only Son" does not, to the best of my knowledge, appear as such in the Scriptures. Yet the Word of God is very emphatic in declaring that all three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are eternally and equally God. The Son is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, generated by the Father as "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." (Heb 1:3) It also needs no proof among us that Jesus is the only begotten Son of the Father, in Whom God is, even as He is in God. (John 17:21)

The term "only begotten Son" appears at least four times in the Gospel that bears John's name and once in his First Epistle. It is obvious why John should employ the name "only begotten Son" in his Gospel account, because his very purpose in writing this account was that "ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through him." Hebrews 1:6 refers to this term when it states: ". . . when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world . . ." And in Revelation 1:5 He is called "the first begotten from the dead."

Although this term "only begotten" is employed in Scripture occasionally to refer to one who is an only son or an only daughter, (see Luke 7:12, 8:42, 9:38, and Hebrews 11:17, where this term appears in the Greek), this name takes on a very special meaning when it refers to the Christ, *the* Son of God. It emphasizes that He is Mary's firstborn (Luke 2:7), the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29), the

firstborn of every creature (Col. 1:15), and the "firstborn from the dead." He always stands out uniquely as the first begotten of God. He is God's beloved Son, the Son of the Highest, Who is eternally in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18). Of Him John declares: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

But the main question is: Is the

Communion Form correct in quoting the Apostle's Creed and leaving out the word "begotten"? This confronts us with the question whether the early creeds that are quoted here include the word "begotten" or not. It is interesting to note that one of the earliest Latin forms of the Creed (341) has the words "God's only Son". There is also a Greek form of the Creed that was composed about the same time and has "God's only begotten Son." It appears that the word "begotten" did not appear in the Latin form of the Creed until A.D. 650, when the expression read: "His eternally only begotten Son". From that we would conclude that in composing the Commu-

nion Form our fathers quoted the early Latin edition of the Apostles' Creed. There can therefore be no objection to the words as they appear in our Communion Form.

[Editor's note: The expression in question in our Communion Form is either a printing error which has been perpetuated in subsequent editions of our *Psalter* or it is a mistranslation. In the original Dutch version of the Form — at least in those editions which I have in my library — the expression is "only begotten Son." In my opinion this error should be corrected, though it is too late to correct it in our coming new edition of the *Psalter*. HCH] □

Taking Heed To The Doctrine

Ronald H. Hanko

The Two Natures Of Christ: The Deity of Christ (Continued)

4. The divine Person of Christ.

In speaking of the two natures of Christ, it is necessary not only to speak of these natures, but also of the Person of Christ. These terms, "person" and "nature," are not so much biblical as theological terms, and are also used in connection with the doctrine of the trinity. The use of them arose out of the need to express and define the truth of Scripture concerning God Triune and concerning Jesus Christ as clearly as possible over against

various heresies that have arisen in the church.

Now it is not my intention to define these terms at this point. That I hope to do when we come to the matter of the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. A definition of these terms will have more value at that point. What must be seen at this point is that in speaking of the divinity of Christ, we speak not only of the fact that He has the divine nature, that is, that He is really God, and that all the

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fulness of the Godhead is in Him (Col. 2:10), but we say also that *personally* He is the Second Person of the divine trinity, the Son. Even through the incarnation He is not and does not become two persons, one human and one divine, but is and remains, personally and individually the Only Begotten Son, the Second Person of the Godhead. This is simply to say, of course, that even in the incarnation He is one Person, one Christ, and one Saviour, the only Saviour. It ought to be obvious, therefore, that this warrants further discussion in connection with the union of the two natures of Christ, but here we must see its importance as far as the deity of Christ is concerned.

Though this matter of Christ's Person may seem at first to be of very little significance, it is nevertheless of the greatest possible importance.

It is important first of all in maintaining the Biblical doctrine of the trinity. To say that Christ's Person is the second Person of the trinity, or that He is personally the Son, is to maintain what Scripture says about God as being three distinct Persons in one divine Being. It is to say that it was not the Father or the Spirit Who came in the flesh, but the Son. There were some in the early history of the church who so blurred the distinction between the three Persons of the trinity, that they would say that the Father was crucified and suffered on the cross. For this they were called "Patripassionists." This, obviously, is not what Scripture teaches. What is worse, it strikes at the very heart of our faith, the atoning work of Christ, for it really denies that there is in God not only One to make atonement, but also One to Whom atonement can and must be made.

