

**A Reformed  
Semi-Monthly  
Magazine**

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# THE STANDARD BEARER

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*As we look forward to the high school days of our children, one of our greatest concerns is that we maintain our home as the predominant sphere of influence for our young people. We know that that will not be easy. Life is becoming increasingly complex and more and more busy. Times when the family can be together are often few and far between. Our young people need the bond and the influence of the Christian home.*

*See "Home, Church, and School" page 20*

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## In this issue . . .

What is the "predominant sphere of influence" in the lives of young people in our churches today?

If we are serious about the obligations of the covenant, we must face that question squarely, both as young people and as parents. Too easy it is simply to consider the current state of affairs to be an inescapable ingredient in the complexities of life in modern-day America. It isn't.

But, what about that question? Is it the *church* that figures most importantly in the lives of young people? Two worship services per week, one catechism class (30 weeks in the year), and perhaps a like number of society meetings. But what about the *home*? Breakfast. Maybe supper . . . if it can be worked in, between school activities and employment. And a place to sleep. And then . . . there's the *school*. That is, the school with all its extra-curricular activities. Six hours in classes. Two hours of basketball practice or four for a game. Three hours at a job to earn the money to support the car to be able to participate fully in the extra-curriculars. Ah, yes, where has the day gone?

Maybe that's a worst-case scenario. To the extent that it isn't, we have cause for alarm. For, the busyness of life means, first, that the influence of the home is minimized, and, second, that we are "too busy to be involved in the church as we should be."

Rev. denHartog, in this issue's "In His Fear," goes on to say that all of this is "a sign of decline and apostasy in our midst and in our lives as Christians." And that, surely, is reason to be alarmed. Are we? Read "Home, Church, and School." □

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## Help My Unbelief

*"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*

*"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."*

*Mark 9:23, 24*

Lay your eyes upon a pitiful scene.

A young man is on the ground, thrashing about in convulsive seizures.

He's foaming at the mouth.

Look away from him, and gaze into the eyes of his father. What pain, what sorrow, what shame exudes, caused by this public spectacle. The disciples, the multitude, the scribes are all gawking at his only son.

Listen to him as he turns to Jesus, "If thou canst do anything, have mercy on us and help us."

As we approach this narrative, we do well to remind ourselves that the account given to us in Matthew and Luke, as well as in Mark, records an actual event. It is part of the record of sacred history. Such history must not be moralized, it must be interpreted. By this account, we learn that Jesus had compassion upon the father and son and delivered them from great distress. Indeed, Jesus has compassion. He is Lord

of disease and able to subdue the devil. All this is true; but there is much more. There is gospel.

We come to understand the gospel as we take a careful look at the son who is so sorely tormented. He is deaf, he is dumb, he has terrible epileptic seizures, and he is possessed of a devil. This devil makes use of the seizures to endanger the young man's life, by causing them to take place when he is near water and fire. What misery this brought to the life of this son and father.

In him we see a reflection of our own spiritual condition. By nature we are spiritually deaf and dumb. We have not ears to hear the gospel, nor lips to praise God. We cast ourselves about in the froth of sinful pleasure. Satan knows exactly how to take advantage of us, to tempt us in those areas where we are spiritually the weakest.

The father, now, is the conscience of this son. The two go together. The son can't express himself, but the father speaks for him. "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us." The father expresses the grief, the utter frustration, the hopeless despair, the public shame. As such he represents the depraved sinner who has come under the work of grace. The representation here is not that of a sinner who does not care, who is hardened and complacent in sin. No, he is burdened, he struggles,

and he has come to the right place — he has come to Jesus. He cries for help.

To be sure, this father has progressed in his faith. He has come to realize that his son can do nothing for his deliverance, for he is helplessly and hopelessly in the grip of Satan and disease. For this reason, he has turned to Jesus. Are you at that point in your spiritual pilgrimage? Do you know that you cannot save yourself? The nature of sin and the treachery of Satan is such that he would like to have us imagine that the natural man can at any time decide to be saved. What deception! The deaf and the dumb cannot even hear the gospel, much less respond properly. Are you at the spiritual level of this father? Be acknowledged that he needed Jesus for salvation.

Still more.

He also understood that no other human being could help him. I am sure this father contacted many doctors. He loved his only child. It tore his heart to see him suffer and be abused this way. Their life was a shambles. You can well imagine that he sought out the best medical help and turned to anyone who could possibly have helped. But none could. How we are forced to acknowledge this point. Must not the drunkards, the drug addicts, those who come under the power of nicotine, sex, blind ambition, lust for power, the craze for



pleasure and sports, come to this point? Human help, without the presence of God's Spirit, is vain.

Then he heard of Jesus. How, we do not know, but we can well imagine that the fame of Jesus went throughout the country. Jesus did more than preach; He also performed miracles. Driven by the desire for deliverance, this father persisted in taking his son to Jesus. When he approached the disciples, he learned that Jesus was not there. Christ was on the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John. The man therefore asked the disciples if they could help him. They tried, but failed. That, too, added to his humiliation. The Scribes observed this failure and began publicly to ridicule the disciples. They were arguing back and forth when Jesus suddenly appeared. It was then that this father ran to Jesus and cast himself down in His presence and cried, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

But wait!

There is something wrong with his request.

It's that little word "if." *If* thou canst do anything!

Jesus didn't like that "if."

Do you approach Jesus with your deepest spiritual needs and say, "if"? The "if" betrays doubt. Do you doubt whether the blood of Jesus can cover your sins? Do you doubt whether Jesus is able to deliver you from the power of your sins? Do you doubt whether you are included in the number of the redeemed?

Jesus deals with this doubt by saying, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." This is a play on words, especially the "if." To summarize Jesus: you say, if thou canst? O brother, you have that wrong. I can. The "if" does not rest with me. I am able. Rather,

the "if" rests with thee. Canst thou believe?

The father still had doubts about Jesus' ability to help. These doubts must now be removed. The answer of Jesus forces him to take a hard look into his own heart. Does he really believe in Jesus? Do you really believe in Jesus when you come to Him with the burden of past sins and the need for deliverance from the power of sin?

Faith includes the following: an acknowledgment that God is holy, and that in His presence our sins carry the penalty of death. Awareness of this fact causes us to cry out in sorrow for sin. The main burden is not the fear of hell, rather, it is the desire for divine acceptance. The relationship between the believer and God is one of friendship, even the most heartwarming friendship of Father and child. We long for His presence and blessing. Our sins cause us to realize that we have forfeited this. We have turned our back upon Him. We have breached the bond of love. There is hope as we turn to Jesus. He is not mere man; He is the God-man. He came into this world to meet the demands of the holy God by bearing the penalty of death for our sins. To come to Jesus is to believe that His blood covers all our sins, and that in His exaltation He is able to deliver us from the power of any sin, even the devil himself. Such salvation is by grace alone.

When Jesus forced this father to examine himself, to evaluate that "if," the father concluded that he did believe, that he did possess this faith. Hence his response was, "I believe."

May that be your answer too. Look back in your life. How many past sins still roar in your memory? It doesn't take too long to uncover them. There is a raw nerve of guilt that still festers in

your conscience. Do you really believe that the blood of Jesus washed away all those sins, that in the way of sincere repentance God has dismissed them from His own mind so that they do not interfere with His dealings with you? How wonderful it is to say, I believe!

Also, as we continue to deal with the influence of sin in our lives today, many of us deal with mighty forces. We look at the son, frothing at the mouth, manipulated by Satan, and we see ourselves in our daily struggle to throw off Satan's assaults and our own failures. How beautiful it is for us to say, I believe. Yes, we are able to triumph over evil in *any form*. We say with Paul, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

He adds, "Help thou my unbelief."

When we come to terms with our faith, we also are able to deal honestly with our unbelief. Does that sound contradictory? It isn't. We cannot know the weakness of our faith unless we examine ourselves with the eye of faith. In response to the gospel, this father cried out, "I believe, help my unbelief." He still realized that Christ was right; he has his doubts about Jesus' ability to help. Do you have some doubts? Do you question the blood of Jesus as being sufficient for your sins? Do you wonder whether the Spirit of Jesus is able to deliver you from the power and temptation of sin in your life?

Such doubts are not to be ignored; they must be faced. Here the father does not make excuses for his doubts. We may not do that either. Doubt is unbelief. This father saw that. Hence he cried to Jesus, "Help my *unbelief*. Take it away, deliver me from any doubt that I still have." We do well to draw near to Jesus with the same spiritual desire.



With a mighty command, Jesus helps his unbelief by displaying His power over his son. "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee come out of him and enter no more into him." Bow before the authority and power of Jesus.

The spirit shrieked. What a thing that must have been to hear! The son shook and violent-

ly thrashed about until suddenly he lay on the ground so that the people said, he is dead.

Jesus took him by the hand and raised him up.

Does that help your unbelief? Jesus is our complete Savior. He is Lord not only over disease and over the devil. He is that to be sure. He is Lord also over sin and

death. Behold the cross, the empty tomb, the crown.

May all our doubts be taken away as we gaze upon the power of our Savior.

Peace was restored to that home and family.

May that peace be amongst us as the family of God. □

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## Changes and Sameness — A New Volume of *The SB* "ISBE" — Significant Publishing Venture

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### Editorials

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#### Changes and Sameness — A New Volume of *The SB*

Every earthly thing that is alive changes. Whatever does not change is dead; and it changes too — it decays, or becomes stagnant.

Very much alive, *The Standard Bearer* does not resist all change.

Volume 66 of *The Standard Bearer*, which begins with this issue, will see several changes both of writers and of rubrics.

