

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

When God instructs us in His word that His grace is eternal, sovereign, particular, and free, but we conceive of it as being common, temporal, dependent on our will — then we have not the God of the Holy Scriptures, but an idol-god.

See “Meditation” — page 962

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MEDITATION

No Idols, Little Children!

Rev. M. Schipper

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

I John 5:21

Amen!

That is the last word in the text, and the last word of the epistle.

But we would like to begin with it.

You know, of course, that with the use of this little word the apostle does not mean to signify that he now concludes the sentence, or the epistle; so that the word serves as a period, a punctuation mark, indicating the end of a thought. Rather, you know it

means that all the apostle had written in the text, as well as in the epistle, he conceives to be the truth.

The truth is the Word of God.

What does not conform to God's Word is of the lie.

And God's Word, as it addresses itself to the people of God in the world, is centrally the Son of God come in the flesh, revealing to them the true God. He is the revelation of the true God, and eternal life. (I John 5:20) "This is eternal life, that they may know

thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3) "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

God's Word is the Holy Scriptures, the infallibly inspired and written Word of God, revealing to us the Christ of God from Genesis to Revelation. This is the truth. It is not a word of man in any sense of the word — of man who always speaks the lie. It is God's Word from beginning to end. Though God was pleased to use fallible, sinful men to write the Scriptures, He does so in such a way that what they wrote was only His Word. That is the truth. And that is why John adds at the conclusion of our text, and, for that matter, the entire epistle, the "amen." It signifies that what is written is the truth.

God's Word is the thesis!

The truth is the thesis!

What opposes God's Word and the truth, is the antithesis!

The children of God are of the thesis, while the whole world which lieth in darkness is the antithesis. (I John 5:19) "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." (I John 5:20) So we are of the thesis, the children of God, the children of light.

The thesis is that which is set forth, is fixed, established as positive truth.

The acknowledgment of this is the "amen!"

Scripture always approaches the church of God as living in the world of darkness, and the children of God as living in the flesh. And therefore when it exhorts us, as it does in the text, that exhortation is often molded in a negative form. Hence —

Little children, keep yourselves from idols!

The positive expression of this would be, love and serve the only true God, Who has been made known unto you through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The world in which we live and the flesh in which we dwell assumes the position of the antithesis. It does not want God. It always chooses the idol. It does not want the truth, but the lie.

Keep yourselves from the idol, little children!

The idol, in Scripture, has a twofold significance. It signifies the image or likeness of a heathen god, an image which the heathen worship, which they conceive of as their god. It also signifies that this image or likeness is a false god: a god, which on the very surface is a lie. It is undoubtedly this conception that is intended in the text.

An idol is anyone or anything one may contrive or make, literally or in his imagination, which he conceives to be his god, in distinction from and in opposition to the true God Whom he is commanded in His Word to serve. An idol does not necessarily have to be an object which he can make with his hands. Whenever one departs from revelation, which tells him in no uncertain terms Who and What God is, he forms in his mind an idol.

This sin of idolatry, therefore, is not only peculiar to the heathen then who know not God. It is the sin also which God's people are liable to commit, and always do commit when they ignore or depart from God's Word and revelation.

It must not escape your attention that the words of our text are addressed to the church, not to the heathen. The apostle is speaking to the people of God who by nature are always inclined to depart from the true revelation of God. These idols we form in our mind when we worship God, not as He would have us, but as we would serve Him.

The warning is very real, and has serious practical implications. The sin of idolatry on the part of God's people can also be clearly demonstrated. When God, for example, says in His Word, "Keep my sabbath day holy," and we on that day do as we please and corrupt it, then we have not only transgressed His commandment but have made for ourselves an idol. When God informs us in His Word that He is omniscient, that He sees and hears and knows all, but we in our thoughts imagine that He is far from us and knows not our secrets — we have made for ourselves an idol. When God instructs us in His Word that His grace is eternal, sovereign, particular, and free, but we conceive of it as being common, temporal, dependent on our will — then we have not the God of the Holy Scriptures, but an idol-god. If I love money and seek it with all my heart so that I am distracted from the service of God, then I seek after an idol. If I form in my mind a conception of God that is not according to His Word, I have made an idol. If, for example, I conceive a God Who is so loving and merciful that He neglects to deal with my sins, then I have an idol. If, when I pray to God, my mind and heart are far from Him, I pray to an idol. If I familiarize, and by my familiarization, bring God down to the level of my next door neighbor, I have made an idol. If I read and study Scripture as I would read a novel, or if I study God's Word in a mere academic way (the idolatry, by the way, of many ministers) then I have made myself guilty of serving the idol. No doubt you can add to this list of examples.

Keep yourselves from idols!

And "to keep" here has its own significant meaning. Literally it signifies: to guard, to watch over, to

keep in safety. Two words appear in the New Testament which are translated: "to keep." Both words are used together in the gospel of John (17:12) where Jesus said, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy Name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition. . . ." A study of these two words as they are used here and elsewhere would reveal that, though basically they refer to the same thing, there is nevertheless a difference. The one means simply to keep in safety; while the other carries with it the added notion that there is an assault from without that threatens the safety of the keeping. It is this latter word that is used in our text. And that implies that in the matter of keeping we have a battle on our hands. The battle, of course, is not with or against the idol. The idol is a dead object, which can do nothing for you or against you. The modern philosophy which prates about God's being dead, applies not to the true and living God, but to the idol. No! Our battle is not with the idol. If you leave the idol alone, it will not hurt you; and if you serve the idol, it will do nothing for you. The battle which ensues when you keep yourselves from idols is with ourselves, particularly against your and my flesh. Against our flesh, our old man, we are to take our stand when it is inclined to seek and serve the idol, which it is always inclined to do. We are to guard and keep in safety our true self, the new man in Christ, which is enticed by the old man of our flesh to go after the idol.

This explains why the apostle sounds the warning, the alarm, in the text: Little children, keep yourselves from idols!

As we said, the positive implication of this is: Serve the true God, and Him only!

Him you know, not only because He has revealed Himself unto you, but also because He has given unto you an understanding. He has not only revealed Himself to you, but also in you.

This, God has done through His Son, Jesus Christ.

He is the true God and eternal life!

The apostle John could say this because, as he declares in the first part of this epistle (1:1), he had seen Him with his eyes and handled Him with his hands. And that which he had seen and heard declared he unto us, that we might have fellowship with him and with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1:3).

Him we are to love and serve, not only because He commands it; but also because He has saved us thereunto.

The apostle Paul puts it this way, as he writes to the Thessalonians: "For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and

how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." (I Thess. 1:9)

We have been saved to serve. That salvation we experience when we know Him and are in Him that is true. And when we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ, as the apostle says in the verse preceding our text, then we are of Him. Then we live the life of the thesis. That is positive living! That is walking in the light! That is revealing the life of Him in Whom we live!

This life of the thesis will of necessity reveal itself in opposition to the idol, the god of the world of darkness. And this is what is meant by living antithetically in the midst of this present age.

Keep yourselves . . .

Little children!

Such are the addresses to whom this exhortation is directed. When you study this epistle you discover this is the apostle's favorite term to describe those to whom the epistle is written. No fewer than seven times does the apostle use it. And there must be a reason.

Several explanations have been offered to explain the apostle's use of this term. Some think the apostle uses the term only to have his readers reflect on the apostle's age. At the time the apostle wrote this epistle he was quite old, and because of his age conceives of himself as a father, in distinction from his readers as little children. Others, along this same line of reasoning, conclude that the apostle indicates by the use of this term "his long attachment to his readers, to whom he has ever been a kindly father." Though there may be elements of truth in these explanations, we believe they fail to interpret the real meaning of the expression.

When the apostle addresses his readers in this endearing term, he considers himself to be their spiritual father. Like the apostle Paul writing to Timothy, he conceives of the church as composed of children begotten through the Word, that is, that through the gospel which the apostle was privileged to bring to them, his readers have been born again from above. In this sense he was, under the providence of God, their spiritual father, and the readers are become spiritual children.

But make no mistake about it, the addresses are not merely children begotten by the apostle through the gospel — they are also, and in the first place, children of God.

They are distinguished in every way from the children of the world. The latter are the children of their father, the devil. And therefore they continue to serve the idol. But God's children reflect the image of

Him Who has begotten them. No matter how old you get, or how far you have come on the way of sanctification, you remain little children of your great Father-God.

Also it is the prerogative of Father to command, and the duty of children to obey. Never in this relationship is it ever true that the children of God mature to the point where this relationship is in reverse. Never is it true that the children of God mature to the point where they are no longer children. Unto all eternity it will be true that we continue to be the children of God.

Little children, you who have been begotten again by the Spirit of the crucified and resurrected Redeemer, who have been translated from the children of darkness into the children of light, who have been recreated to conform to the image of God, in whose hearts the love of God abounds — keep yourselves from idols!