Even more significant for our study, the truth that Christ is personally the Only Begotten Son of God, the second Person of the trinity, means that the incarnation is a matter of God becoming flesh, not flesh becoming God. Modern liberal theology, for example, has no problem with a Christ Who as man becomes God. That is, in fact, the heart of liberal theology, that humanity can become or take on what is divine. Thus liberal theologians have no problem with a Christ Who is divine in some vague, ill-defined sense, but with a Christ Who is personally divine, Who does not become but *is* God. Liberal theology, of course, always begins with man. That is the reason Arminianism always ends in modernism and liberalism. But when we say that Christ, personally and individually is the Son of God, the second Person of the trinity incarnate, then we are beginning with God, not man, and teaching the fundamentals of sovereign grace.

That Christ is personally God also means that we can never deal with Him, speak of Him, or come to Him except as God. Even after the incarnation He can never be to us only a man. The Person Who speaks and acts through the human nature of Christ is always God Himself. This makes our contact with Christ so critical. This makes the question, "What think ye of the Christ?" a question whose answer has eternal consequences. To express this another way is to say that in dealing with Christ, confronting His claims, hearing His Word, obeying and following Him, we are not just indirectly dealing with God, but dealing with Him personally, as it were, face to face, as the great Judge and Rewarder.

Scripture teaches this very clearly. Because He is personally God, Scripture does not just call

His blood the blood of His humanity, but "the blood of God" (Acts 20:28). Likewise, we do not read of the incarnation merely as the joining of the human and divine natures, but of "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). It was in this connection also that the early church insisted that it was not wrong to speak of Mary as the mother of God.

It is this same truth that Scripture is proving in Hebrews 1 when it speaks of Christ as the One Who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person (vs. 3), and continues by citing the evidence of various Scripture passages. It is proving not just that Christ is divine or that He has a divine nature, but that He *is* God, the great God Who speaks to His people. And it is in this same connection that Hebrews also reminds us that it is God Himself with Whom we have to do in the gospel: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (2:1). That He is really and personally God means that we cannot escape should we so much as neglect the salvation of which He speaks.

5. The necessity of Christ's divinity.

That Christ be God is necessary in connection with all the works of God. The creation itself as something made through Christ shows the very handiwork of God Himself. Christ in creation is not merely a tool, even a divine tool, but He is God, working God's own handiwork in all things that are made.

Even more importantly, it is necessary that Christ be God in connection with the damnation of the ungodly. In Christ they were given and are given today the opportunity to show what they really think of God, not abstractly and impersonally, but face to face, and are shown to be haters of God who will not bow before His glory and greatness. As Jesus Himself says, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9), and it could be added, "He that hath heard Me and rejected Me, hath heard and rejected the Father."

The same is true of salvation. Christ must be God in the work of salvation, because the things He does and gives are things that only God can do, and things that belong to God, and which He alone can give. The Heidelberg Catechism confesses this when it says that He must be "very God" in order that He might "sustain in His human nature, the burden of God's wrath; and might obtain for, and restore to us, righteousness and life" (VI, 17). Only because He is God can He endure to the end the heavy burden of God's fury against sin without being everlastingly destroyed. Only because He is God could He in a few short hours endure an eternity of the punishment of sin. Likewise, the gifts of righteousness and life that He must give us are not earthly life or righteousness by works, a righteousness that might be again defiled or lost, but the life of God Himself, life eternal, and the righteousness of God, which is forever incorruptible. Who but God Himself could give such blessings?

Nor is this true only of righteousness and eternal life, but of all the blessings of salvation. They are all such as only He can give as God. I Corinthians 15 speaks of heaven and of our heavenly life as something we have only through Him Who is the Lord from heaven (vss. 47-49). It was not something that we could ever have had through Adam, though he had continued obedient to God, because Adam was of the earth, earthy. We have sonship with God only through the Only Begotten Son, as we are reminded in Lord's Day XIII of the Heidelberg Catechism; and the same is true of our re-creation in the image of God. Athanasius says of this restoration of the image of God in man:

Whence the Word of God came in His own person, that, as He was the image of the Father, He might be able to create afresh the man after the image For as, when the likeness painted on a panel has been effaced by stains from without, he whose likeness it is must needs come once more to enable the portrait to be re-

newed on the same wood: for, for the sake of his picture, even the mere wood on which it is painted is not thrown away, but the outline is renewed upon it; in the same way also the most holy Son of the Father, being the Image of the Father, came to our region to renew man once made in His likeness. (The Incarnation of the Word, 13, 7 and 14, 1 & 2).