Rev. Jason Kortering will share with Rev. James Slopsema the writing of the meditations. Professor Robert Decker will take over the column, "All Around Us," noting and commenting briefly on significant developments in the ecclesiastical realm as brought to light in the religious press. Professor Herman Hanko will produce a series of articles in which he sketches the life and labor of notable persons in the history of the church,

beginning with the early, post-apostolic church. The emphasis will be on the *life* of the "fathers" (and "mothers"). By means of these biographical sketches, we intend to instruct our readers in church history. Secretly, we hope to whet their appetite for more reading in the fascinating area of church history on their own. We encourage our young people in particular to read these articles.

We look forward to "new" writers and rubrics. Rev. Bernard Woudenberg will share the responsibility for "Taking Heed to the Doctrine" with Rev. Ronald Hanko. Rev. Woudenberg has written in the past; and we welcome him back to the staff of regular writers. He plans to begin with a short series on the nature of gospel-preaching. Rev. Woudenberg is finishing up the requirements for a ThM degree at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids. We will benefit from some of the fruits of his studies. Rev. Kenneth Koole and

Mrs. Marybeth Lubbers will highlight the life of the covenant family in some eight articles on "The Reformed Family." About the importance of this subject, not only for families but also for the church, nothing needs to be said. Missions will be the subject regularly addressed by Rev. Ronald Van Overloop. Rev. Van Overloop has served for some 10 years as home missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches. He has deep convictions about the church's calling to do missions and some well-reasoned ideas as to how the church should carry this calling out. Mr. James Lanting, practising attorney in South Holland, Illinois, has agreed to write at least five articles on current issues or court decisions touching on the relationship of church and state. His rubric will be "Church and State."

We have also planned a number of guest articles, including articles from our sister



churches; from the denominational Contact and Mission Committees; from various ministers; and others. One of these "others" appears already in this issue. We have asked Rev. Steven Houck, home missionary of the PRC, to shed light for our readers on the "new age movement." Two more installments will follow. Again, we urge the young people particularly to read Houck's "A Reformed Look at the New Age Movement."

One change calls for special attention, since it requires cooperation from the Bible study classes and societies. Rev. Gise Van Baren will work up exegetical outlines on a book of the Bible, to serve as a guide and help especially for the various Bible study groups. He intends to begin with the book of Philippians. These study guides may later be published separately. We ask the societies and other groups to consider studying the book of Philippians this season, availing themselves of the guide in *The SB*. Of course, this guide will serve also for personal and family study of Holy Scripture. We would like to hear from the Bible study groups, what they think of publishing such guides for their help.

These are the changes.

We make them in the interests of the spiritual growth of our readers; and we make them, as we do all the plans for *The SB* in the coming year, subject to the "condition of James," "If the Lord will."

What remains the same?

All of the other writers and rubrics, for one thing. We express our thanks to these writers for their readiness and reliability.

Most importantly, the witness of *The SB* to the Reformed faith and life as defined in the Reformed confessions remains the same. If this changes, *The SB* will have perished. Our purpose in the last decade of the 20th cen-

tury is to give expression to this faith, also as the Holy Spirit has developed it in the PRC. At the same time, we intend to subject all doctrines and practices in the sphere of the churches, as well as developments in the world, to examination according to this standard.

May the Holy Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ bless our writers, our readers, and all who contribute to the publishing of *The SB* so that the Reformed faith is promoted and so that all those who love this faith are encouraged and strengthened, as well as that others may come to know and love this faith.

Brothers and sisters, pray for us!

And write us.

One column, in our judgment an important one, will depend entirely on you, the readers — "Letters." □ -DJE

## "ISBE" — Significant Publishing Venture

With Eerdmans's publication in 1988 of the fourth volume, the ambitious project of producing a fully revised edition of the well-known and highly regarded *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* ("ISBE") is completed. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* has long been a standard Bible reference work — a classic in its field. As a Bible encyclopedia, "ISBE" consists of articles on the names of all the persons and places mentioned in the Bible, as well as the other Scriptural terms that have theological or ethical meaning. Although based on the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, "ISBE" contains cross-reference entries to the forms used in the King James Version and in the New English Bible, so that those who use these English versions can also easily use the *Encyclopedia*. Related articles are

cross-referenced; bibliographies are provided to assist in further study of many subjects.

Volume Four contains the entries, Q-Z.

The *Encyclopedia* contains a world of Protestant scholarship in Scripture and will be of benefit to all Bible-students, whether ministers or laymen. Does the preacher want an overview of "Sacrifices and Offerings in the OT"? Is a member of the congregation interested in a complete description of the Sanhedrin, including its history, composition, working, and appearance in Scripture? Is a young person required to introduce some aspect of the temple for Young People's Society? Pull "ISBE" off the shelf!

The quality of the articles varies, as is to be expected, from one contributor to the other. A.A. Hoekema's article on the "Seventy Weeks" (of Daniel 9) is excellent, a great improvement on the article that appeared in the edition of 1929. C. Plantinga, Jr. has a thorough treatment of the "Trinity," including a good account of the history of the doctrine.

Generally, the contributions of the General Editor, the indefatigable Geoffrey W. Bromiley, are sound, and well-done. Especially interesting to a Reformed student of the Bible is Bromiley's posing the question, in his article on "Substitution," "Of whom is Christ the Substitute?" Although Bromiley's answer is not satisfactory ("We can hardly say that He is the substitute only of some men, for on good biblical grounds all responsible theologians have always recognized that He identified Himself with the race and offered a sufficient sacrifice for all"), a Reformed man does appreciate that Bromiley calls attention to the fact that, as he puts it, "The doctrine of substitutionary



representation gives sharper edge to the problem of the scope of salvation," and that he concludes that, "This may be worked out in the narrowly Calvinistic form or otherwise," warning that "the objective universality of substitution must certainly not be applied in the direction of an unbiblical and dangerous universalism."

Bromiley should consider that universalism is not the only, or even the chief, danger of a doctrine of "the objective universality of substitution," but that the central danger is the necessary denial of substitution itself — if Christ died in the stead of every man, but many yet perish, Christ's suffering was not in fact substitution.

Not all is well with the revised, updated "ISBE." At least one article is mostly sheer, superstitious nonsense. Under "Shroud," one contributor conducts a lengthy, serious study of the Shroud of Turin, which concludes, amazingly:

*Thus, the Shroud of Turin remains a fascinating, unfinished puzzle, whose pieces are not yet all in place . . .*

*The possibility that it was the burial shroud of Jesus cannot at this point be either proved or disproved . . .*

The author ought to have written, if he wasted space on this hoax at all, "Thus the Shroud of Turin is still another piece of

Roman Catholic deception and superstition, foisted on an incurably credulous people."

More serious is the evidence of a weakening of the doctrine of Scripture throughout the *Encyclopedia*, betraying the abandonment of the orthodox doctrine of Scripture widely within evangelical Protestantism. Far too much attention is given to the unbelieving views of higher critical scholars; and some weight is ascribed to these positions (cf. the article, "Son of Man"). In response to the charge of the liberals that the entire history of Samson is a "solar myth," "ISBE" concedes that "the story may contain some solar features."

In a new article, "Science and Christianity," R.H. Bube sells out the Biblical truth of creation:

*There is . . . no a priori reason why a world view based on creation, as biblically described above, cannot be consistent with . . . the mechanism . . . of creation by process in time (usually called evolution) . . . Ample scientific evidence suggests that living creatures undergo changes in physical and biological structures, particularly in response to changes in environmental conditions. This is the basic scientific foundation for evolutionary theory . . . The general theory of evolution, which supposes that all living forms developed from less complex forms that in turn developed from nonliving matter, is a reasonable hypothesis . . .*

Having adopted Darwin's explanation of the origin of the universe, Bube, as a professing Christian, must wrest Genesis 1 and 2, so that Scripture subserves the theological and scientific monstrosity of evolution. Correctly noting that "Christian anti-evolutionists . . . have concluded that the general theory of evolution and the Genesis Creation account are mutually exclusive" and that they "have seen advocacy of the general theory as a direct assault on the reliability, authority, and integrity of the Bible," Bube assures us that we "Christian antievolutionists" have "uncritically accepted specific traditional interpretations of these biblical passages without thoroughly evaluating the *revelational purpose behind their writing*" (p. 355; my emphasis - DJE). Therein lies a heterodox doctrine of Holy Scripture, which is fatal to the Christian religion.

Volume Four, with the three preceding volumes, is published by the William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan. It contains 1211 pages, taking the reader from Q. (a hypothetical source of the gospels, not the letter) to Zuzim ("One of the peoples subdued by Chedorlaomer . . . Gen. 14:5"). It sells for \$39.95. □ -DJE

## Letters

### Lying — Is It Always Wrong?

That lying is indeed always wrong is the contention of Prof. H. Hanko in his article in the

*Standard Bearer* of August 1, 1989, entitled: Lying (2). We would have no criticism of this article except for the incidents which he cites. In this article he refers to certain incidents of lying

in Scripture. He writes that, although Scripture does not specifically condemn these lies, and also that the saints who committed these lies were always properly motivated, the lie, ac-



cording to the Word of God, is always wrong, and these lies must also be condemned. He refers to Rahab who lied to the police of Jericho (see Joshua 2:2-7), the midwives of Israel when they lied to the servants of Pharaoh (see Ex. 1:15-22), and the woman of Bahurim who lied when she sent the messengers of Absalom away in search of Hushai's messengers when in fact they were hidden in her well (see II Samuel 17:15-21). Now I wish to add two other incidents to these to which Prof. Hanko refers: II Samuel 15:32-37 and Joshua 8:1, 2. In II Samuel 15:32-37 we read that David sent Hushai to Absalom to affiliate himself with the cause of his rebellious son, Absalom, in order to frustrate the good counsel of Ahithophel; and in Joshua 8:1, 2 we read of the Lord's counsel to Joshua to destroy Ai.