Little children, you who have been begotten again by the Holy Spirit of Christ through the gospel, so

that in your deepest consciousness you know that you are in Him that is true, Who is the true God and eternal life — keep yourselves from idols!

Never allow, not even for a moment, the old man of your sinful and corrupt nature to dictate in your life and walk. Never give way to the enticement of your flesh to go a whoring after the false god, but bring the old man of your sinful nature into subjection. Point out to that old man the truth of revelation, which has made known to you the true and living God in Jesus Christ. Say to it, as Jesus said to Satan, “It is written, Thou shalt worship God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”

And you will reveal yourselves as children of the Most High!

That when He shall appear, as He surely will in Jesus Christ in the last day, He may say to you and to me: “Come, ye children, enter into My heavenly and eternal tabernacle, where ye shall serve Me without opposition for ever and for ever.

Amen!

EDITORIAL

In the Right Direction--Where God Calls

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Elsewhere in this issue you will find a contribution which critically questions the direction in which our churches decided to go with respect to New Zealand at our last Synod. Lest anyone — either among our own churches or among the brethren and sisters in New Zealand — should get any false impressions or misconceptions about these matters, I wish to reflect editorially on certain matters raised in that contribution and to set the record straight.

Before dealing with the substantive matters touched upon by the contribution, I wish to make a few remarks about the method and approach of it. I do not find the latter to be very helpful, either with respect to the decision-making process in our own churches or with respect to promoting and cementing relationships with other Reformed believers and churches in other parts of the world. Calm discussion

of legitimate questions on the basis of accurate information is, of course, always proper and helpful. But I do not find such an approach in this contribution. Let me itemize a few matters. In the first place, if the brother wished to be helpful in the decision-making process of our churches, it seems to me he might have raised some questions long before our Synod convened. I wrote about the request of Christchurch and stated what the confessional basis of the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches is (the Westminster creeds) as long ago as December, 1975! How does it *help* the churches to wait with possible objections until after decisions have been taken? This reminds me of the Dutch saying, “*met zout komen als het ei op is* (coming with salt after the egg is eaten)”. Secondly, it is not even true that Synod’s decisions in this matter were unanimous. The original decision

was by a bare majority; and this original decision was later confirmed by an overwhelmingly favorable vote. This is an instance of inaccurate information; in this instance, it is relatively innocent, I suppose. But it typifies inaccurate information which has tended to undermine Synod's decisions among those who are uninformed. And let me say right here that it is my understanding of the duty of delegates to Synod, also of those who vote negatively — unless, of course, they give notice of protest — that they should not go about saying things which tend to undermine decisions of Synod which are settled and binding. In the third place, I do not appreciate the innuendo of that unfounded word "dismay" in the opening sentence of this contribution. I submit that there has never in the history of our churches been any work or project about which a more complete account has been given, both in the official Tour Report to all our office-bearers and in the unofficial story of the tour in my editorials. Is that reason for *dismay*? This was not the work of two men. It was not the work of the Contact Committee. It was not even the work merely of Synod. It was the work of our *churches*. And our churches had the right to know what was accomplished and what were the fruits. That the churches have been fully informed is, it seems to me, reason for rejoicing, not dismay. And I have been happy to hear from many individuals of their interest in and gratitude for the editorials about the tour. And as to preparing Synod to take a favorable decision? I point out: 1) My editorials were totally unnecessary for this. All our officebearers received a detailed and official report (more detailed than my editorials) of the tour from the Contact Committee. 2) If you will take the trouble to look it up, I specifically *refrained* from any comment on the Christchurch request. I wrote that I would let the request speak for itself; and I reported that the Contact Committee was unanimously in favor of the request. 3) But if my editorials did indeed help to prepare the churches (not merely the Synod!) for this decision (which, I think, gives too much credit to my editorials), then I can only rejoice. For I am of the deep conviction that this is a right decision, that we are going in the right direction, and that we are doing so in obedience to our Lord!

Finally, I must take pains to contradict the over-all impression which this contribution gives, as though Synod took a very hasty and reckless decision, did not know the implications of the decision, and even possibly was prepared to ignore or to sacrifice some of our cherished doctrinal and confessional positions. Nothing could be farther from the facts. I make bold to say that there was no single item on the Agenda of Synod which received more detailed attention and more careful and lengthy consideration than the request of Christchurch. There were no questions

raised which did not receive a reply, and there were no contrary arguments which were not answered. Let our churches rest assured on that score.

But now let me address myself to some of the more substantive arguments which this contribution raises in question-form.

THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF THE REQUEST

It is of the utmost importance that we understand how and why this request for a minister-on-loan came before our Synod. The facts about this were all reported in the *Standard Bearer*. But let me refresh your memory.

For some years, as you know, we have been in correspondence with various individuals and groups in New Zealand. Besides, we became known to many in that country through our *Standard Bearer*, our pamphlets, and our books. And we became known, remember, for our Reformed testimony. During this period the little group of Orthodox Presbyterian Churches was born — among them the Christchurch O.P.C., which was organized in June, 1974. What is the avowed purpose of these churches? To quote from the letter of Christchurch, it is "to stand uncompromisingly upon Scripture and the confessions." Or again, to establish "a testimony faithful to the Word of God and the Reformed Confessions" in New Zealand. Bear in mind, too, that many of these brethren and sisters have separated from the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand at great sacrifice; and others could no longer be at home in the Reformed Church of New Zealand, and that, too, for doctrinal reasons.

Then came our visit of last year. And I believe — if anyone has doubts on this score — that the people in New Zealand (as did our friends in Australia) will bear us witness that in the busy days we were among them we surely did not hide from them who we were and what we stood for as representatives of the Protestant Reformed Churches. In sermons, lectures, and cottage meetings what we believed and what we did not believe as to the antithesis, the covenant, sovereign predestination, and sovereign, particular grace — all this came to the fore as much as possible during the short span of our tour.

Out of all this came this testimony (and I quote snatches of the letter from Christchurch): ". . . except to express our deepest gratitude to your committee and all who were used of God to make this tour possible. Its memories remain as an unforgettably and unspeakably blessed expression of the mercy of our covenant God." Or again, they testify "that as our knowledge and understanding of the Reformed Faith has grown, bonds of unity and like-mindedness with the Protestant Reformed Churches in America have developed. The reality and degree of

that unity will, we trust, be witnessed to you by Prof. Hoeksema and Rev. Hanko." And as they wrote in the same letter, even before our arrival in New Zealand, the congregation in Christchurch had decided to discuss with us the possibility of one of our ministers coming "to help in establishing a Church in Christchurch faithful to the Word of God and the Reformed Confessions."

Then their request came to Rev. Hanko and me during our visit, and later came to our Contact Committee by official letter.

This request is for a *minister*, not a missionary. It would be an insult to send them a missionary. They represent the true church in New Zealand. They no longer have to be gathered and organized as a congregation. On the contrary, they desire a pastor and also one who may perform church extension and home mission work in their behalf. Moreover, by their own testimony — and under the Lord's gracious leading — they have been attracted to us. Further, as a congregation and as a group of churches they are small and of little strength; they desperately need help and leadership and instruction and enrichment in the Reformed faith. In fact, in recent months their strength has even been diminished, due to the fact that two of their ministers have been on the sick list.

As I stated at Synod — and others said similar things: "The congregation at Christchurch is saying to us, in effect, 'In all the world you of the Protestant Reformed Churches are the only ones to whom we can look for help. Please come over and help us.' How, before the face of God, if the Lord makes it possible for us to help them, can we in good conscience say *No* to them?" I make bold to say that if, when it is possible for us to help them, we would refuse to do so, this would be sectarian and would be downright sinful!

THE CREEDAL BASIS

But what is the creedal basis of the O.P.C. of Christchurch? Their confessions are the Westminster Confession and the Shorter and Larger Catechisms. This was plainly stated already in our Tour Report to the churches, as well as in the *Standard Bearer*.

Let me point out the following in this connection.

In the first place, such differences in creeds have never been an obstacle to ecclesiastical fellowship among Reformed churches. The Reformed faith has come to expression in various creeds, according as it was confessed in various *countries*. Thus, for example, at the Synod of Dordrecht the various foreign delegates subscribed to several different Reformed confessions; but they all recognised one another as *Reformed*. It is true that the Westminster creeds had not yet been composed at that time; nevertheless

some of the Westminster divines were also present at Dordrecht.

In the second place, our own churches are on record as accepting the Westminster creeds as a basis for ecclesiastical fellowship. Several years ago we declared that we had no objection to fellowship on the basis of creeds mentioned in the "Basis" of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, though we did object to a certain statement in that constitution. Besides, this is also in accord with the constitution of Synod's Committee for Contact. Surely, we must not have the idea that only those who subscribe to our Three Forms of Unity, the creeds of the Dutch branch of the Reformation, are Reformed.