And, as Athanasius himself knew so well, all this is simply to say that if Christ is not God, we have no Savior.

6. Conclusion.

In all of this we see that the truth of Christ's deity is one of the cornerstones of our Christian faith. It cannot and may not be tampered with in any way. But we must remember that it is not merely a doctrine, but the object of our faith. Simply to grasp intellectually the meaning of this doctrine is not enough. We must love it, and confess it, and make it the foundation of all our hope in Christ. This we do when we worship Christ, trust in Him, while abandoning all trust in men, come to Him in faith, and hear and obey His Word. He may not be just Lord and God but must be "my Lord and my God" (Jn. 20:28). □

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Decency And Order

Ronald L. Cammenga

The Necessity Of The Lawful Call To The Ministry

"No one, though he be a professor of theology, elder, or deacon, shall be permitted to enter upon the ministry of the Word and the sacraments without having been lawfully called thereunto. And when anyone acts contrary thereto, and after being frequently admonished does not desist, the classis shall judge whether he is to be declared a schismatic or is to be punished in some other way." Church Order, Article 3.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS ARTICLE

Article 3 begins the treatment by the *Church Order* of the office of the ministry of the Word. This discussion will extend from Articles 3-17. Article 3 is introductory and emphasizes the necessity of the lawful call of the minister of the gospel. Article 4 will describe the nature of the lawful call. Subsequent articles will deal with various questions regarding the office of the minister: his work, his removal to another congregation, his support, his emeritation from office, etc.

This article has special application today when the importance of the lawful call is ignored or denied. There are many who set themselves up as independent evangelists, whose ministry stands altogether apart from the instituted church. These men are not called and sent out by the church, and are not under the supervision of the church. This multiplication of independent, self-appointed evangelists has been a plague on the church. On the other hand, in some circles, it is not uncommon that laymen from time to time carry out the duties that rightfully belong to the office of the ministry, even though they have not been called and ordained to this office. It is

urgent, therefore, that the churches be reminded of the Biblical truth expressed in this third article of our *Church Order*.

Although Article 3 is directed especially against those who intrude themselves into the office of the ministry, by implication the article is also directed against all who enter the office unlawfully, as not called by Christ. Condemned is the sin of simony, the buying and selling of church office. This practice was common in the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation, a practice abhorrent to the Reformed churches. Condemned is all entering of the office by force, bribery, or deception. Condemned are all those who seek the office for reasons of personal ambition, rather than out of the desire to be a servant and spokesman of Jesus Christ.

A note should be made about the mention of the professor of theology in this article: "No one, though he be a professor of theology . . . shall be permitted to enter upon the ministry of the Word and the sacraments without having been lawfully called thereunto." This article was written out of the historical context of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands where the professors in the universities were appointed by

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the State and were for the most part unordained men. This provision of Article 3 has no direct application to us, since our professors are already ordained men.

THE HISTORY OF ARTICLE 3

Article 3 addresses a problem that arose shortly after the introduction of the Reformation into the Lowlands. At the time of the Reformation, many clergy left the Roman Catholic Church and became itinerant, self-appointed preachers. These men often intruded upon the labors and congregations of those who had been lawfully called. Besides these itinerant preachers, there were also the Anabaptist preachers who travelled from city to city, without a fixed charge, and for the most part without any formal training.

Besides the problem with the itinerant preachers, there was also often confusion over the distinct labors of the ministry. Although many agreed that the itinerant preachers should not be permitted to assume the labors of the ministry, they were willing to allow especially the elders to administer the Word and the sacraments. That elders were administering the sacrament of baptism is evident from questions concerning this practice that were forwarded to some of the early synods. To the Synod of Dordrecht, 1578, the question was directed whether baptism administered by a private person or an elder should be recognized as a valid baptism.

As far as the specific history of Article 3 is concerned, one of the first Reformed synods to insist on the necessity of the lawful call to the ministry was the Synod of Tours, 1563. The Synod of Wezel, 1568, passed the resolution that, "... it is very necessary that no one is admitted to the ministry of the Word of

God or to any other ecclesiastical office without a lawful calling, election, approbation, proper examination, and lawful order."