We have already remarked that Prof. Hanko concedes that Scripture does not condemn these incidents of lying, and also that these saints were properly motivated. Scripture, however, does more than this. It is not only true that the Word of God does not condemn Rahab, but she is called a heroine of faith, and this exactly in connection with her action in her dealings with Joshua's spies, as recorded in Hebrews 1:31. And, in connection with the Hebrew midwives, recorded in Exodus 1:15-21, notice what we read in verse 20, immediately after they lied to Pharaoh (vs. 19): "Therefore God dealt well with the midwives." The Lord dealt well with these midwives exactly because of what we read in verse 19.

Now Scripture does not condemn these acts of lying of these saints. Prof. Hanko concedes this, but his reasoning does not convince the undersigned. Why do not the Scriptures condemn these acts of lying? I have always

believed that the reason the Word of God does not condemn them is that they are not to be condemned. Now notice that all these incidents occur when there is conflict between the Cause of the Lord and its enemies, between the seed of the woman and that of the serpent. I would designate these incidents as military strategy. To use an illustration, do not field commanders always resort to the strategy of deception when involved in battle? Do they not always attempt to confuse their opponents? In fact, to use another illustration, do we not resort to the same tactics when engaged in a game of chess or checkers? Is this necessarily wrong?

But here we are dealing with the saints of God in their constant conflict with the forces of darkness. Why did the messengers of Pharaoh believe the lie of the midwives? Was this not of the Lord, and do we not read that because of what these midwives told the king of Egypt the Lord therefore dealt well with them? Were these emissaries of Pharaoh not fools to believe these midwives? Indeed, were not the messengers Absalom fools to believe the woman of Bahurim, and must this not also be said of the messengers of the king of Jericho who believed what Rahab told them? And, yet, these emissaries of Pharaoh, the messengers of Absalom, and the messengers of the king of Jericho believed these tales. That was of the Lord.

Did David sin when he sent Hushai to Absalom, as recorded in II Samuel 17:15-21? Mind you, Hushai was advised by David to affiliate himself with the cause of Absalom? Was this wrong? This, we understand, was deception. When Hushai told Absalom that the counsel of Ahithophel was not good, this too was deception

on the part of Hushai. Hushai knew that he was not speaking the truth to Absalom. Was this wrong on the part of Hushai? I think not. Besides, Absalom believed Hushai, and this was of the Lord.

And, finally, there is the incident which is recorded in Joshua 8 and which I would particularly call to the attention of Prof. Hanko. We understand the strategy employed here by Joshua. A certain detachment of Israel's troops is ordered by Joshua to lie in ambush behind Ai. Then another detachment of Israel's men of war is advised to advance upon Ai, and then to flee as the men of Ai came forth to meet them. That they fled was also deception. It served to draw the men of Ai away from the city and give the men of Israel, who were hiding in ambush opportunity to come out of their hiding place and destroy the city. All this was deception. And, mind you, this counsel of deception was given to Joshua by the Lord.

(Rev.) H. Veldman  
Jenison, MI

Although it is true that lying is rooted in the sin of man and the deception practised by Satan, your articles on lying (June 1 and August 1, 1989) do leave some questions. You say that the spies could have been saved in some other way if Rahab had told the truth. My question is this, would not this have been tempting God? Surely if the hiding place of the spies had been revealed it would have meant the death of the spies and also of Rahab and her family. Although lying was not involved when the Devil tempted Jesus to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, nevertheless, Jesus declared that this type of trusting on the Lord would be tempting the Lord. One can apply the same kind of thinking to the act of some Dutch



families when they hid certain people from the German Gestapo and then lied about it. Sometimes, don't you think, that individuals are placed in the position of choosing the lesser of two evils? The instances you mentioned from Scripture fit this category and probably this is why Scripture does not condemn in such instances.

However, I have a further comment to make regarding instances in the Bible in which lying is commanded. There is the case of Samuel recorded in I Samuel 16:1-4. As I read this incident it appears that the Lord told Samuel to purposely deceive Saul. Then there is the case of Ahab in which the Lord put a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets, I Kings 22:23. You might also take a look at Judges 9:23. The case of Gideon and the Midianites might apply also in that Gideon under the command of God deceived the enemy by making them think that Gideon's band was a great number.

In general, however, lying is a sin and although Scripture does not condemn certain cases of lying, all lying is rooted in original sin; but the cases I have mentioned, and there may be more, cause me to think that none of us has the last answer on the question of lying. One can add to this the question of killing, for in many places in the Bible the Lord commanded to kill, even women with child and small children.

Perhaps you might comment on these questions in a future issue of *The Standard Bearer*. You might also comment on the intent of lying. It seems to me that the Heidelberg is pointed to the idea of lying with the intent to destroy a brother's reputation and to be honest in a court of law that justice might be served.

Howard Van Manen  
Grand Rapids, MI

## Response

My correspondents and I are confronted with the clear teaching of Scripture that we must never lie and must always speak the truth. I have shown this in the first of my articles, and I cannot find a way to get around Scripture's insistence on the point. Undoubtedly it is true that we are left with problems and questions, but we ought to admit that these problems and questions do not arise from any ambiguity in Scripture's teachings, but in our apparent inability to put Scripture's teachings into practice in our lives.

I do not consider trusting in God at times when telling the truth endangers our lives to be "tempting God." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not tempt God when they told king Nebuchadnezzar: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Daniel 3:16-18). Daniel was not tempting God when he prayed at his window towards Jerusalem contrary to the king's commandment, even though he knew that the result would be being thrown into the den of lions (Daniel 6).

If Scripture categorically condemns lying whenever the Holy Spirit discusses the subject, but does not specifically point out that lying is a sin when it describes a child of God as lying, it seems to me to be stretching a point to say that the sin is not condemned by Scripture in every instance. Scripture condemns drunkenness, but does not condemn Noah when he lay drunken

and naked in his tent. In fact, when he woke from his drunken stupor he prophesied (Genesis 9:20-27). Does this mean that we are to condone Noah's sin of drunkenness because Scripture does not condemn it and because it became the occasion for a prophecy? I think not.

I do not think Samuel lied when he went to Bethlehem to anoint David. He did, as a matter of fact, sacrifice in Bethlehem as was his usual custom as he traveled about among the tribes. He was under no obligation to tell Saul that he was also going to anoint David, that, in fact, to anoint David was his chief purpose in going. Withholding information is not necessarily lying.

The lying spirit which God put in the mouth of Ahab's prophets was a devil, and the text is proof that God's sovereignty extends also over the wicked devils. That they should be present in heaven ought not to surprise us, for the devil himself was present in heaven when God brought up the matter of Job's righteousness.

Nor can Gideon's strategy be characterized as lying. Was he under an obligation to tell the Midianites that he intended to attack? And was he morally bound to inform them that he was coming with only three hundred men, although the noise they would make would leave the impression that there were more?

The same holds true for the strategy used at Ai. Was Joshua under some moral compulsion to inform the citizens of Ai that he had troops in hiding behind the city? Of course not. Military strategy (much like that of a game of chess, although the object is quite different in war and in chess) is not lying, for a general is under no moral obligation to inform the enemy of his plans in the battle.

It appears to me that the effort is being made to carry over the



whole point to the life of the child of God in the world: "But here we are dealing with the saints of God in their constant conflict with the forces of darkness." The argument then appears to be: 1) Israel was fighting against the powers of darkness and sin. 2) Fighting against the powers of sin justifies lying. 3) In our spiritual fight with the powers of sin we are permitted to use the lie. If this is the argument, the dangers of taking such a position are apparent. Every part of our life is a facet of the battle of faith which we are called to fight in this world in which we live. Hence, because we are engaged in a life and death struggle against the forces of darkness all our life, we are permitted to lie — or to commit any other sin for that matter. I may steal when I am no longer able to buy or sell. I may cheat when the government requires taxes which prevent me from supporting the cause of the gospel. I may lie when my position as a Christian is threatened in the courts — when, e.g., (as shall some day happen) I am charged with teaching my children doctrines forbidden by the State. Not only have we then reached the point where we operate on the basis of the Jesuit ethic, "the end justifies the means," but we have adopted a truly situational ethic, i.e., that the rightness or wrongness of an act is determined by the situation in which the act was performed and by the motive for doing it.

It will not do to justify lying by appealing to the fact that the Lord sometimes used the lie for good. Our God is a very merciful God Who is mindful of our human frailties and whose great mercy is not only revealed in forgiving our sins, but Who even on occasion uses our sins for good. That is amazing. It is truly of the Lord that the "messengers

of the king of Jericho . . . believed what Rahab told them . . . ." It was truly of the Lord that "the emissaries of Pharaoh, the messengers of Absalom, and the messengers of the king of Jericho believed" the tales told them. It was also of the Lord that out of David's adultery and murder the Christ was born. Neither we nor Scripture approve these sins.

It is true that the verse which speaks of God's blessing the midwives in Egypt (Exodus 1:20) is introduced with the word "therefore." It is not necessarily true that this must be interpreted to mean: "Because the midwives lied, God dealt well with the midwives." It is more likely that the "therefore" stands connected with the work of the midwives in keeping the male children of Israel alive in spite of the command of Pharaoh. That this is likely the meaning is suggested also by the rest of verse 20 which speaks of how specifically God's blessing came upon the midwives, and through their work, upon Israel: "And the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty."