In the third place, what happens if there are certain points of difference between our Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms? Or what happens if there are items in the Westminster creeds which are not even mentioned in our creeds, but with which we cannot fully agree?

The answer, it seems to me, is obvious. It would be a matter of simple honesty to make such reservations known at the time one subscribes to the Westminster creeds. We certainly do not believe in subscribing to the creeds "tongue-in-cheek" or with mental reservations. That would be dishonest. Moreover, I do not know of any minister in our churches — thank God for that! — who would be guilty of such dishonesty. Furthermore, I am certain that the O.P.C. of Christchurch would not even want a minister who would be less than honest about these matters. In their own past they have seen too much grief from such dishonesty in the church.

I hasten to add, in the first place, that this does not mean that a minister would immediately attempt to *thrust* his views on the O.P.C. in New Zealand: for this would be a matter of discussion and instruction in mutual obedience to the Word of God. And, in the second place, from my present knowledge of the situation in New Zealand, I would not expect any great difficulty with regard to the two areas of reservations.

My final remark in this connection is that we must by all means not allow the presence of these two limited areas in which we have certain reservations with respect to the Westminster creeds to diminish our deep respect and esteem for these creeds. We must not have the impression that churches who subscribe to the Westminster creeds are somehow "second rate" among Reformed churches. Nothing could be less true. I suppose there are not many among us who are thoroughly acquainted with these creeds. But those who have studied them will have a deep appreciation for them, and will even have to admit that in certain areas the Westminster documents excel our Three Forms of Unity.

But let us briefly look at each of those areas in which we have reservations: that of remarriage and that of the "covenant of works." (On both of these subjects, by the way, our Committee for Contact has already informed the Session of Christchurch concerning our reservations.)

REMARRIAGE OF DIVORCED PERSONS

First of all, let us remember that the area of possible disagreement on this subject is *very limited*. It is simply not fair either to the Westminster Confession or to Presbyterians to speak in general of an "unbiblical declaration on the right of the divorced to remarry." The Westminster Confession teaches only that the innocent party who obtains a divorce on the ground of adultery may remarry. Here is the statement, Chapter XXIV, pgph. 5: "In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce: and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead." Especially in our day of wholesale divorce, when it is well-nigh impossible and almost unheard of to obtain a divorce on the ground of adultery, this is a very limited area of disagreement. It is even very unlikely that a concrete case of this kind would ever arise.

In the second place, let us remember that this position of the Westminster Confession is the position which Reformed churches took for hundreds of years. True, they did not all make creedal statements on this subject; but this was nevertheless the historic Reformed position. In fact, it was also the position taken by our own Protestant Reformed Churches until, through the instruction of the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema, we came to a clearer insight into Scripture on this subject.

In the third place, let us not be so self-righteous as to insist that everyone in another denomination must immediately see this point, must change his stand, and must refuse communion to such a remarried person. I call your attention to the fact that this is not the way things were done in our own denomination. When the late Rev. Hoeksema came to this position on remarriage, the majority of First Church's consistory disagreed at first and clung to the traditional position. Did he fight the issue by way of protest and appeal? Not at all, but he left the matter to the process of instruction, expecting, correctly, that eventually the Word of God would have its way. And so, over a period of years, in more than one of our churches many of us have administered to and celebrated the sacraments with persons whom we later say were not properly remarried, though at the time the consistory itself might have approved the remarriage.

Now I do not even know that this will be a burning issue in New Zealand. I have no reason to think so;

and I have some reasons to think it will not be. But I would expect a minister who goes to New Zealand to be *at least as patient* in dealing with such a situation in those churches, which are in their infancy and which have not had the benefit of the instruction and experience which we have had, as we were in past years in our own Protestant Reformed Churches. And in case there should be disagreement on this subject initially, I submit that a Protestant Reformed minister in Christchurch would free his conscience and his record from responsibility in this matter by making known to all concerned that he does not believe that Scripture allows such remarriage. Moreover, let me call attention to the fact that this would not affect our own churches and the stand of our churches in the least.

But let me say again: this is "jumping the gun." We know of no problem in this area. And we do know — because our pamphlets and books have been distributed in New Zealand — that they are aware of our stand. In fact, just about the time that the contribution under discussion arrived in my mail the quarterly magazine of the O.P.C. of New Zealand, *The Gospel Witness*, also arrived. And in that issue there appeared the most glowing recommendation — without negative criticism — of the Rev. Engelsma's recent book on *Marriage* that I have read thus far. And it came from the pen of one of the O.P.C. ministers, the Rev. Ivo Bishop. If space permits, I will reprint the review in this issue.

THE "COVENANT OF WORKS"

Also on this matter we should keep things in perspective.

In the first place, it is surely true that the Westminster Confession speaks of a "covenant of works."

In the second place, however, it is not true that the Westminster Confession — even though we would have reservations about what it says — teaches the covenant of works in the traditional sense in which Charles Hodge or L. Berkhof teach it. When you read all that the Westminster says on this subject, and read it in the context of the entire confession and in the light of the history of doctrine, you will discover that this is the case.

In the third place, it is surely not true that there is any more room in the Westminster creeds, than in our own creeds, for the miserably Arminian conditional view of the covenant of grace and the promise which we all repudiated in the struggle of 1950-'53. The Westminster creeds are thoroughly Reformed when it comes to the doctrine of sovereign, particular grace. Those who want a general, conditional offer have to tamper with these creeds or add a Declaratory Statement, as, for example, the Bible Presbyterian Church has done.

In the fourth place, I will very frankly state that there is as yet no well developed view of the covenant in the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand. How could there be? These churches are in their infancy. Besides, they have not had the same struggle we have had. They are waiting to be enriched on this subject.

In the fifth place, I know these three facts: 1) We did not hide from the New Zealand friends our beautiful idea of God's covenant of friendship as it is sovereignly and unconditionally established and realized with His elect people in Christ. In fact, I recall distinctly that I personally more than once spoke of it in approximately the above words. It is, after all, of the bone and marrow of my theological convictions! 2) That the O.P.C. of New Zealand and specifically of Christchurch are, and showed themselves to be, averse to Arminianism, even as we are. And they take this very seriously. 3) That they know who we are and what we stand for, have found themselves to be like-minded with us, and for that reason have asked for our help. What more can anyone ask?

But there is one thing that grieves me deeply in Brother Feenstra's article. That is those suggestions,

be it in question form. That kind of thing hurts. It is not edifying. And it is altogether uncalled for. I must ask the brother to retract his suggestion that "this matter of a conditional or unconditional view of the covenant (is) now non-essential." — unless, of course, he can show on the basis of objective evidence that to Rev. Hanko and me as emissaries, or to the Committee for Contact, or to the Synod this matter has indeed become non-essential.

CONCLUSION

In what direction are we going?

In the right direction!

Is what we are now about to do in New Zealand proper?

Yes, by all means!

God wills it. To refuse would be flagrant disobedience.

Let us pray for grace to obey gladly, to be thankful for an open door; and let us pray fervently for the church "down under" and that God will send to Christchurch the man of His choosing.

CONTRIBUTION

In What Direction are We Going? More on Compromise

I have been reading and studying the recent editorials in the *Standard Bearer* with interest and dismay. We understand, of course, that these editorials were to inform our people of the events and various circumstances that were part and parcel of the Australasian Tour. We also believe that these articles served in no small way to prepare our Synod of '76 to unanimously decide to grant the request of the congregation at Christchurch, New Zealand that one of our ministers labor in their midst as an Orthodox Presbyterian minister.

But I have some questions about this matter. Let me make it clear, I am not opposed as such to sending a man to New Zealand. But how and on what basis

are we in good conscience going to send (or allow one to leave) to labor in the Presbyterian congregation at Christchurch?

Did Synod inquire into the creedal basis which will serve as the foundation of our minister's labors there? We rightly understand, of course, that our minister will not be a missionary there but in very fact a Presbyterian minister of another denomination and particular church. If our minister was being sent there as a missionary many of, if not all, the questions and problems which I see would not be occasioned by such an endeavor.

I now present my questions. I believe that my questions are also shared by others in our churches.

What is the creedal basis for one of our ministers, who will remain an officebearer in our churches, to serve another denomination and congregation? Is it so that the session of Christchurch has or will accept the Three Forms of Unity of the Protestant Reformed Churches? Or will it be necessary for our minister there to labor under the Westminster Creed with its binding declarations concerning a conditional Covenant of Works and its unbiblical declaration of the right of the divorced to remarry? What about the demands of the Formula of Subscription upon our minister on loan in this regard?

Is this matter of Divorce and Remarriage a matter of non-essentials of which Article 85 of our Church Order speaks? Article 85 speaks of *usages* not matters of faith. Article 85 is not minimizing doctrinal differences or matters of a proper Christian walk. Would it be necessary that our minister on loan, who is supported both financially and spiritually by our P.R. people, to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to a person whom we believe lives in a state of adultery? This is a very real possibility, isn't it? Would not such a minister fall subject to discipline by the P.R. consistory which has loaned him to this O.P. Church at Christchurch, New Zealand? How about the matter of the baptism of the children of divorced and remarried persons?