The Synod of Emden, 1571, ruled that no one, though he be a professor of theology, elder, or deacon, shall be permitted to enter the ministry of the Word and sacraments without having been lawfully called. The Synod of Dordrecht, 1574, ruled that the classis should twice call intruders to account, and in the event they refused to desist, should expose them and issue warning against them to the other classes as schismatics. This synod even went so far as to petition the civil magistrates to charge the police to bar from church pulpits all who could not produce valid credentials proving they had been lawfully called. The Synod of Dordrecht, 1578, affirmed the decisions of the Synod of 1574. The wording of our present article is the work of the Synod of Middelburg, 1581.

SCRIPTURE'S TEACHING CONCERNING THE NECESSITY OF THE LAWFUL CALL

Already in the Old Testament the necessity of the lawful call to office is emphasized. Prophets, priests, and kings were directly appointed by God. The authority in which the prophets came to Israel rested on the fact that God had called and sent them. "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me," Isaiah 6:8. "And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel," Amos 7:15. Those who had not been sent and called by God were condemned as false prophets and usurpers. "I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied," Jeremiah 23:21.

The New Testament continues to demonstrate the importance of the lawful call to the ministry. The apostles were called and sent out directly by Christ. Time and again the Apostle Paul emphasizes that he is an apostle by the will of God, I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1. Romans 10:15 is important with respect to the necessity of the lawful call: "And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Hebrews 5:4 is also relevant: "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Other passages of Scripture may be consulted: Matthew 9:38; John 10:1, 2; Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 12:28; and Ephesians 4:11.

The crucial point in connection with the lawful call in the New Testament is that God issues the lawful call *through the church herself*. This is the teaching of the Books of Acts. According to Acts 1:23, "And they (that is, the members of the church) appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias." Acts 6 records the calling to office of the first deacons in the New Testament church. What is significant is that these men were chosen and called to office *by the election of the church*. The opening verses of Acts 13 record the Spirit's separation of Paul and Barnabas to be the first missionaries. Although separated by the Spirit, Paul and Barnabas were appointed and sent out by the congregation at Antioch. It is significant that at the conclusion of each missionary journey, Paul always reported back to the congregation at Antioch. II Corinthians 8:19 speaks of Titus "who was also chosen of the churches" to labor with Paul. In II Timothy 4:14 Paul reminds Timothy that he had been put into office "with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (elders)."

The insistence of our *Church Order* on the necessity of the lawful calling of the minister of the gospel, as well as its insistence in subsequent articles that the lawful call consists of the call by the church, is based squarely on the teaching of the Scriptures.

VIOLATORS TO BE DEALT WITH

Article 3 not only insists on the necessity of the lawful call, but also prescribes the manner in which violators are to be dealt with: "And when anyone acts contrary thereto, and after being

frequently admonished does not desist, the classis shall judge whether he is to be declared a schismatic or is to be punished in some other way."

By mentioning specifically the classis, the article does not intend to overlook the responsibility of the local consistory. Discipline always begins at the local level. Certainly consistories must take action against those who attempt to intrude into the office of the ministry.

Article 3, however, is concerned with the climax of the treatment of violators, if they stubbornly refuse to desist. First, they are to be publicly exposed

and admonished. Discipline always begins with admonition. If those involved continue, they are to be denounced publicly as schismatics, excommunicated from the church, and all the classes warned against them. In the event that a particular congregation refuses to recognize the action of the classis, they also are to be dealt with.

Those serving in the ministry of the Word must be lawfully called to their office. No one may intrude himself into the office. This is decency and good order in the church of Jesus Christ. □

Guided Into All Truth

Thomas C. Miersma

Rationalism And Its Fruit (2)

The principle of rationalism by which man, by his own reason and thought can come to a knowledge of the truth without divine revelation, led, as we have seen, to the making of an idol, of a philosophical god, after man's own imagination. Thus it led to the worship of the creature and not the Creator. It is not surprising therefore that it would also lead to the resurrection of old heresies rooted in pre-Christian paganism. This tendency manifested itself in the philosophy of Leibnitz. In Leibnitz the difference between God and the creature is one of degree. It is not an essential difference. Leibnitz's god is an infinite spirit or

mind which is at the same time a force or first cause of all that exists. From this first cause everything else is generated by a series of sparks struck from the divine being which in turn generate other lesser beings or monads. In reality this was nothing more than a warmed-over version of first century Gnostic heresies which had plagued the early church.