Yet the point you make is well taken that the line between lying and telling the truth is not always so easily drawn. I have wondered whether it is possible for a Christian to be a spy — even in wartime when he is required to gain information behind enemy lines. Although cloaking his identity would not necessarily be lying, he would be forced to lie with false and forged papers wherever he was stopped for interrogation. Yet the Lord commanded Israel to send spies into Canaan. The point is not, however, whether lying is always wrong, or right under certain circumstances; the point is to define what actually constitutes lying. And it would seem to me that if under some circumstances it is not crystal

clear whether what one does is actually lying, the course of action is to avoid even the appearance of evil.

At any rate, not only does our God Who knows the heart examine the motive and deepest impulse of everything we say and do, but He also passes righteous judgment on every outward deed. If we take the position that lying *for good reasons* is pleasing in God's sight, then we have adopted an ethics which teaches that *the end justifies the means*. And you know what horrible evils have been perpetrated over the ages in the name of this ethical premise.

The discussion on lying remains interesting and important. May God give us grace to "speak the truth in love." □ -H. Hanko

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### "In Remembrance Of Me"

Dear Jesus, Thou this feast hast spread,

Invited guests are we;  
We come as Thou hast bid us come,  
Thus to remember Thee.

We come from sinful thought and aim,  
More earnestly to flee;  
Pardon to seek and grace to find,  
As we remember Thee.

We come to thank Thee for Thy love  
So rich, so full, so free;  
To bless Thee, praise Thee, lose ourselves  
As we remember Thee.

We come to lay the burdens down  
That press most heavily;  
To enter into perfect peace  
As we remember Thee.

Our penitence, our love, our hope,  
Oh condescend to see,  
And let us "bear a song away"  
As we remember Thee.

—S.B. Oct. 15, 1927



## A Plan of Action

With this article, a new rubric begins in the *Standard Bearer*. In earlier years, in both *Beacon Lights* as well as in the Sunday School magazine, *Our Guide*, articles have presented a study of passages and books of the Bible as a guide for discussions in societies or Sunday School. After a period of time, this practice fell by the wayside — perhaps because it was difficult for societies to keep pace with the studies. Still, it was the opinion of the *Standard Bearer* staff that a study guide for a book of the Bible in this magazine could profitably be used for our societies still. Possibly through the current year, societies will not be able to make use of the material which follows. At any rate, the articles can be saved and used in following years. Also, it might be very profitable for families to use this guide for family devotions — discussing the outlines and seeking answers to the questions.

It is, surely, a lofty goal to “search the Scriptures.” The thought comes from Acts 17:11 where we read of the Jews in Berea that they were “more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” That practice was noble indeed!

We must continue this practice if we are to know Scripture properly and understand the doctrines of that Word.

Perhaps a few pointers are necessary to assist each in his study of Scripture. There are complaints made about societies: the study proceeds at too slow (or fast) a pace; the discussion is uninteresting; certain parties monopolize the discussion. The difficulty is often with ourselves. Though no society is perfect, though there is always room for improvement, still, societies are what we make of them. It is a truism: we get out of society what we are willing to put into it. If we are unprepared, we won't learn much when we do attend. If we are not regular in attendance, we quickly lose interest in the society itself. So, allow me to make several suggestions.

First, one ought to have an overall picture of the Bible book that is being studied. One ought not to lose the “forest” while considering the “trees.” Therefore, before entering into the details of a book, make (or find) a detailed outline of that book. That will give an understanding of what the book is about, how it is presenting the principal thoughts, and how these are interrelated. Keep that outline available and consult it frequently.

Secondly, there ought to be made a more detailed outline of the passage which one is studying. A careful study will show

how the “trees” fit into the “forest.”

Next, one ought to take careful notes on the passage which is being studied. Some sort of notebook ought to be used for this. Perhaps each verse could be listed, followed by your notes and questions. These notes could consist of three distinct parts: first, a list of questions which occur to you as you read and study the verse; secondly, a list of thoughts or comments which come to your mind as you have been studying; thirdly, adequate space should be left to add comments or thoughts of significant points made in the study at society. Allow me to illustrate this, using Psalm 23:1 as an example:

Psalm 23 — *What is a shepherd? What specific tasks make him a figure of God's care of His people? What tasks are identified for the shepherd in the rest of this Psalm? Does the author of this Psalm use the figure of “shepherd” because of his own acquaintance with shepherds? Where else in Scripture is the figure “shepherd” used? What does the word “want” signify?*

*Comments which could be made: “LORD” with the four capital letters means “Jehovah” (the covenant-name of God which emphasizes His changelessness). He is MY Shepherd — this has wonderful personal meaning for me. In connection with “not wanting,” I must remember always to distinguish between what I think I need and what in fact I do need. I can point out how Jesus uses the figure of “good shepherd” concerning Himself in John 10. Calvin states: “He who has Jahve, the possessor of*



*all things, himself has all things, he lacks nothing . . . ."*

*Notes made on the verse in society:*

In process of study, one ought to make good use of a concordance. Three, I believe, are commonly used: *Cruden's*, *Strong*, and *Young's*. The latter is the one I use. Practice in the use of a concordance can serve one well in his studies. In the case of Psalm 23:1 several words could be checked in a concordance. The word "LORD" would, perhaps, not be checked because there are so many different places in which it is used. If we do look it up, we find that there are 13 different Hebrew words used for "Lord" and one in Greek (plus three variations). We find the word of Psalm 23:1 under the fifth division. The Hebrew word is listed — but then a transliteration is given (Hebrew letters written into our alphabet so that we can pronounce it — in this case, *yahweh*). One then turns to the back of the concordance to the section on Old Testament Hebrew and finds *yahweh*. In this instance, the word is not listed there because of its very frequent use. Most words are found in a similar manner — and the Hebrew or Greek section in the back of the concordance shows how the same word is translated by various different English words. So one could find the word "want." There are ten different Hebrew words and four Greek words which are translated as "want" in the King James Bible. One finds the "want" of Psalm 23:1 under the fifth Hebrew word (*chaser*). Checking the Old Testament Hebrew in the back of the concordance, one finds that *chaser* is translated with other English words as well: once as "be abated," once as "decrease," twice as "fail," once as "have need," five times as "lack," and seven times as

"want." One can then turn back to the concordance to find where the word is used as "fail" or "decrease" in Scripture. So one could do the same thing with the word "shepherd."

All of this, obviously, takes a lot of hard work and much time. Yet the more one does this, the easier it becomes. But the important point is that in this way one becomes acquainted with the usage of various significant words in the passage studied — as well as their importance in other

### Life's Promises

Oh, human life, thy promises are sweet,  
They fall upon the ear  
In cadence charming, and their tones repeat  
In accents clear.  
But dost thou keep thy promises?  
Can I trust  
Thy silvery voice,  
Will it awaken echo-tones that must  
Bid me rejoice?  
Ah no! one voice alone my soul hath heard  
That ne'er deceived,  
One Heart alone the depths of mine has stirred  
Yet never grieved.  
Jesus, I turn to Thee! oh let me hide  
Within Thy breast,  
Refuge and shelter, peace and grace provide,  
And needed rest.  
For in the mazes of a troublous hour  
I make my way;  
Oh come to me, Thou hast the will, the power,  
Be mine always.

—S.B. Nov. 1, 1927

passages of Scripture. In Berea those worthy Jews "searched the Scriptures daily." We ought to do some of the same sort of searching. We have so many more tools than they did to do this searching!

Then one can make good use of a cross-reference Bible. There are usually cross references which are listed either in the center column or under an individual verse. By checking each of these, one can gain further insight into the meaning of a text.

Finally, there are available various commentaries which can help our understanding of the meaning of a passage. Several New Testament commentaries which can be used include Calvin's commentaries, those of Hendriksen, and also Lenski (who is Lutheran and opposed obviously to Calvinism — but does give some good explanations of a passage).

I mention commentaries last. These are not unimportant — but ought rather to be used with care. Often, a careful study as outlined above will make the use of a commentary superfluous. Still, there are thoughts or questions which a good commentator might present which are worth considering. Choose at least one good commentary to use in your study. Make note of significant points. Do not take what is written uncritically. Do not simply quote a commentator in society — but freely repeat what you believe to be profitable.

Let none be ashamed to be wrong when speaking. Societies are for exchange of ideas and thoughts. There these can be examined in the light of Scripture. Far better to have an incorrect idea corrected in the light of Scripture itself, than to retain an incorrect interpretation for all of one's life.

May your studies in society this season be blessed indeed! □



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## *The Day of Shadows*

Rev. John Heys

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# The Man of Sin Foreshadowed (2)

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The tower of Babel of the kingdom of Nimrod, who tried to unite the whole human race as one worldwide kingdom, was a shadow of what lies ahead of us. As pointed out last time, another Nimrod is coming, namely, the antichrist as king of the one-world kingdom presented to us in Revelation 13.

Way back before the days of Abraham, and after the judgment of God in the Flood in the days of Noah, it was possible for the seed of the serpent to attempt the formation of such a one-world kingdom. What makes it so hard to do so today is the sharp difference between the various peoples of this world, because of the confusion of man's speech by God for the safety of His church. This difference of speech was due to a difference of natures which God wrought in the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth. There was by no means agreement then among the people of the world in that day; and a kingdom in which they could work together was impossible. And God wrought this for the good and safety of His church.