Further, to what covenant view does the Church of Christchurch subscribe? Do they have an Arminian view of the covenant which is so common in our day? It seems logical that if one holds to the conditional notion of the Covenant of Works that he would also hold to a conditional view of the Covenant of Grace. Or is this matter of a conditional or unconditional view of the covenant now non-essential? It was not non-essential in 1950-53 when many Dutch immigrants wanted to be served by our ministers and form P.R. congregations. Do we remember the "Declaration of Principles?" It is not pertinent in this case?

I ask: In what direction are we going? Is what we are now about to do in New Zealand proper?

Mr. Thys Feenstra
Redlands, California

(editor's note: for a reply to this article, see the Editorial Department.)

MORE ON COMPROMISE

The writer, N.D., is justly and rightly burdened with the injustice and wrongdoing of government compelling Christians to pay taxes for God-less, Christ-less government-owned and operated school systems. (see S.B., March 15, p. 781). He also condemns the government take-over of the deacons' work to provide relief for Christ's needy. He might

have also condemned rightly as the work of the devil such sinful misuses of God-ordained government taxing powers as social security payments, government paid doctor and hospital expenses, handouts to farmers, government college scholarships and hundreds of other similar present day misuses of the power of government. These are not the duty and responsibility of government.

Government is ordained by God to execute justice and judgment, to punish evil doers and to praise them that do well. But sad to say, very few know what is true justice and what are God's and Christ's commandments for individuals, families, society and church; so we witness in our land the reign of confusion under the rule of Satan, the father of disorder, confusion and disobedience of divine commandments.

The Lord Jesus in His days on earth lived under corrupt and evil government. Think of the slaughter of many children at Bethlehem, of the beheading of innocent John the Baptist, and then later the crucifying and putting to death the innocent Lord Jesus. Nevertheless Jesus taught by word and example the paying of taxes to corrupt and evil government, confer Matt. 17:27.

So the compromise is not that we pay taxes for all sinful misuses of government, but the compromise is that the church officially fails to witness to government against its evils, John 7:7. Citizens in the glorious kingdom of Christ also sinfully compromise when they apply for some of the many handout programs. These are very serious days for God's people. Jesus warns His Church with great concern. He said if it were possible, even the elect would be deceived. What a responsibility have those of Christ's ministers who claim to be Christ's mouthpieces in the proclamation of the Gospel of His kingdom! Brethren, pray for them!

Harold Tilma

Editorial comment:

Brother Tilma makes a severe indictment when he writes that the "church officially" compromises when it "fails to witness to the government against its evils." John 7:7 (the reader can look it up) says nothing whatsoever as to the duty of the "church officially." If the brother means that it is the duty of our consistories, classes, and synods to make and forward to the government pronouncements on the various social, economic, and political ills for which our governments (local, state, and federal) are responsible, then I demur. The marks of the church are the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline. To this three-fold task the church must be faithful.

—HCH

THE VOICE OF OUR FATHERS

Election and Reprobation (IV)

(Predestination According To The Reformed Creeds)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

"We believe that all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin, by the sin of our first parents, God did then manifest himself such as he is: Merciful, since he delivers and preserves from this perdition all, whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel of pure goodness, hath elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works: Just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves."

The Belgic Confession, Art. XVI

The first two articles were devoted to an exposition of the doctrine of election and reprobation as taught in this chapter of the *Belgic Confession*. We saw that this truth permeates all of Scripture. The third article was concerned with John Calvin's views on this precious truth. In this our fourth and final installment on Article XVI it is our purpose to examine the doctrine of predestination as it appears in the creeds of the Reformed Churches.*

We find this truth set forth very clearly in the *Gallican* or *French Confession of Faith*. This creed was prepared by Calvin and one of his pupils in 1559 and was adopted by a Synod of the French Reformed Churches in Paris that same year. There can be little doubt that Guido de Bres was markedly influenced by this Confession in his writing of the *Belgic Confession*. In its twelfth article this Creed says:

"We believe that from this corruption and general condemnation in which all men are plunged, God, according to his eternal and immutable counsel, calleth those whom he hath chosen by his goodness and mercy alone in our Lord Jesus Christ, without consideration of their works, to display in them the riches of his mercy; leaving the rest in this same corruption and condemnation to show in them his justice. For the ones are no better than the others, until God discerns them according to his immutable purpose which he has determined in Jesus Christ before the creation of the world. Neither can any man gain such reward by his own virtue, as by nature we can not have a single good feeling, affection, or thought, except God has first put it into our hearts."

Notice that this creed teaches that God's calling of those whom He has chosen in our Lord Jesus Christ is a manifestation of the riches of His mercy, while

God's leaving of the rest (reprobation from the infralapsarian point of view) in corruption and condemnation is a manifestation of His justice. We find this same emphasis in Article XVI of the *Belgic Confession*. Notice too that all this takes place "according to God's eternal and immutable counsel" and "his immutable purpose which he has determined in Jesus Christ before the creation of the world."

The *Heidelberg Catechism*, which presents the truth of God's Word from the point of view of the life's experience and confession of the child of God, has only one explicit reference to this great truth. This is found in the profoundly beautiful answer to the fifty-fourth question. Here, the *Catechism* speaks of the "holy catholic church of Christ" as being a "church chosen to everlasting life" and "gathered, defended and preserved by the Son of God through His Word and Spirit from the beginning to the end of the world." No one can deny, however, that the truth of election and reprobation is implied throughout the *Heidelberg*. This is especially evident in those questions and answers which speak of the atonement of Christ as satisfaction of the justice of God for the sins of God's people. (Cf. Questions 37 – 44)

As one would expect, the *Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht*, 1618, 1619, have much to say concerning this truth. In its first head of doctrine entitled: "Of Divine Predestination", the *Canons* declare: "That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree . . ." (Article 6) After citing Scriptural proof for this statement the *Canons* continue: "According to which decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect . . . while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment

to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which though men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation." (Article 6). Note the strong language employed in this article in reference to the opponents of the doctrine of election and reprobation. The fathers of Dordt did not hesitate to label such: "men of perverse, impure and unstable minds" who "wrest the decree of election and reprobation to their own destruction." What is so tragic in our times is that one finds the most bitter opponents of election and especially reprobation not outside of but within the sphere of the Reformed Churches. But what is even more tragic is the fact that some of the denominations belonging to the Reformed family of churches do nothing to expel these opponents of the truth. They make a "fuss" over these deep theological issues, pass all kinds of Synodical decisions, appoint all kinds of prestigious study committees which produce involved and lengthy reports couched in lofty, theological language and at the same time allow the opponents to continue teaching and preaching in the churches. This obviously is not in the tradition of Dordt!

These *Canons* describe the doctrine of election as: "... the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of Salvation." (Article 7) Article 15 of Head I describes reprobation in these terms: "What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election, is the express testimony of sacred Scripture, that not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree; whom God, out of his sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have wilfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous judge and avenger thereof." Finally the *Canons* concludes this first Head of doctrine with both a warning and a doxology: "To those who murmur at the free grace of elec-

tion, and just severity of reprobation, we answer with the apostle: 'Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?' Rom. 9:30, and quote the language of our Savior: 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?' Matt. 20:15. And therefore with holy adoration of these mysteries, we exclaim in the words of the apostle: 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. -Amen.' " (Article 18)

No less emphatic in its teaching on election and reprobation is the great *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1647. In fact Chapter III of this *Confession* is a detailed, thorough, and very precise statement of the truth concerning God's eternal decree. After setting forth the truth concerning God's decreeing of all things the *Westminster* states: "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death." (Article III) In the succeeding articles of its third chapter this beautiful creed describes the decree of election. Speaking of the elect, both men and angels, the *Westminster* declares: "These . . . thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite that it can not be either increased or diminished." (Article IV) Furthermore according to this *Confession* election is unconditional and not on the basis of foreseen faith (Article V). Election includes also the means to salvation (faith, conversion, justification, etc.) (Article VI). Concerning reprobation the *Westminster* states forthrightly: "The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice." (Article VII) This third chapter is concluded with a word of caution to which we do well to take heed: "The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, an admiration of God; and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel." (Article VIII)

Very simply, what this means is this: Article XVI of our *Belgic Confession* is not merely an isolated

instance of the teaching of election and reprobation. At this point the *Belgic Confession* reflects the current and clear teaching of the Reformed Creeds and the conviction of the historic Reformed Churches. These were the convictions of our fathers, faith for which they lived and, in many instances, for which they even died! It ought to be perfectly evident, therefore, that no one who denies either election or reprobation (and remember, the two stand together) can *honestly* claim to be Reformed. Elec-

tion and reprobation belong to the *essence* or *heart* of the Reformed faith as this faith is taught by Scripture and expounded by the Creeds. All who are Reformed according to the Word of God as summed and set forth in the Confessions believe this precious truth in their hearts and boldly and humbly confess it with their mouths to the praise of God's great glory.