With such speculative rationalistic thinking as that of Leibnitz, Rationalism reached a certain limit. It had fundamentally been no more able than the philosophies of the heathen before it to search out God unto perfection, or to find Him and ar-

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rive at truth. Rationalism had set aside faith in God's self-revelation to us in His Word, to place its trust in the unaided reason of man. But man's reason is both finite and fallible. The result in the latter part of the 1600's and 1700's was the appearance of a certain skepticism concerning the power of man's unaided reason alone. This did not lead to a development in the truth, however. Instead, to man's reason was added man's world and man's experience. Descartes had begun by finding in man's conscious reason alone a basis for truth. The skeptics argued that man's reason was shaped by his experiences, perceptions, and impressions of the world outside of himself, whatever the nature of that world might be. It was in the interplay of experience and reason, perception and interpretation, that truth and certainty were to be found. By this approach man's reason was not cast from the throne, but turned from abstract speculation toward the practical realm of everyday life and experience.

As with Descartes, there was at first on the part of some an attempt to include within the realm of experience and reason also the existence of divine revelation, and to make room for faith. This was the approach of those who sought to defend the Christian faith by rationalistic means, among whom may be numbered the English philosophers Locke (1632-1704) and Berkeley (1685-1753). This attempt to defend divine revelation on the basis of man's perception, however, could not stand. Others such as Hume (1711-1775) reversed the argument and denied any consistent experience by which God's existence or attributes could be determined. Instead, they traced the origin of religion itself to man's imagination and fancy. Religion to Hume

was the result of man's imagination reacting upon his experience out of fear and ignorance. Hume's arguments proceeded from an evolutionary theory of the development of religion from primitive nature worship and belief in spirits to the belief in one God.

The effects of Rationalism and the reaction of skepticism, with its emphasis upon man's mind in man's world as the arbiter of truth, were felt throughout the 1700's. Rationalism had severed the truth of God from its basis in divine revelation and the Word of God. Their philosophical god served not only to undermine the truth of God revealed in His Word, but also became the means to attack that truth. The God of the Bible and the god of philosophy were identified as one; the assault upon the one became an assault upon the other. Philosophy was free to play with the god of its own imagination and to banish him from man's world altogether. Thus the fundamental fruit of rationalism, under the more practical turn of mind which manifested itself in the 1700's, was Deism.

Under the philosophy of Deism, God or a god was principally banished from the world, and with Him also His self-revelation. The philosophy of deism conceived of a god, if it acknowledged that there was a god at all, as merely a being like a watchmaker who had brought the world into existence, wound it up like a watch, and set it to run on its own. The world of man's experience, then, was totally governed only by natural laws which were discernible by science and philosophy. Man's life was bounded by his life in this world, with the watch, and had nothing to do with a god, the watchmaker. The result of Deism

was rampant agnosticism and practical atheism, and man turned his mind to the discussion of politics, and economics, to history, and sociology. He did so seeking to bring all things before the bar of his own reason, the light of his own experience, intuition and perception. For the same reason this period of the eighteenth century is also sometimes called the age of enlightenment, for it was thus that man regarded himself; though spiritually it was an age of decline and darkness. It was a period of corruption within the church, of spiritual indifference and worldly-mindedness, a time of war, the rising of nation against nation, and of revolution and strife which would flow over into the nineteenth century. War also was made upon the doctrine and existence of the Christian church and the Word of God in particular.

Deists such as Collins (1676-1729) in England, Holback (1723-1789) in France, and atheists such as Thomas Paine in the American colonies, sought to pull the Bible apart and tear it to pieces. The miracles of Scripture were ridiculed as contrary to man's experience and reason, the result of credulity and ignorance upon the part of those who reported them. Men sought to discredit the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of Christ, to explain them away or give them another meaning, that they might deny the reality of prophecy in the Word of God. The supposed inconsistencies of the Biblical narratives in the gospels were set against one another to discredit the New Testament. God's righteousness and His love and mercy were set in opposition to one another to discredit the Old Testament. Jesus was made a mere man, a good teacher of morality, followed by a group of credulous

and superstitious disciples who intruded their own superstitions into the gospels. The Deist Thomas Jefferson went so far as to cut out of his Bible every passage which he did not regard as consistent with human reason, decimating the gospels, stripping them of the miracles of Christ. Thus Jefferson has not only the distinction of being one of the authors of the Declaration of Independence but also of one of the first condensed versions of the Bible, a version according to the wisdom and criticism of man who presumes to sit in judgment upon the Word of God.