This confusion of the language of man in that day God wrought in His grace for the good of the seed of the woman. Had God not scattered them by this confounding of their language, the church

would have been wiped off the face of this earth. But that is not the most serious reason for this confounding of their language. The Seed of the Woman, namely, Christ, had yet to be born, to die on His cross, and to be exalted to God's right hand with absolute control over the whole human race, so that He could prepare the way for His return and the establishment of a holy kingdom upon the new earth wherein righteousness and holiness would shine forth in perfection.

And now today the world remains divided into nations, tongues, and tribes, people and races so that the various members of the body of Christ, His church, may all be formed as well as saved by a rebirth, and faith may be wrought in them by God in His grace. The elect, the exact and complete number of members of the body of Christ, must not all be alike, except in the sense that they are spiritually perfect and have hearts that love God in every part of them. At first God gathered them only out of Abraham and his seed with very few exceptions. But since the day of Pentecost He gathers His people from the whole Gentile world, so that the body of Christ, the church which God chose eternally, will have all its various members for the glory of God's name.

Take a look at your own body. What a variety of members

designed by God to work together for the work He designed for that body. Each member has its place and work. Look at your thumb and the direction in which it moves as contrasted to the other four fingers on your hand. If that thumb moved up and down, as did the others, instead of from left to right, could you easily pick up a pencil or piece of paper? Try it once! Think of your ribs, which give effective protection to your important organs of heart and lungs. How different they are from that heart and those lungs. Yet they work together. And so it is with the members of the body of Christ, His church. For that reason also God changed the natures of man in that confusion of their language. The human race must be divided into different kinds of people for the realization of that beautiful and perfect body of Christ.

Now, as pointed out last time, the human race is rapidly moving toward the day when the antichrist will arise and mankind will be united as a one-world kingdom. It is an important and amazing thing to note the "earthquakes in diverse places" of which we read in Matthew 24:7. The last few months there was one in Canada, followed by one in California, and then that terrible one in Armenia, which was followed the next week by one in Alaska! Talk about diverse

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places! And they do not simply display God's almighty power. They reveal His faithfulness to His promises, and His mercy and grace for His church; for they reveal His intention of sending Christ back to this earth for the good of His church.

But now, as far as the coming of the antichrist and his worldwide kingdom is concerned, the amazing inventions of man in the last few centuries, if not indeed in the last few years, make it very, very plain that such a one-world kingdom is coming. This globe is shrinking rapidly. And it is becoming more and more possible for one government to rule the whole human race.

Not only do we today have commercial aircraft that fly over 600 miles an hour and military aircraft that can break the speed of sound; but we are now able to see what is happening on the other side of the earth *while it happens!* Babylon and Jerusalem were far from where London and Paris now are in the day when John wrote in Revelation of the fact that, when the antichrist comes, "all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him." We, here on this side of the Atlantic Ocean will see that antichrist; and he will see us. The amazing invention of color television not only, but also the production of those satellites that can make it possible for us to see what is happening on the other side of the globe reveals how small this earth is getting, and how it can become one world, a worldwide kingdom ruled by one government. Today we can be seen, as well as see things that happen, all over the earth. And the antichrist will see and govern all the tribes and tongues and races upon the face of this earth with more contact and control than our own government now has over the fifty states that make it one nation.

A little more electronic advances added to our computers and video cassette tapes, and the ability to show what they took upon the TV screen, reveal how the members of the body of Christ cannot hide from that antichrist who demands his mark on the right hand or forehead. It also reveals how he can have awesome rule over all people, all the seed of the serpent, and why it is said in Revelation 13:8 that all the unbelievers shall worship him as one worldwide kingdom's king.

This all makes it plain also that we will be forbidden to buy or sell. Think of how much spying can be done now already, and is done by electronic devices that have been invented. Can not then the antichrist have our house "bugged" and have awesome control over the whole human race?

Besides, all the powerful weapons which have already been invented and which threaten the wiping out of the whole human race, and which can wipe out cities like New York and Los Angeles by an atomic bomb, reveal how man must come to the point of joining together as one nation. More and more we can see that, and hear government leaders in other countries as well as in our own emphasizing that we must work together for peace to save the whole human race. In Nimrod's day they thought it would be more profitable to join all the human race in one place as a kingdom of peace. That being the case then, they reveal how much more necessary it will be in the days ahead.

Now, a shadow does not show all the details of the object which casts it. It is true that a beautiful mountain scene may consist of the trees and snow-capped peaks of the mountain reflected in the water of the lake before it. But

that is not a shadow. A shadow may reveal merely that the object has round or square corners. The tower of Babel, and the one-world nation which Nimrod ruled, do not show us all that which is revealed to us in Revelation 13. In verse 1 we read that John saw a beast rise up out of the sea — that is, out of the human race — a beast having seven heads and ten horns. Then in verse 4 we read that one of these heads was wounded to death; but that this wound was healed.

Plainly here we have that shadow kingdom of Nimrod; and the wound is the disruption of that kingdom by the confounding of man's language. The other five kingdoms were those of Assyria, the Babylonian empire, the Medo-Persian empire, the Greek-Macedonian empire, and the Roman empire. But remember that they are all heads of one beast. That beast is the serpent whose seed, as God told Adam and Eve, would in God's time have its head crushed, but would also, and especially in the days of this one-world kingdom, crush the heel of the seed of the woman. Yes, that serpent did crush the heel of Christ when it crucified Him. Indeed He was killed, and it seemed as though Satan got the victory. For when Christ died the royal seed of David came to an end. But do not forget that He had blotted out our guilt and earned the resurrection of our bodies, including His own, and did rise the third day and reveal to Satan that, though he crushes the heel of the elect, his head and that of the seed of the serpent is going to be crushed. Christ's death looked like a crushing of His head, but it was not. Before He died He could and rightfully did call out, "Father, into Thy hands do I commend My spirit." Without His cross the crushing of the



head opens the door to hell and its everlasting punishment. But before He died physically Christ, for His elect's sake, took away that death for His elect in hell wherein the seed of the serpent are going to be cast.

What does this confounding of man's language there at that tower of Babel mean? Of what is it the shadow? Certainly it was a shadow of God's holy wrath against the seed of the serpent, but also of His wisdom and almighty power. He knows how to stop the seed of the serpent from sweeping His church away and from wiping it out. And we may be sure that all is well for the church in the dreadful days that lie ahead. As surely as Nimrod's kingdom melted away, so shall the coming antichrist's kingdom be wiped off the face of this earth. And the elect children of God will not be forced to take the mark of the beast. Not one of them will do that!

Let it be understood and let it comfort every child of God that God did not need to confound the speech of man because things temporarily slipped out of His control. No, in His wisdom as well as in His sovereign rule over all things, this devilish work of mankind in Nimrod's day was decreed by God in His eternal counsel. And the raising up of the other five world powers, culminating presently in the seventh one, namely that of the antichrist, was all eternally planned by God for the good of His church, and for the glory of His own name.

Nothing ever — not even for one split second — causes God to lose control of anything, or to make things difficult for Him. Every heartbeat of every living creature occurs because He wants it to take place, and makes it occur at the right rate and for the exact number of beats, so that what He eternally planned

takes place. And as the sovereign and only God He has the right to plan everything that happens, even all the sins that are committed.

Remember and take hold of what God Himself declares through Solomon in Proverbs 19:21: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." And Jesus Himself said, "The Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed." And plainly the idea here is that God determined that sin of the unbelievers killing His Son. For in Acts 2:23 we read: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

The shadows in the Old Testament Scripture were there because God designed and brought into being the objects that cast these shadows. However, shadows need a light to be shining on the objects. God Himself is that light, and He causes His Word, the Holy Scriptures, to shine down on these deeds so that we may see what lies ahead, as well see what He already did for us through His Son.

Let us then stand in awe as we look at that of which the kingdom of Nimrod was a shadow, namely, the coming antichristian kingdom that will persecute the seed of the woman in a worldwide torment with death. In those days we will see the truth which God gave to Adam when He told him that if he ate of the forbidden fruit he would die spiritually that day, and physically die the moment God eternally decreed for him.

Adam's and Eve's eating of a piece of fruit may have looked harmless and as a minor sin. Not so! Be not deceived. The dread-

ful, godless, devilish, blasphemous world that will soon appear, and of which that kingdom of Nimrod was only a shadow, is where that first sin of Adam and Eve brings the whole human race. But what God did to the whole human race at that tower of Babel also reveals God's grace upon His church. Her enemies He will destroy utterly when the last of His elect has been born and born again. The head of the seed of the serpent is going to be crushed! □

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## Race

(Hebrews 12)

A cloud of witnesses surrounds:  
Those who have run;  
Those who by faith have won  
The victors' crowns.

Now you must run His Course.  
Lift up your feeble hands,  
Your strengthless knees. Before  
you stands  
The Saviour, your faith's Source.  
Author and Finisher He is;  
Look unto Him your spent  
strength to renew.  
He gives the eagles' wings to you.  
You shall not weary grow — the  
race is His.

Already He the victory has won.  
His life He has laid down  
To gain for you a crown.  
Rise up with joy and run!  
Throw off the weight that would  
delay.  
Lay at the foot of Calvary's tree  
The sin that would a hindrance be.  
Go on your way!

The laurel wreath awaits him that  
endures  
And Jesus Christ your victory  
assures.  
His chastening hand supplies  
Your healing exercise.  
You shall not faint but thrive,  
So for the finish strive.  
You are His chosen One,  
So run!