*All references to and quotations from the creeds are taken from Philip Schaff's *The Creeds of Christendom*, volume III.

ALL AROUND US

Lutherans Debate Biblical Authority The Church's Abortion Business The Basic Issue at the CRC Synod Rev. Peter De Jong's Answer to E. Wierenga

Rev. H. Veldman

LUTHERANS DEBATE BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

Also this article appears in the Banner of May 7, 1976, and we quote:

The faculty of controversial "Seminex" (seminary in exile) has recently authorized the ordination of woman to the ministry. Faculty members of "Seminex" use as the basis for their argument the contention that the Bible is time-and-culture oriented. Therefore, it is possible to reinterpret the passages in the Bible which the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has repeatedly used to forbid the ordination of woman to the ministry. . . .

Dr. Martin Scharlemann of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, said the following at a 1972 convention: "The major problem in this divergence between the two church bodies is not so much the matter of ordaining women as that of the nature of Biblical authority. That is where the real division is between them and us. . . ."

Yes, we, too, are of the conviction that the major problem concerns the nature of Biblical authority. To maintain that the Bible is time-and-culture oriented must lead to and implies the destruction of the Word of God. People refuse to listen to what the Lord has to say unto them. Man would place himself above these divine scriptures, determine what must be embraced and what must be rejected. This is hopeless.

And, this is also a clear indication that "Seminex" has departed from the inspired scriptures.

THE CHURCH'S ABORTION BUSINESS

This article appears in the PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL of April 14, 1976, page 12. We quote the following:

A little item in the report of the treasurer to the General Executive Board of the Presbyterian Church US caught our eye and revived memories.

The item: \$10,000 received for COTA.

Another contribution to the Committee on Therapeutic Abortions (COTA) to keep the Church in the wholesale business.

That word "Therapeutic" represents an all too familiar type of hypocrisy. The hundreds upon hundreds of abortions paid for by the Presbyterian Church US, for the most part are "therapeutic" only in the sense that it is therapeutic to a teenager or a college girl that her parents not know the result of her indiscretion.

Just how much money has been spent by the Church for abortions, just how many have been performed under the Church's benevolence and who has "benefited" is one of the most closely guarded secrets in the denomination's program.

Nobody is talking and no figures are ever released.

How sad! we agree with the concluding paragraph: "This program is one of the sadder aspects of the life of the PCUS (Presbyterian Church, U.S.). It is a business for which no Christian in the PCUS has an excuse before God.

THE BASIC ISSUE AT THE CRC SYNOD

The editor of *The Outlook* refers to this basic issue in the June, 1976, issue of that magazine. He writes, page 2, and we quote:

The 1976 Agenda for Synod (CRC Synod meeting June 8 to 18) is a volume of 541 pages. It may seem presumptuous of me to attempt to say what the basic issue at this Synod will be — but I feel conscience-bound to take that risk and to attempt to do so. *The basic issue at this Synod will be the issue of the Bible.*

Beyond a doubt, it is becoming increasingly apparent among us that the matter of the inspiration, the infallibility, the inerrancy, and the authority of the Bible remains a piece of unfinished business. Notwithstanding the adoption of Report 44 in 1972, it is or should be obvious that we are not of one mind.

Let no one doubt the seriousness of this.

With this we can certainly agree. It is certainly true that the Christian Reformed Church is faced with this problem.

And is it not appalling that a reformed synod must debate this issue! How wonderful it would be if the CRC synod would maintain the infallibility and inerrancy of the divine scriptures, that they are the infallible and unerring Word of God from Genesis to Revelation! Is it not appalling that the matter of the inspiration, the infallibility, the inerrancy, and the authority of the Bible remains a piece of unfinished business, that they are not of one mind in that church. The difficulty is that it is not merely a matter of unfinished business. The tragedy is that the CRC has erred in the past, has made some very bad decisions, is tolerating among its leaders men who have erred as far as these divine scriptures are concerned. That church must not only maintain that the Scriptures are, in their entirety, the Word of God, but it must repent of these evils, repudiate these bad decisions, and return to the living God and His infallible Word. And when has a church ever returned from an evil course? This is the appalling situation in the Christian Reformed Church today. Of course, we would rejoice were this to happen. But we are afraid that the situation is hopeless.

REV. PETER DE JONG'S ANSWER TO E. WIERENGA

This, too, appears in *The Outlook* of June, 1976, pages 30-31. A certain E. Wierenga of Neerlandia, Alberta TOG IRD, had commented on an article "Calling and Reprobation", written by Dr. M. J. Arntzen and translated by Rev. Peter De Jong. In his answer Wierenga comments on the exegesis given of the texts, I Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9. The brother writes that, in his opinion, these texts refer exclusively to the people of God and not to everybody. He also refers to what we read in Romans 9:11-13, and then he also calls attention to Calvin's *Institutes*. Of Calvin he writes that the reformer is very plain on these texts in his *Institutes*, and that he (Calvin) does not see any indication in the Bible that God wants all men, that is head for head, to be saved. And now the Rev. Peter De Jong replies to this article of E. Wierenga.

In his reply, first of all, Rev. De Jong maintains that 2 Peter 3:9 refers, not to the elect, but to everybody, head for head, and he also declares that Calvin, in his explanation of Ezekiel 33:11, applies this to all men, head for head. How sad that Rev. De Jong should interpret 2 Peter 3:9 as referring to all men! Rev. De Jong is a conservative, maintains that the Bible is infallible and without error in its entirety. How sad that he should offer this interpretation of a text such as 2 Peter 3:9, which so obviously and clearly refers exclusively to the elect. How sad that he explains this text in such a way as to make impossible the coming of the Lord. O, I do not say that De Jong does not believe in the coming of the Lord; but his interpretation of the text makes that coming impossible. Fact is, Peter is speaking of the coming of the Lord, and that He can come only when all men shall have been brought to repentance. So, if Christ can return only if all men have been brought to repentance, He will never come, because all men will never repent. Unless Rev. De Jong believes that Christ will finally come in spite of the fact that all men did not repent, inasmuch as God at least tried to bring them to repentance. Scripture knows nothing of such a God. E. Wierenga is surely correct in his interpretation of I Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9.

As far as De Jong's reference to Calvin is concerned, for that reformer's explanation of Ezekiel 33:11, I advise this E. Wierenga to obtain Calvin's *Calvinism*, published on January 1, 1552 (Calvin was born in 1509). In this book Calvin writes on two subjects: Eternal Predestination of God and The Secret Providence of God. This book is full of the reformer's repudiation of a general, well meaning offer of the gospel.

In this book Calvin also calls attention to Ezekiel 33:11.

There is one more matter in this reply of Rev. De Jong to which I would call attention. On page 30, middle column, he writes, and we quote:

We too encounter people who fear that they are not elect and that therefore the gospel call and promise are not really intended for them. Such misunderstandings are not helped when some who are deeply concerned about maintaining the biblical doctrine of election, because of that concern, hesitate to say that God through His gospel sincerely calls all kinds of people (whether elect or not) to repent and turn to Him. Yet we find the Bible again and again extending such a call and commanding us to do the same. The Apostle Paul, for example, when speaking to the Athenian philosophers, some of whom turn away mocking, told them that God "commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent" (Acts 17:30).

Rev. De Jong, are you referring in these words to our Protestant Reformed Churches? If so, you have not written the truth. Then you have misrepresented our churches, and I dare say that you have mis-

represented us deliberately. You are a well-informed man, and you certainly know that you have drawn a caricature of us. Rev. De Jong, we believe in the general proclamation of a particular gospel. This has been stated by us countless times, and this is also proclaimed in all our pulpits every Lord's Day. We deny Acts 17:30? We deny that the Lord sincerely calls all kinds of people to repent and turn to Him? If you, Rev. De Jong, referred to us, shame on you. What you should do is apologize in *The Outlook* and inform your readers that you have misrepresented us. This would be your christian duty. Yes, our churches maintain the biblical doctrine of election, and we also maintain the biblical doctrine of reprobation. You know that we do this. Do your churches today maintain the biblical doctrine of double predestination? The Rev. Tuinenga does not believe that the doctrine of reprobation need be preached. And now you inform your readers and also E. Wierenga that our churches hesitate to say that God through His gospel sincerely calls all kinds of people to repent and turn to Him? I assure brother E. Wierenga that this is not true of our Protestant Reformed Churches.

GUEST ARTICLE

Desiring the Sincere Milk of the Word

Rev. Richard G. Moore

Do you hunger and thirst for the Word of God? Do you long for things spiritual? The apostle Peter points out that, for the child of God born again by the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever, it is necessary that the new life within us be nourished and fed. Therefore, the Word of God exhorts the church in I Peter 2:2 that, "as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." This is not a popular exhortation in our day. The Word of God becomes more and more something secondary in the "sphere of the church." And yet, according to Scripture, there is nothing more essential to the life of God's children.