On the continent of Europe the situation was essentially the same. Men such as Rousseau (1712-1778) and Voltaire (1694-1778) ridiculed the Chris-

tian church, its doctrines, and foundation. In Germany also the rationalism of Leibnitz spread its influence upon theology, and was followed by skepticism and Deism. The poet and dramatist Lessing (1729-1781) spread the views of the enlightenment by denying the possibility of revelation and teaching that Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are all true religions because they produced noble men, reducing religion to a mere common denominator of natural belief in a deity and morality.

It was with great difficulty that the church kept and preserved the light of the Word of God, and the preaching of that Word. For Deism also entered the churches and corrupted them from within. Men sought to defend Christianity with the methods of Deism.

Among them were men like Paley (1743-1805), who argued from the existence of the watch to the watchmaker, but who was willing to compromise when it came to the chronology of the Bible, or to the days of creation, and who were content if only the truth that God created was confessed. In France, the French revolution prevailed, with its proud rebellion and open hatred of the Christian religion. In England, toleration of unbelief within the church prevailed. In Holland, the government prevented the church from exercising discipline and sheltered those who promoted error. In Germany likewise the influences of both Rationalism and Deism made their presence felt as the church declined. □

Book Review

Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity, Ed. by Charles W. Hedrick & Robert Hodgson, Jr. Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts; 1986. 332 pp., \$14.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

Gnosticism was a heresy which appeared in the early church and against which the church had a long and bitter struggle before victory was achieved. Its basic character was its synthesis of Christianity, Oriental mysticism and pagan philosophy; and because of this character, its threat was a synthesizing of Christianity with pagan thought,

which would have destroyed Christianity. In many respects, it is similar to today's more liberal ecumenical movements which seek to unite oriental religions, Mohammedanism, Judaism, and Christianity into one world-wide religion.

No writings of Gnostic thinkers were thought to be extant, and all the knowledge which the church possessed of Gnosticism came from the early church fathers who wrote against it in defense of Christianity. The result was that large gaps remained in an understanding of Gnosticism. Some are of the opinion that

some early forms of Gnosticism were present during the Apostolic Era and that Paul (e.g., in Col. 2:20-23) and John (e.g., in I John 1:1-3) were writing against these errors.

In 1945 archeologists discovered the so-called Nag Hammadi library (hence the title of this book) in the desert south and east of Palestine, in the same general area in which the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. This library contained 53 Gnostic works written by Gnostic thinkers. It stands to reason, of course, that this material is invaluable to those who are in-

terested in this ancient heresy, for it gives scholars a great deal of information hitherto unavailable, and brings new light upon Gnostic thought.

In 1983 at Springfield, Missouri, a Working Seminar was held to give preliminary attention

to these new discoveries of Gnostic literature. Thirteen scholars who had had access to the Nag Hammadi library presented papers. This book is an edited version of those papers. While some of the material is technical, the book contains cur-

rent thinking about Gnosticism in the light of these new findings. While not all will be interested in this material, the book is important for colleges and Seminaries. It is a must for those who wish to keep abreast of current Gnostic studies. □

News From Our Churches

Ben Wigger

January 1, 1988

It has been a couple of months now since we have had a church profile in our news. Let's change that by looking at the history of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

In 1942 the Mission Committee of our churches came to work in the Randolph area. Rev. C. Hanco, with his consistory of the Oak Lawn, Ill., congregation, was instrumental in these beginnings. In Sept. of that same year, the interested group rented the Congregational Church in town, using it Sunday afternoons and evenings.

In August of 1943, Randolph Protestant Reformed Church came into being as an organized

congregation. There were eight families with a total of fourteen children.

The Rev. George Lubbers became their first under-shepherd. When he and his family came, they moved into a parsonage that had just been bought for \$1,400.00.

The early years saw Randolph still "sharing" the Congregational Church. However in 1951, they purchased property with a building on it. It was just a basement, but it was their own basement and services could be held mornings and afternoons.