—Suzanne Looyenga



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# Synods and General Assemblies The Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church The Evangelical Presbyterian Church Other Interesting News Concerned CRC

## All Around Us

Prof. Robert Decker

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### Synods and General Assemblies

In the past our churches and some of our ministers have had contacts and correspondence with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This church, we recently learned, has suffered a split. *The Banner of Truth* (August-September 1989) reports:

*At the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Synod meeting in Inverness held on Thursday, May 25th this year, a critical division took place. As many as 14 ministers out of a total ministerial strength of about 36 have broken away from their church to form the Associated Presbyterian Churches. They are supported in the move by a number of officebearers, members, and adherents of the church. At a subsequent meeting in Inverness, the emergent group discussed prayerfully the way they ought to take in coming days. The immediate cause of the dissent and withdrawal was the Synod decision, made by majority vote, to uphold the suspension from office of Lord*

*Mackay of Clashfern, the Lord Chancellor, for attending two Roman Catholic requiem masses. However, supporters of Lord Mackay regard this issue as only the 'straw which broke the camel's back'. They have felt that their church has for long been denying to its members and ministers that liberty of conscience which Scripture and the Westminster Confession of Faith declare to be a Christian's inalienable right. Lord Mackay has stated that he has left the Free Presbyterian Church. These events will be watched eagerly by friend and foe alike. The prayers of many who read the magazine will be for wisdom and grace to be given to esteemed brethren on both sides of the debate as they face the future.*

We do not know what issues causing dissent in this denomination led to this "straw that broke the camel's back." What we do know is that divisions such as this do very little to help the cause of the Reformed faith and a great deal to harm it.

### The Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church

The 56th General Assembly of

the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) and the 160th Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America (RPCNA) met concurrently at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, PA early last June. Reporting on the OPC General Assembly David Kiester informs us:

*Stung by recent defections of congregations and ministers to the Presbyterian Church in America the Orthodox Presbyterian Church devoted itself to sensitivity and unity . . . but that unity did not instantly spread to embrace without controversy their host and fellow NAPARC (National Association of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches; the Christian Reformed Church is also a member of this association, RDD) member, the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America . . . . A joint protest action against abortion was also planned. This turned out to be a sticking point. The exact details of the planned protest were not known to the OPC Assembly until after their arrival, and rumors circulated. When details became known, several OPC commissioners (delegates, RDD) voiced reservations, and an amendment to the docket to allow a recess for joining in the protest failed after*

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*Prof. Decker is professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*



rigorous debate. The following day, a renewed plea from the RPCNA resulted in reconsideration and the docket amendment carried. However, several commissioners (including Moderator, Rev. Donald Duff of Oxnard, CA, who had communicated his objections to the RPCNA committee by mail prior to the Assembly) refrained from joining in the joint protest, objecting both to protesting as a church (as opposed to objecting as private citizens) and to protesting under the American flag (thought to be an Americanizing of the gospel).

Sadly, what had been proposed as a unity venture had instead highlighted one of the most serious doctrinal impediments to organic union.

The Assembly dissolved on 16 June, with the 57th General Assembly scheduled to meet in San Diego, in mid-June of 1990.

The prevailing sentiment upon exiting seemed to be, "How can we pull the church back together." (Christian Observer, July 21, 1989)

In the same article Kiester informs us that the Assembly was concerned with the great diversity within the OPC over worship practices. In addition, the commissioners dealt with a complaint from one of the Presbyteries over women in places of authority. It appears that all is not well within the denomination which J. Gresham Machen helped to found in the 1930s. There have been some significant changes in practice since its founding, and certainly not all of these are for the good. One significant point of difference lies between those who favor joining the Presbyterian Church in America and those who do not. The OPC recently decided not to merge with that denomination. It will be interesting to observe future developments in this denomination which has in the past been a staunch defender of the Calvinism of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, a much older church than the OPC,

is a denomination about the same size as our Protestant Reformed Churches. Relative to their numbers of members this church does a great deal of work. It was reported to their Synod that: 297 young people graduated from their college, Geneva College, last May; 154 students were enrolled in their seminary last year (of these 15 were RPCNA students); and eight new RP students are anticipated for the fall. This church also took the "bold step" to open a new mission in Liberia. The RP church also has a mission in Japan. This church too struggles with the issue of women in office. A final report on this matter will be presented to the Synod of 1990 (Covenanter Witness, August 1989).

## The Evangelical Presbyterian Church

This denomination, organized eight years ago out of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., has grown to 133 churches and over 38,500 members. Its General Assembly met last June in Clayton, Missouri. In its Press Release from the office of the Stated Clerk we learned that:

*Highlights of the Assembly included the recognition of twenty-one new churches this past year, including the reception of the 3,600-member Second Presbyterian Church of Memphis, Tennessee upon its withdrawal from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).*

The Senior Pastor of this large church is Dr. John R. de Witt. Dr. de Witt has written for the *Standard Bearer*, lectures often at Banner of Truth Conferences as well as other conferences, and has taught for a few years at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi.

The Press Release also reports that fraternal delegates and observers were present from the Presbyterian Church in America,

The Christian Reformed Church, and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church. The Assembly "... instructed its representatives to seek to develop and foster greater working relationships with these denominations as well as with member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches."

## Other Interesting News

Many of us are familiar with the Rev. Iain Murray who has recently been appointed as the first minister of the two-year-old Cambridge Presbyterian Church, Cambridge, England.

*Mr. Murray was assistant minister to Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel, London, from 1956-1959 during which time he was co-founder of the Banner of Truth Trust, an organization which republishes Reformation and Puritan literature long out-of-print as well as modern works of a similar character. From 1961-1969 Mr. Murray was minister of Grove Chapel, Camberwell, London, and moved to St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Sydney, Australia, in 1981. Mr. Murray is the author of a number of books and articles including The Life of Jonathan Edwards, The Life of Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and The Forgotten Spurgeon (Press Release, B of T Trust).*

There is an effort currently to revive historic and conservative Presbyterianism in England, and Cambridge Church and Rev. Murray are part of that effort. We wish Rev. Murray God's blessing as he takes up the labors of this pastorate.

## Concerned CRC

*Christian Observer* (August 25, 1989) reports that new chapters of this movement within the Christian Reformed Church have been formed in Whitinsville, MA; Lansing, IL; Hamilton, ON; and Toronto, ON. "A covenant to unite our membership and clear-

*contin on page 22*



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## Guest Article

Rev. Steven Houck

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# A Reformed Look at the New Age Movement (1)

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The New Age Movement is not a structured organization like the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, but is a loosely connected movement. It is made up of all kinds of different people — some who adhere very closely to its beliefs and practices and others who embrace only some of them. This is one of the fastest growing movements in the country. That is why we must be concerned about it. This movement is extremely anti-Christian, anti-God, and anti-Christ. Its beliefs and practices are directly contrary to all that we believe as Christians.

The contemporary roots of the New Age go back to the counterculture of the past decades. The beatniks of the fifties and their fascination with Zen, the Hippies of the sixties and their acid dreams and Eastern gurus, and the human potential movement of the seventies with their mysticism, all came together in the eighties to form the New Age Movement.

Ultimately, however, the roots of this movement go back to some of the oldest religions in the world — the Eastern mystical religions. The New Age Movement is a Westernized version of Hinduism, Buddhism, Japanese Zen, and Chinese Taoism. It has also been influenced by the

Gnosticism of the early church, the paganism of ancient Greece and Rome, and Spiritism and Occultism. Thus the New Age Movement is a mixture of spiritual, social, and political forces that are extremely anti-Christian.

The adherents of the New Age Movement believe that the world is God, that God is a force, and that we are all a part of that world force. They believe that man is God and therefore good. He has within him infinite potential if it can only be brought out. Their highest goal is to become enlightened so that they are conscious of their oneness with God. In their search for enlightenment, they involve themselves in all kinds of wicked practices such as mysticism, spiritism, the occult, witchcraft, yoga, transcendental meditation, and ESP. They worship the earth, goddesses, and even the devil.

This is so far out that we might think that few would ever fall for this kind of thing. The very opposite is true, however. The influence of this movement is everywhere. It has been said that this movement has the potential to be as sweeping as the Renaissance and Reformation. It is the fastest growing "alternative belief system" in the country — not just among extremists, but among the well-educated middle class. It touches every aspect of contemporary life. It can be seen on the television, in movies, in

the newspapers, and even at your local health-food store. Sports and exercise programs, motivational training, psychological counseling, and religious classes are all pipelines for New Age thinking.

New Age beliefs and practices are very popular among movie stars. Shirley MacLaine is an outspoken proponent. Others include: Linda Evans of *Dynasty*, Helen Reddy, Tina Turner, and Sharon Gless. The singer, John Denver, is deeply involved in the movement.

But this movement is also having a tremendous influence upon respected professions such as the medical profession. Many physicians, even though they may not adopt the religious aspect of New Age, practice the holistic method of health care. Community mental health centers in the state of New York have used spiritism as a supplementary healing system since the mid-1980s. Many psychological institutions and counseling centers teach and practice New Age principles.

The New Age Movement is making a big impact upon corporate America. A 1986 survey indicates that more than half of the Fortune 500 companies surveyed used some form of consciousness-raising technique. Such firms as Merrill Lynch, Ford, Westinghouse, RCA, Boeing, Scott Paper, and Calvin Klein have sent employees to seminars

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*Rev. Houck is a home-missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches.*



conducted by New Age groups.

The New Age has found its way into the public school system. In Los Angeles City Schools children have been taught to imagine that they are one with the sun's rays. They are told that they are part of God. New Age practices are used in training athletes. Its influence can also be seen in music and art.

Many of our politicians adhere to the principles of this movement. Congress has funded many New Age projects. Even the military has come under the spell. At one time there was a military battalion called "First Earth Battalion" which was to be a New Age militia of warrior monks attuned to resolving conflict through yoga, meditation, and the martial arts.