The apostle uses the figurative expression, "the sincere milk of the Word," to refer to the preaching of the gospel of Christ. This is evident from the connection of this text with the context, specifically the twenty-fifth verse of chapter one. Peter calls the

preaching "wordy" milk. The apostle, in using this figure, does not have in mind the distinction that the apostle Paul used when he made a comparison between the "milk" and the "meat" of the Word. But rather, this Scripture speaks of the preaching as the perfect food for the elect, regenerated child of God. It is essential to their very life and well-being, and is perfectly adapted for this purpose.

The reason that the apostle is able to picture the preaching of the gospel of Christ as the perfect and essential food for the church is the fact that the Word preached is the Word of Christ! It is the Word which Christ expounds to nourish and build up His Body. This is evident when we consider the gospel of Christ in the inspired Word of Paul, as recorded in Romans 10:13-15, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how

shall they believe in him (of) whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" The point of this passage that is important for us with respect to our topic is that, though it is through the agency or means of a man, *Christ* through His chosen and ordained ambassadors preaches to His flock. And when He calls them, they hear and follow Him. The true preaching of Christ is essential to the faith of His children. Truly the preaching of Christ is "milk" for the soul of the child of God.

Further, the preaching of the Word of Christ to His Body is "milk" because Christ Himself is expounded unto the church as the content of the preaching. The Heidelberg Catechism asks the question: "What is thy only comfort in life and death?" To this question the Christian responds: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful savior Jesus Christ." The child of God who is lost in himself, dead in sins and trespasses, has an absolute need of the testimony of Christ that He has fully satisfied for all of his sins. The believer, who knows himself incapable of any good, needs to hear the testimony that the God of all grace through Christ and by His Spirit delivers from darkness, from the depth of the miry clay of sin, to lead us into His eternal fellowship, love, and covenant communion. And from day to day the true believer needs the gracious and efficacious exhortation and instruction of the Lord to be sustained in the battle of faith, as a pilgrim and stranger in the midst of the world. The preaching of the gospel of Christ is the milk for our souls! That milk we must and we do desire as the seed of the covenant!

By using the "Homey" figure of milk, the apostle emphasizes the importance and the essential character of the pure preaching of the Word for the strangers and pilgrims, elect, redeemed in Christ. Milk is essential to the life of a baby. The milk of the mother is wholly able to sustain an infant's life. And as the infant drinks in the milk he grows and is strengthened and develops in his new life. The preaching of the gospel of Christ is likewise food to God's people which nourishes the child of God, causing him to grow in grace and knowledge. And the pure proclamation of the gospel is just as essential (even more so) to his new life in Christ, as the milk is to the infant. For it is alone under the preaching of the Word of Truth that the believer grows in faith to be strong, holding fast to the hope unto which they are begotten.

Unto this end it is important that the milk be "sincere." Sincere milk is unadulterated milk. Milk, if it is to nourish and strengthen, must be pure. If it has poison in it, the infant nursing shall die. But also if that milk be diluted — watered down — it will not sustain health and strength. The result will be the

same, the child becomes weak, frail, and finally dies. Even so must the children of God have preaching that is pure, if they shall be built up and sustained in faith. If the preacher brings in his preaching that which is contrary to the Scriptures, he poisons the congregation! It is no less than this. And be mindful that all which is not founded in the Scriptures is the word of man, and is deadly! And we may not say, "We hear mostly truth." It only takes a bit of arsenic to kill! God's church needs nothing less than the true and pure gospel proclaimed from Sabbath to Sabbath and from house to house.

But also detrimental, and most often destructive to the flock of Christ, is watered down preaching. Just as it is true of the infant, preaching with little content will not feed and nourish the soul. The congregation has the right to expect and ought to receive the truth in all its fulness. The preaching must be distinctive, fully expounding the Scriptures. Anything less is diluted milk and weakens, eventually leading to the demise of a local manifestation of the Body of Christ. The full doctrine of Christ, of salvation by grace, of sin, of judgment, is milk that strengthens and nourishes unto life eternal.

Do you desire such preaching of the Word? God's children do, just as much as the infant desires milk from his mother's breast. The infant has an insatiable desire for milk. It is almost his only desire; he craves milk and literally howls until he gets it. The baby cannot get to the nipple fast enough, swinging his little head back and forth until he finds his mother's breast. Then he gulps down the milk till he be satisfied. And that lasts but a short while and he cries for more. But each day he grows, is nourished, and strengthened, and lives.

God's people are new-born babes, "begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Thus we are become the opposite of what we were. We were dead in sin, but now are alive in Christ. We were alienated from God by our transgressions, but now in Christ's blood we are made worthy heirs of the everlasting fellowship of God. We were in darkness, but are now called into the marvelous light of God. Principally, by grace, the child of God is made a new creature in Christ! Yet we are always babes. Even the aged saint is a babe in this life, for in this life we have but the beginning of new obedience. Always the old man of sin is present, so that we have a battle to fight — the battle of faith. Thus we need the "wordy" milk. And we ought to desire it even as the baby the milk of his mother. Surely God's children do! It is the spontaneous longing of the new man begotten unto a lively hope through regeneration and called by the Word and Spirit.

But often this desire is not on the foreground in the lives of the people of God. And this is because of

our sin. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life do not desire the pure preaching of the Word. For the Word proclaimed is deadly to our old life of sin. The old man, in us, violently opposes that preaching. For our sins deaden the spiritual taste buds for the sincere milk of the Word.

This becomes evident when we do not take on the appearance of thirsty babes when attending the worship services. Often our appearance becomes the very opposite. Because of the lack of preparation on Saturday evening our eyes become heavy, and while the very Word of Life is proclaimed it falls upon heavy ears that do not hear. Or many times one's thoughts are so filled with secular things and thoughts that he finds it impossible to concentrate upon the Bread of Life being broken. And how many times do we not become so filled with pride and covetousness that it becomes impossible to worship God with the brethren and sisters of the congregation. And how many are there who, when going to church, know that the "milk" they receive is diluted to the point that it no longer can feed, yet have not the spiritual hungering and thirsting of babes to seek out the pure sincere milk of the Word? Often, rather than living for the Sabbath Day with hungering to be fed by Christ, we so fill our weeks with activity, pleasures, and business that we do not have time to digest the Word of God. The last thought of the sermon preached by the minister on Sunday was when he said, "Amen." Indeed, we have but the principle of new life!

Therefore, the Scripture admonishes the church to

desire the sincere milk of the Word. It requires conscious activity. We have a calling by grace to cultivate an appetite for the true preaching of the Word. This means that as God's children we must root out the desires of the old man of sin. It is our calling to flee our natural inclinations and put all sin away.

As Christ applies by His Spirit this Word to His Body, they fall down to their knees before God in prayer. It is the prayer for grace to see their sins. It is the prayer that they may learn to see how they deaden all desire for the Word. It is the prayer for grace to be filled with godly sorrow for that sin, and a prayer for grace to repent. The believer prays that, for Christ's sake and on the basis of His precious atonement, he may be forgiven, and given grace to flee from all sin. And positively it is a prayer for the sanctifying work of the Spirit of Christ in our hearts that we might be prepared to receive the sincere milk of the Word as babes. Such prayer on the part of God's true children shall always be accompanied by a turning from sin, and a thirsting after the only "milk" that strengthens and gives life.

This is the promise of God! Those by grace desiring the sincere milk of the Word shall grow in truth and grace. The more we taste the preciousness of the Word of Christ the more we shall desire it. And tasting that "milk" we taste that the Lord is gracious. Nothing is more precious to the elect sinner. Christ, and Him crucified, is food for the soul of the penitent sinner. It alone satisfies! May we desire that Word unto eternal life.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

"Hyper-Calvinism" and the Call of the Gospel (20)

Rev. David Engelsma

As the next step in his "apology for particular grace," Kuyper goes through the entire Bible, showing "that the Holy Scripture indeed teaches particular grace" (*Dat De Genade Particulier Is*, p. 162). He covers the Old Testament in three stages, the period from Adam to Noah, the period from the patriarchs to Moses, and the period of the prophets. His conclusion is this: "Plainly, exceedingly plainly, it appears that if we put the question to God Himself,

how *He* has intended His grace, neither His operations of grace nor His gracious promises (as far as the Old Testament is concerned, at any rate) give us even the least right to speak of a grace which, according to the counsel and according to the provisions and *according to the revealed will of God*, would be intended for the salvation of the entirety of all human individuals" (p. 191, my emphasis — DE). In the Old Testament Scriptures, "without any ambiguity, there is the very

definite testimony of a grace which is not universal, but particular" (p. 192).