Through the years Randolph has enjoyed the preaching of the reverends G. Lubbers (44-50), H. Kuiper (51-54), G. Van Baren (62-65), D. Kuiper (67-70), W. Bekkering (72-77), K. Koole (77-82), J. Slopsema (82-86) and since January of last year Pastor A. den Hartog. Randolph also endured the turmoil of dissention during the labor of one man who eventually left for another denomination. Randolph has also been vacant three different times for a total of seven years.

Plans for a new church building were begun in the fall of

1972. The next spring ground was broken. Much of the work was done by the church members. It was a difficult job, but on May 24, 1974, a new church building was dedicated.

Another dream began as the church grew, and there were more and more children: the dream of their own school. A school society was started and later disbanded. But the dream still lived. In 1981 a second school society was begun. But the money needed not only for the building of a new school, but also the day-to-day running of that school, was just not available at that time. Prayers were continually being offered that God would show the way and provide the means.

Randolph's church life is an active one. They have a Men's, a Ladies', and a Young People's Society. They also enjoy various special occasion singspirations and programs, Young People's evenings (gym nights, soup suppers), church extension work (lectures, slide presentations, Basic Christian Truth Classes), the 4th of July picnic, and a Fall Fellowship Supper.

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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Randolph now numbers 28 families and 5 individuals with a total of 69 children, including 9 college students, 16 high schoolers, 32 kindergarteners through 8th graders, and 12 preschoolers. Randolph is a small farming community and there are seven farm families in the church. There are also an equal number of men who are general laborers, working for a local seed company, driving a feed truck, or working in local factories. There are six in the construction field, three who own service businesses, a husband and wife who teach, and an electrician.

Randolph has lost members of late to sister churches in the denomination because of the economy. There are more and better jobs in the bigger cities. But God continues with Randolph. His truth is proclaimed from the pulpit each Sunday, strengthening, encouraging, and blessing those in Randolph as His beloved flock.

"Daily Devotions" written by Rev. John Heys are now ready. These one-page-a-day Bible studies are the result of a request that came from members of our sister churches in Singapore. These one-page jewels, one for every day of the year, cover many subjects of interest for every child of God, such as hope, praise, prayer, confessions, forgiveness, joy, and many more. They are all based on the Psalms.

They are printed in sets of twelve small, handy, monthly booklets that are available now from your local Protestant Reformed Church. Soon there will

be some bound in paperback book form covering one whole year. These books are the project of the Hudsonville Prot. Ref. Church's Men's Society. If you haven't gotten your own personal copy yet, be sure you do so soon. From all appearances it looks like a worthwhile addition to anyone's library.

Hope Prot. Ref. Christian School in Walker presented their All-School Program and 40th Anniversary Commemoration on the evening of Thursday, December 10 at the First Jenison Christian Reformed Church.

The Sunday School of the Trinity Prot. Ref. Church in Houston, TX invited the children and the parents of the congregation to the annual fall outing, Saturday, November 14. They were all planning to spend the day at the Houston Zoo.

The Council of First Church in Grand Rapids has decided to overture Synod to make the Reformed Witness Hour a denominational work. Today and through its more than 45 years of broadcasting, the Reformed Witness Hour has been a First Church project. Other of our churches contribute support and/or sponsor stations, but the R.W.H. has never had denominational backing as a whole. The Radio Committee also reported that currently denominational (through Synod) spending equals about ten cents per family per week. And as little as \$1.00 per week would generate about \$65,000 to give a larger working balance for expanding the radio witness. □

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On January 8, 1988, the Lord willing, our parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. FRED HUIZINGA, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary.

We are grateful that God has given them to each other and to us for so many years. We pray that God will continue to bless them in the years to come.

"For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death." (Psalm 48:14)

Rick and Terri Huizinga

Jack Huizinga

Dan and Carol Huizinga

Doc and Jan Kuiper

Larry and Ruth Burgess

and 16 grandchildren

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to Rev. and Mrs. W. Bekkering and family in the passing of Mrs. Bekkering's father and their children's grandfather, MR. PETER BOER.

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18)

Mrs. John Veldman, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Senior Mr. and Mrs. Society of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church expresses its Christian sympathy to Chuck and Joanne Bult in the death of his father, MR. ARTHUR BULT.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." (Isaiah 53:4)

John Van Baren, Pres.

Ruth Oosterhouse, Sec'y.