The New Age Movement has even influenced the Christian religion. It is openly embraced by many of liberal Christianity. "The power of positive thinking" of Norman Vincent Peale and Robert Schuller bears a striking resemblance to the human potential philosophy of the New Age Movement.

This great influence ought not surprise us, for it is the stated goal of the New Age Movement to transform the world. They want New Age beliefs and practices to become universal. They even have a political agenda to bring this about. In fact, that is how they received their name. They seek the coming of a new age.

In order that we might recognize the great danger which this movement represents and be able to resist its influence, I would like us to take a Reformed look at the New Age Movement. First, I want to explain the beliefs and practices of this movement. Secondly, I want to examine those beliefs and practices in the light of Holy Scripture. Finally, I want to suggest ways in which

we can avoid the errors of this wicked movement.

The most basic principle which underlies all the beliefs and practices of the New Age Movement is the principle: all is one. Ultimately there is no difference between God and man, birds and trees, flowers and rocks. Any apparent difference between things is not real. The World is pure and undifferentiated. This "one" is described as energy, consciousness, life force, principle, or even mind. This oneness includes mankind. Humanity, like everything else, is only an extension of the "one."

Since all things are one, including God, it is but a short step to conclude: all is God. All things are not only one but all things partake of one divine essence. Man is God. Animals are God. Plants, rivers, mountains, trees are also God. Everything is God. This erroneous view of God is called Pantheism. That all is God means that God is not a personal God. If trees, rocks, rivers, and mountains are all God, He can not be a personal God. Rather He is an impersonal force or energy.

This leads us to one of the most important principles of the New Age Movement: humanity is God. You are God and I am God. Every person is God. Man, like everything else, is a mode of expression of this one life force or energy.

One promoter of the New Age Movement put it this way: "It has long been held that whoever denies God asserts his own divinity. In dropping God, man recovers himself. It is time that God be put in his place, that is, in man, and no nonsense about it."

Shirley MacLaine, in one of her TV programs, stood on Malibu beach and shouted, "I am God."

Another advocate of the New Age philosophy went so far as to

say, "Kneel to your own self. Honor and worship your own being. God dwells within you as you!"

Because man is God there is within every individual infinite potential — infinite knowledge, power, and truth. It is all there just waiting to be unlocked.

That raises a very important question. Why aren't we experiencing the fact that we are God? What is the problem? The New Age Movement answers, "The problem is ignorance." We are blind. We all have meta-physical amnesia. We have forgotten our true identity. They blame that on our Western culture, specifically rationalism and Christianity. For this culture of ours has deluded us with a fragmented vision of ourselves and the universe so that we do not see true reality.

The solution to this problem is found in a change of one's consciousness. We must have an awakening experience by which our divine nature is actualized. This change in consciousness is known by many different names. It is called a transforming experience, a cosmic consciousness, God-realization, enlightenment, illumination, nirvana (Buddhists), satori (Zen), and at-one-ment (Hindu). This change in consciousness is accomplished by many different means such as: transcendental meditation, yoga, chanting, mood-altering music, mind-expanding drugs, religious mysticism, guided imagery, balancing of energies, hypnosis, body disciplines, fasting, the martial arts, mechanical devices that measure and alter bodily processes, and various mental programs.

Since all is one, so that there is no distinction between things, much of our world is considered to be only an illusion — a matter of our own darkened consciousness. For instance: disease and



suffering are illusions. They can be eliminated simply by altering your state of consciousness. Even death itself is not real. War with all of its killing and pain is not real. Thus a New Age advocate said of the Vietnam War, "If we all stop thinking about it, if we all stop agreeing on its objective reality, it will cease to exist."

When this principle is applied to moral issues, we discover that there is no such thing as right and wrong. There is no difference between good and evil or between God and the devil. Thus

there are no moral standards. There is no such thing as sin. You can do anything you want to do.

One New Age advocate put it this way, "If you had come to the realization of your own divinity you could do anything, even rob a bank, and it would be all right."

Therefore some of the New Age Movement are involved in very evil things such as drugs, illicit sex, the occult, devil worship, witchcraft, abortion, and even murder. The infamous

Charles Manson was involved in several New Age groups when he committed his heinous crimes. He said that he saw himself free to kill since he had reached a state of consciousness with the One which put him beyond morality where there was no good or evil.

These are the wicked and dangerous beliefs of the New Age Movement. The Lord willing, in the next article we will consider the practices of the New Age Movement which come out of these beliefs. □

## *In His Fear* Rev. Arie denHartog

# Home, Church, and School

Some time ago we attended an informational meeting for prospective freshmen at the Christian High School in our area. Our family has come to a new stage. Our oldest child begins high school this fall. We are conscious of the change this will involve for our family. High school has its own challenges, temptations, and difficulties for young people. Some major adjustments no doubt will have to be made in the routine and order of our family life. The years of high schools will inevitably make a great impact on our young people. All of this gives us occasion to stop and consider what lies ahead.

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*Rev. denHartog is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Randolph, Wisconsin.*

During the years of high school our children will be in their adolescent years. Those years of life are not always the easiest, either for the teenagers themselves or for their parents. This is the time of life when young people begin to think more and more for themselves. This in itself is good and necessary. We as parents have to teach our young people to make mature decisions in life. At the same time young people are still very much in need of the instruction, counsel, guidance, and discipline of their parents. With teenage years comes the strong desire for more independence from parents. Often, because of the sinful nature of young people, there will also be the inclination towards rebellion in some young people. Our young people in this stage of life are faced with some of the most serious decisions of

life, decisions that will have very great significance for the future of their life. They face many pressures and temptations from the world and are not yet mature enough to deal with all of these. Adolescence more than any other time of life is a time when young people are strongly influenced by their peers. The friends our young people make during this time of life will be of greatest importance during high school days.

Even when we send our children to a Christian high school there will be many things that we as parents will have to warn our young people against. They will have to be told over and over of the need of living an antithetical life of holiness and obedience to the Word of God. They will have to be told that by the grace of God they have to be different and separate even from



many of their peers in Christian High. It is simply a fact, tragic as it may be, that many young people at Christian High do not live as genuine Christians ought to live. Because of the strong desires to be accepted among their peers and to go along with the prevailing trends and life styles, there will be many struggles and trials. Young people very easily imagine that they know better than their parents. They soon become wise in their own conceits and turn from the wise counsel and advice of parents. How we as parents need the grace and wisdom of God to deal with our young people in this stage of their life! How much we need to go on our knees to pray for them that they might not be led astray.

There are three spheres of influence that we raise our young people in: home, church, and school. We hope by the grace of God to maintain these three in that order of priority. Ideally there would be harmony between these three, so that all three would be guided and controlled by the truth of the Word of God. How we wish that we could send our children to our own Christian high school. It is quite obvious that many Christian high schools in our land leave a lot to be desired, with regard to their being genuinely Christian and Reformed. As the world grows increasingly wicked and the church more and more apostate, there is increasingly urgent need for our own schools. I often wonder whether we in our Protestant Reformed Churches are aware of this. I wonder whether we are truly willing to strive as hard as we should to establish our own Christian schools wherever this is possible. Are we still as covenant parents ready to make the great sacrifices and face the great struggles that are involved in

establishing genuinely Reformed and Christian Schools? It is so much easier just to accept whatever else is available. But we know that as time goes on the situation is not getting better. We dare not send our children to public schools because of the humanistic and worldly philosophy that is promoted by these, and the increasingly immoral and wicked life style of today's youth. Yet we wonder how much better some of the modern-day Christian high schools are. If ever there was a time when we need schools to train our young people in the doctrine and life that we preach in our church it is today.

As we look forward to the high school days of our children, one of our greatest concerns is that we maintain our home as the predominant sphere of influence for our young people. We know that that will not be easy. Life is becoming increasingly complex and more and more busy. Times when the family can be together are often few and far between. Our young people need the bond and the influence of the Christian home. Parents must work hard to maintain an open relationship of communication, love, and concern with their young people. We as parents must always be ready to sit down with our young people and sympathetically discuss with them the great issues of life and give spiritual guidance at the time in their life when they so urgently need it. We must be ready to spend the time and energy and concern with our young people to help them face the great struggles and temptations of this sinful world. All of that takes a great deal of time. Parents must be willing constantly to make personal sacrifices for the sake of the welfare of their Christian families. Fathers have to be ready to say no to overtime work sometimes and to evening

business meetings, in order to attend properly to the urgent needs and concerns of the family. Our families have far more important needs than merely bringing home a large pay check that will be able to buy our young people their own cars and all the latest gadgets of the world.

As we look forward to high school days for our young people we can see another great area of concern. High schools more and more monopolize the time which young people spend there. Besides the many hours a week they spend in academic pursuits there are also extra-curricular activities. At the meeting mentioned above I noticed that these activities are now called "co-curricular activities." A subtle name change, this is I suppose, in order to leave the impression that such activities are virtually as important for high school students as their regular studies. Most of these so called co-curricular activities involve sports. In order to be active in one of these sports, young people must often come to school two or three nights a week. Along with other great concerns about the emphasis on such co-curricular activities is the simple and obvious concern about the fantastic amount of time involved. When are our young people ever home anymore with their families? How can we in such a situation ever expect that our homes will remain the main influence factor in the lives of our young people. Ought we as parents not to be alarmed by all of this and do something about it? Should we not tell our school administrations that there must be a severe limitation put on co-curricular activities so that we can have our young people home at least a couple of nights a week?