But what does the New Testament say "about the common or particular character of grace?" "What is revealed to us concerning this in and through Jesus?" (p. 193) Kuyper limits himself at this point to the gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke teach that "Jesus preached that salvation proceeds according to *election* and . . . repeatedly and expressly distinguished the elect from the non-elect (p. 194). The synoptics also teach "that the blood of Jesus will be shed, not for *all*, but for *many*"; and "that those who obtain salvation do not obtain it according to an uncertain result, but according to the holy predestination of God" (p. 195). God's grace in Christ is not even intended for every Israelite. Kuyper makes a distinction between an elect kernel and a reprobate husk: "Jesus, like the prophets, very sharply distinguishes the spiritual kernel in Israel from the unholy mass. Not to all Israel was He sent, but only to the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel'" (p. 199). The gospel of John teaches the same truth, so that the conclusion must be "that the doctrine of 'common grace' can in no way or manner be harmonized with that which was spoken by Jesus. On the other hand, particular grace was taught by Jesus in the plainest words" (p. 214).

Inevitably, defense of the truth that God is gracious only to the elect raises the question, whether the gospel is to be preached to all men without distinction and, if so, why. This question arises from two quarters. On the one hand, those who hold that God is gracious to all men raise the question as an argument against the truth of particular grace. By this question, they mean to say, "If grace is particular, the Church cannot preach the gospel to all men, as she is called to do." On the other hand, there are those, the hyper-Calvinists, who deduce from the doctrine of particular grace that the Church should preach only to the regenerated elect. Kuyper confronts this crucial question, in a chapter entitled, "To Whom (Must the Gospel Be) Preached?": "Now we have come to the question, whether the gospel of Christ must be preached to every soul, or only to the elect?" (p. 292)

Kuyper's answer is: "to *every soul* without distinction; God does *not* will any limitation of the preaching to the elect." This is not an unimportant matter to Kuyper; he roundly condemns every effort to restrict the gospel: "And so entirely foreign to us is the limiting of gospel-preaching, that we rather condemn as unlawful and un-Biblical every attempt somehow to fence in the preaching of the gospel" (p. 292, 293).

As if he lived in 1976, with its corruptions of preaching — all under the name of evangelism,

Kuyper finds it necessary to add that he does not mean "that we recognize as gospel-preaching, everything that claims to be gospel-preaching; nor that we acknowledge as gospel-preachers everyone that sets himself up as a gospel-preacher; nor that we approve every *method* by which men think they have to preach the gospel. On the contrary, we understand by gospel-preaching only 'the proclamation of the whole counsel of God,' by persons lawfully qualified thereto and in the manner prescribed by the Word of God" — a description of gospel-preaching that warms the cockles of a Reformed heart (p. 293).^{*} Nevertheless, "of such a gospel-preaching now we say, that it may not aim only at the elect, but that the preaching of reconciliation must direct itself towards everything that is sinner (*tot al wat zondaar is*)" (p. 293).

But why? Why must the gospel be preached to *all*, when God's grace, in that very gospel, is not for all, but for some, the elect, only? The answer that many give to this question undermines everything else that they might say about a decree of election; particular redemption; total depravity; and the like. Their answer is: "because God loves them all, reprobate as well as elect; because God sincerely desires the salvation of all, the non-elect as well as the elect; and because God's love moves Him to make a well-meant offer to all." In other words, their answer is: "because God, after all, is gracious to all." Thus, the dike of particular grace, no matter how laboriously strengthened at other points, is breached, and the waters of universal (ineffectual) grace inundate the Reformed land.

This, however, is not Kuyper's answer!

That the gospel must be preached to all "stands fast on a three-fold basis," no aspect of which is a grace of God to all or a desire of God to save all.

The first reason for preaching to all is this, that "God's Word nowhere contains a limitation under the New Covenant; rather it lays emphasis on the falling away of every limitation; and actually shows us the preaching of the gospel to all sinners . . ." (p. 295). "Both John the Baptist and the apostles preached the gospel to all without distinction who came before them or whom they found in the synagogue, without the least limitation." Especially the preaching of Jesus is proof, for, although He was the one preacher Who knew who were elect and who were reprobate, He preached to all (p. 295).

The second reason is that we "cannot distinguish the sheep from the goats" (p. 295). Preaching is intended by God to gather the elect, but we do not know who the elect are. Therefore, we must preach to all. An implication, says Kuyper, is that "the doctrine of election, rather than restricting the extent of the preaching, offers the strongest incentive to bring the preaching to all" (p. 297).

There is a third reason. This has to do with the fact that God has a purpose in bringing the Word to the reprobate. "It is . . . altogether misconceived, if one says: God lets His gospel be preached to all sinners with the exclusive purpose, that it come to His elect Rather, even if all the elect stood on one side and all the lost stood on the other side, the high, serious obligation would still rest on the Church of Jesus to cause *both* to hear the gospel." For "to these (elect) we are indeed a savor of life unto life, *but we are also a savor of death unto death unto the others*; and the preacher of the gospel, *also when he brings death*, is a good savor unto God. This is what Paul expressly says in II Cor. 2:15: 'We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, *and in them that perish*' " (pp. 298, 299 — emphasis Kuyper's).

God intends to convict the lost sinner of the extent of his depravity. The sinner likes to contradict God's judgment on him, that he is totally depraved. But the awful depths of his depravity are made undeniably plain exactly when he laughs at and rejects the redemption presented to him in the gospel. "It is for this reason, *so that He may appear righteous*, that God now has the ransom presented (*aanbieden*, 'offer, present' — DE) to every creature without distinction" (p. 300). ". . . the preaching of the cross of Jesus must indeed properly be brought to the *lost*, as well as to the *elect*, so that the sinner may be convicted of guilt and God may be justified in His ways" (p. 301).

Although the gospel must be preached to all, the content of preaching may not be an announcement that the grace of the gospel is for all. Kuyper will not permit a preacher to say to everyone in his audience, "The ransom has been obtained for you," i.e., Christ died for you (or, by implication, God loves you). "Whenever you stand as a teacher before a *Christian congregation*, then you may and must say that (namely, the ransom has been obtained for you — DE), as often as you address the *congregation as a whole* But, on the contrary, when you do not speak in a congregation . . . and thus simply address sinners, then you may and must say, 'Salvation has appeared *for every one who believes* . . . ' " (p. 302). "The presentation (*aanbieden*) of this ransom in such a way that you say, 'It is destined for you personally,' can only be preached to the congregation of Christ or to one who shows himself to you as converted in his heart. Whereas the preaching of the ransom of Christ also to those who go lost must abide by the explicit rule which is described by the holy apostle Paul in this manner: 'to the one a savour of life unto life, to the other a savour of death unto death': but the preacher is 'unto God a sweet savour of Christ both in them that are saved, and in them that perish!'" (pp. 305, 306).

This was Abraham Kuyper's clear exposition and powerful defense of the Reformed faith at a crucial moment in the history of that faith in the Netherlands. With this ringing testimony to particular, sovereign grace, he began his labor to restore the Reformed character of the Church in the Netherlands. He did this in the face of great opposition. For 140 years, the theologians at home and abroad had exerted all their powers to obliterate the truth of particular grace, with the result that almost all pastors had forgotten the doctrine, and public opinion in the Church held it for foolishness. Kuyper's colleagues cursed him from their pulpits: "Whoever preaches another gospel, than that Christ died for all men, let him be accursed." Even his friends urged him not to write a defense of particular grace, at least not so early in the movement. It would alienate the "weaker brethren," hurt the cause of the newly created *De Heraut* (*The Herald*, the magazine in which Kuyper and his cohorts spread their views and in which the articles on particular grace originally appeared), and jeopardize the plans for the Free University.

Nevertheless, he wrote. The reason? Kuyper tells us the reason. He was concerned "for the favor and the grace of the Lord our God, more than for the favor of men" (p. 448). "Exactly through the confession of particular grace, the worth of His glory and the infinite fulness of His Divine favor reveals itself to our soul's eye . . ." (p. 451). "It would have been beneath God's dignity and a disparagement of His honor, and would be found altogether; loveless and powerless in our God, to offer to poor creatures, who lay cast away in their need, nothing more than a *chance* at an *uncertain* salvation; to allow His beloved Son to die at the risk that, perhaps, His holy blood would be shed for nothing; and to keep His dear children on earth in anguish and fear, right up to the last gasp, that, perhaps, all will still be lost — no, brothers, that you cannot, that you may not believe any longer, and if you do believe that, Oh, how you grieve and how you belittle the honor of the love and the mercy of the Lord our God!" (p. 452)

We hear much of Kuyper today. The Kuyper of common grace and the Kuyper of a "Reformed world-and-life-view" is proclaimed and acclaimed in the Reformed sphere. But from all the disciples of Kuyper and from the "neo-Kuyperians," very little is heard of the Kuyper of particular grace. Indeed, of this Kuyper, the *essential* Kuyper, we hear nothing.

Strange.