Love for the church must be central in the life of the Christian. Such love must be evident



in the lives of God's people by their active and zealous participation in the activities of the church. We may not as Christians content ourselves with going to church twice on the Lord's day, as important as that is in itself, and then for the rest of the week seldom ever be found in church. We must teach our young people that the most important place for them to go outside of the home is the church. We must teach them to be zealously involved in church activities. We must teach them to have great concern and interest in what goes on in the church. We must teach them to find their close friends if at all possible in the sphere of the

church. We hope and pray that our young people will find their life's partners in the sphere of the church. So many things in our modern day world are pressuring and influencing us and making us too busy to be involved in the church as we should be.

It is a great concern of mine, both as a father and pastor, how often it is evident that life in the high school and all the activities it sponsors is apparently so much more exciting and important to our young people and their parents than life in the church. The same people that would not think of missing a practice for sports at school and even less a game at school will quite easily

find an excuse to miss a meeting at church. The same person who "yells his head off" at a sports game sometimes has very little zeal and interest in a Bible discussion in church. This ought to be cause for alarm among us. This is a sign of decline and apostasy in our own midst and in our lives as Christians. We are not the first to express great concern about this. Our homes and our Christian schools must encourage our young people to be servants of the Lord in His church. May God help us to do this. This is of great importance for the future of our churches. □

## Book Review

**FAITH & REASON**, by Ronald H. Nash, Zondervan, 1988, 295 pages, \$15.95 (hardcover). (Reviewed by James Lanting)

Is the historic Christian faith rational? Is Christianity philosophically respectable or somehow epistemologically inferior to other world-views? How can a Christian convince the atheist of the reasonableness, say, of miracles or of the Incarnation? Are there convincing answers to the serious challenges to the Christian faith (such as the "problem of evil")?

These kinds of heavy-duty questions are treated in this book which is designed primarily as a text for introductory college and seminary courses in the philosophy of religion and apologetics. Dr. Nash, a Professor of Philosophy at Western Kentucky University, also offers some

tentative answers to these perennial problems from a contemporary evangelical perspective.

A major claim of the book is that every issue investigated in the area of philosophy of religion must be seen in the context of competing "world-views." Every person, whether he admits it or not, asserts Nash, has a "world-view" — a conceptual scheme by which we order everything we believe and by which we interpret reality. A typical world-view includes what a person believes on at least five major topics: God (theology), reality (metaphysics), knowledge (epistemology), morality (ethics), and humankind (anthropology). The two major contemporary competing world-views are Christianity and Naturalism, the latter being the view that nothing exists outside the material, natural order. Nash

describes the major tenants of both world-views and explains why these competing systems clash irreconcilably at almost every point.

It is Nash's central thesis that traditional apologetics and natural theology were largely unsuccessful because they tried to do the impossible — prove the existence of God with "logical certainty." The historic attempts to use the deductive cosmological or teleological arguments are

**ALL AROUND US** (con't. from page 17)

ly state our desire to reform the Christian Reformed Church rather than divide it is being developed under the guidance of Dr. Robert Godfrey."

This movement continues to grow. The outcome of its activities only the Lord knows. □



"logically inconclusive," claims Nash, and thus of little or no value to the natural theologian seeking a "coercive" proof characterized by logical necessity or certainty.

Nash's approach to Christian apologetics is much less ambitious. As an "inductive" presuppositionist, Nash embraces the more modest goal of demonstrating that the Christian world-view is "logically probable" and therefore rational. To demand logical certainty in such matters is "bizarre," he claims, and is totally unnecessary.

Nash's inductive presuppositionalist approach is heavily indebted to the work and writings of Alvin Plantinga, an internationally acclaimed philosopher and Christian apologist (who recently left Calvin College to teach at the University of Notre Dame). Nash admittedly borrows much from Plantinga's thesis that belief in God is properly a "basic" presupposition that needs no proof or supporting evidence to be held rationally, not unlike our belief in the existence of other persons' minds. (Apparently no philosopher has ever constructed a satisfactory proof for the existence of other minds.)

Nash's apologetic, then, could perhaps be crudely summarized as follows:

1. We quite properly know and believe, without requiring any proofs or evidence, many "basic" truths (e.g., self-evident propositions, belief in the existence of other people's minds, etc.). Such truths are nonetheless rationally held.

2. Belief in the existence of a personal God is such a "basic" belief.

3. Every person unavoidably has a world-view built upon certain "basic" truths or presuppositions.

4. The Christian world-view, when inductively tested by generally accepted epistemological standards, commends itself as a "logically probable" world-view.

5. Christianity is, therefore, rational.

The author mercifully treats many of these profound issues with studied simplicity and clarity, a feature which makes the book eminently readable for a layperson who has had a philosophy or logic course somewhere in his or her past. Nash is a prolific writer (this is his eighteenth book) and is obviously competent in this intriguing area where apologetics and the philosophy of religion coincide.

At the end of the book, Nash carefully distinguishes between *believing that* and *believing in*, the former being mere intellectual assent, the latter being a confession of the heart, a gift of faith from the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, in the light of I Corinthians 1 and 2 ("That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God"), I remain somewhat sceptical of the efficacy of the philosophy of religion as a meaningful apologetic device. For example, will a staunch atheist be favorably impressed by Nash's admittedly modest claim that the Christian faith is "logically probable"?

But, on the other hand, the Christian world-view *is* the most probable, the most rational view of reality, isn't it? And if so, it's hard to see why we would omit this feature when witnessing to the unbeliever about "the reason for the hope that is within us." □

### Autumn Anthem

The glowing trees are tinged with flame;  
The fiery forests with colors blaze.  
And written there I see His name  
And hear the silent call to praise.

James Jonker  
(from *Beacon Lights*, by permission)

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

### MINISTERIAL CALLS

Our congregation in Pella, Iowa formed a trio from which to call a pastor consisting of the Revs. W. Bekkering, R. Cammenga, and M. Joostens. I am

happy to write that, from that group, Pella extended a call to Pastor W. Bekkering, and that he has subsequently accepted that call.



The Hope P.R.C. in Redlands, CA has extended a call to Rev. C. Haak from a trio of the Pastors R. Dykstra, C. Haak, and J. Kortering.

Pastor R. Cammenga has declined the call he received from the Peace P.R.C. in Lynwood, IL.

And, finally, the Consistory of the Grandville P.R.C. in Grandville, MI has declined the request of our Contact Committee to release their pastor, Rev. Kortering, for a year to labor in Burnie, Tasmania, the work Prof. Hoeksema labored in over a period of eight months before being called home to glory.

#### **CONGREGATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS**

The Council of our Hope P.R.C. in Walker, MI received a letter of acknowledgment from the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore. The money which Hope's children gave this past year in their catechism collections was designated for the needs of this sister church. With catechism starting up again in all our churches, it seems that this idea could be considered by all of us as well.

I also received a call from the Church Extension Committee of our Grandville P.R.C. in Grandville, MI. You may remember that earlier this year Grandville sponsored a Creation Seminar for several weeks with Prof. Hanko as the speaker. Evidently these lectures were rather well received. Grandville wants to inform you, the readers of the SB, that these lectures are available in a set of four tapes for \$5.00 or in printed form for \$3.00. This cost covers postage. These lec-

tures would make a worthwhile topic to cover for after-recess in our societies. Interested? — send your request to Grandville P.R.C. Extension Committee, 4300 Pineway, Grandville, MI 49418.

Grandville also wanted you to know that Prof. H. Hanko is willing to present this seminar again. Perhaps there is one of our churches outside the west Michigan area that would be interested. If so, give Prof. Hanko a call.

The Young Adults of our Lynden P.R.C. in Lynden, WA held a Summer Retreat in late August. Rev. and Mrs. Haak, along with the young adults, hoped to enjoy a few days of camping, with spiritual growth through several speeches and discussion groups, and some good Christian fun and fellowship.

At the request of the Activities Committee of the First P.R.C. in Grand Rapids, MI the Council has given permission to begin a "Greeters" program. The emphasis is to be on greeting visitors to their church.

The Council of First is also looking into the feasibility and advisability of building a parsonage on the church property.

#### **MISSION HIGHLIGHTS**

The Council of First has also decided to postpone calling missionaries to Jamaica until after a committee consisting of members of their Jamaican Committee and the Mission Committee studies the ramifications of Synod's decisions concerning the work of missions in Jamaica. Of special concern is the question of what to tell prospective missionaries about plans for on-the-field support of some kind in Jamaica.

That's in light, first of all, of First's own position that "we ought not again send a man to Jamaica alone"; in light also of the unlikelihood of First's being able to obtain two missionaries; and finally in light of Synod's rejection of the Mission Committee's recommendation that in the interim First be allowed to send a co-laborer who is not an ordained minister.

#### **CONGREGATIONAL NEWS**

Cancerous growths were found in the throat of Alice Hanko, daughter of Rev. C. Hanko, one of our churches' "retired" ministers, presently active in Bradenton, Florida. The doctors in Bradenton are presently waiting for medical reports from Ann Arbor, MI before either surgery or chemotherapy is decided upon.

Seminary Convocation exercises were held Wednesday, September 6 at the Byron Center P.R.C. in Byron Center, MI. Our new professor, David Engelsma, spoke on the topic, "The Task of the P.R.C. with their Seminary." □

#### **RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY**

The Board of the RFPA herewith extends its Christian sympathy to our fellow Board member, Arnold Haveman, and to his family in the death of their father, grandfather, and great grandfather MR. CARL HAVEMAN at the age of 93 on September 11, 1989.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Psalm 116:15

Board of the RFPA  
P. Koole, Secretary

(Hudsonville, MI)