*Similar is Kuyper's description of the *motive* for our preaching to all: "The gospel must be preached, not out of ambition, in order to be able to say, 'I have been able to save souls,' but *out of obedience to God*" (p. 298).

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

Dear Timothy,

September 1, 1976

Since it is quite some time since last I wrote to you, I think it best that I try to pick up the tread of our conversation a bit so that it will become clear how this letter is intended to follow upon my last letter to you.

You had written me about practical preaching and its importance in the preaching of the Word on the Sabbath. The general thrust of your letter was to the effect that preaching ought to address itself forcibly to the problems which the people of God face in their walk in the world. It ought not to be far removed from the daily life and experience of God's people. And, further, you asked about the need to preach about the holy life of the people of God, not as an unattainable ideal, but as something for which God's people must daily strive.

Some aspects of this matter we have already discussed, and, in general, I agreed that indeed the preaching must be practical — if that word "practical" is correctly understood. But now, there are some particular dangers to which you must be alerted as you strive to make your preaching practical in that good sense of the word.

I think I already mentioned in a former letter that you must be careful not to fall into the error of perfectionism; i.e., that you leave God's people with the impression that they are able to attain perfection on this side of the grave, or even that they can approach perfection. The teaching of Scripture is very clear on this matter, and our confessions confirm this when they say that we have only a small beginning of the new obedience.

But in this connection I want briefly to bring up another point. Although it is true that perfection comes to the people of God only when they are brought into glory, nevertheless, Scripture is quite clear also on the point that the *dominion* of sin is destroyed in us.

While there is no need in this connection to go into this point in detail, it is necessary that you make it very clear to the people of God that this is true in their lives. It is so important that you do this because else you may conceivably give the people of God occasion to excuse their sin by some kind of antinomian self-justification so that they condone sin in their lives on the grounds that they are terrible sinners, unable to do any good and in no spiritual condition to heed the admonitions which Scripture holds before them.

But Scripture tells us that we are delivered from sin's dominion. This is presupposed in every admonition and it is implied in all Scripture's description of the work of salvation; but this is specifically taught especially in the book of Romans. In Romans 7 Paul speaks of the fact that we are dead to sin (vs. 2), that our old man is crucified with Christ (vs. 6), and that therefore the "body of sin is destroyed that henceforth we should not serve sin." (vs. 6) He then speaks specifically of this matter when he writes that death hath no more dominion over us (vs. 9), that sin ought no more to reign in our mortal bodies (vs. 12), that sin shall no longer have dominion over us (vs. 14), that God ought to be thanked that we are no longer the servants of sin, but are the servants of righteousness (vss. 17, 18).

The question is, of course, what particularly does this mean? While I do not intend to go into a lengthy exegesis of these verses, perhaps an illustration can best clarify, at least in part, what the apostle has in mind. The matter is at least partly comparable to the freedom granted to a slave after many years of slavery. You must think of a slave who was born into slavery under a very cruel and merciless master. His slavery was so complete that every action of his was determined by his master so that he was, in all respects, the cowering and obedient dog of the tyrant who controlled the whole of his life. He was never given even the slightest opportunity to think for himself, to determine his own conduct, to do anything

else but what was told him. He was given only sufficient to keep him alive and reasonably healthy so that he could do what was commanded him. He was a man who habitually wore rags, was totally unkempt in appearance, abject and servile in all his conduct, used to subsisting on a watery gruel made from the slop that came from the master's kitchen, with no opportunity to know or become acquainted with the outside world. If this man were suddenly set free, you can imagine that it would be difficult, to say the least, for him to live a reasonably normal life in the world of free men. Never having worn decent clothes, he would not know how to dress as other people did. Having never eaten anything which constitutes the normal diet of free men, his whole system would be unaccustomed to our food. Never having bathed or shaved, he would be hardly in a position to pay attention to the needs of his personal hygiene. But, more importantly, never having lived in the society of other people, never having had to make his own way in the world, he would be utterly at a loss to know how to live, how to earn his daily bread, how to conduct himself in the proper way in contacts with his fellow men. The habits of a lifetime of slavery would be so strong that he would constantly revert to them, and would only finally overcome them through the greatest effort, and over a long period of time. Nevertheless, he would be a free man. And, although he would need the constant help of someone stronger than he, he would be forever out of the clutches of his former master and would not any longer be under the dominion of the cruel tyrant who so long determined his life.

This is roughly analogous to what Paul means when he speaks of the fact that sin has no more dominion over us. Sin is no longer our master. The habits and actions of sin are still strong in us, for they are deeply imbedded in our depraved nature. But, by grace, we are delivered and stand in the freedom of the children of God. We are given a new life which is, as it were, a life in the palace of the King where all the blessedness and joy of life in the King's court is ours. But we need the constant instruction of the Word of God, the constant assistance of divine grace, the constant attention of Him Who has delivered us if we are to learn to throw off all the habits of our past life of slavery to sin.

It is this glorious truth which must be taught the people of God. Sin has no more dominion over them. The habits of sin are strong, and there are innumerable relapses into the old ways. For these we must daily seek forgiveness. But the greater we can be made to see the joys of life in the King's palace, the more we will strive towards that goal of living a life compatible with the principles of the kingdom of heaven.

Shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer in it?

That is one truth which must be driven home.

But there is another matter which we must consider yet in connection with practical preaching. This has to do with the fact that it is entirely possible for the minister to address himself in his preaching to problems of life and conduct which are not directly connected with his sermon. Let me illustrate once again. In some church circles where there are different views of the covenant held than in our own it is customary for the minister to consider a large portion of his congregation as unconverted. This is not the place to enter into the doctrinal questions involved; but you know that in these circles it is customary for and expected of the minister that he end each sermon which he preaches with some kind of call to the unconverted and some kind of "toepassing" which confronts the unconverted with the need of conversion. Now, apart from the erroneous doctrine which is involved in this matter, you must understand, of course, that God's people must be constantly called to repentance and conversion. There is no dispute about this. But the fact of the matter is that when this kind of preaching comes from the pulpit, the minister tacks on his little call to the unconverted no matter what text he may be preaching on. He may, e.g., be preaching on Eph. 1:3, 4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him." How totally inappropriate it would be to end a sermon on this text with a call to the unconverted when the text is a personal confession of faith put in the mouths of people of God.

Or, to use another example: suppose a minister hears that his young people are increasingly guilty of the sin of movie attendance. He decides, and correctly so, that he ought to mention this from the pulpit and discuss this sin in the preaching. But if he would do that in connection with a text such as is found, e.g., in the last verses of Ephesians 1 ("And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.") everyone would immediately sense how totally inappropriate that would be.

But the error is not only one of inappropriateness. The fact of the matter is, (and this needs the greatest emphasis), that if God's people are to hear admonitions of a practical nature which point them to their calling in life in connection with very specific sins, then they must hear the *Word of God*. They must not

hear a minister telling them about life. They must hear God Himself speak to them through the Word. The commands to live spiritually must be firmly rooted in the Scriptures. Only then will these commands come with the very authority of God Himself.

I cannot emphasize this strongly enough. It happens too often. The minister must be on his guard against the evil of dragging something into his sermon which has nothing to do with his text. If he wants to warn the people of God against a particular sin, let him choose a text appropriate to that and show in a very careful way that God's Word opposes that sin. If he ever hears his parishioners say, after a sermon: "The minister can easily talk. He really does not know what life is all about, and what its difficulties are", then he had better ask himself first of all whether he has carefully shown from God's Word that this sin is condemned by God. Practical applications which do not flow naturally from the text do more harm than good. Avoid them as you would the plague.

And finally, and in connection with this, beware of being harsh on the pulpit. You must be authoritative. You must be able to say: "Thus saith the Lord." But you will not attain that if you harshly rant and rave against God's people and castigate them for their sins. The Dutch have an expression which warns against making the "preekstoel een steekstoel." Roughly translated, I suppose this would mean that one makes the pulpit a whipping post. Jesus deals with his people as a shepherd deals with his sheep — tenderly, carefully, lovingly. You can do no differently — even when they stray. And the best way to avoid this danger is to see yourself as one of those wandering sheep. When you preach to yourself, understanding your own sins and weaknesses, you will not deal roughly with those for whom Christ died.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

Book Review

(Note: this review of Rev. D. Engelsma's book, *Marriage: The Mystery of Christ and the Church*, is reprinted from *The Gospel Witness* of June, 1976.)

There is only one book for review this Quarter. We have purposely excluded others because we deem *THIS* book so important that we do not want its value overlooked or forgotten by the mention of others. The book is timely. We would wish it could be made "required reading" for *EVERY* adult New Zealander; that *EVERY* adult read it — marked it — learnt it — and inwardly digested it. If this were so; if the contents of this book were put into practice, society would become more stable and broken homes would be few and far between.

The book may be ordered through the O.P.C. Bookshop P.O. Box 2289, Christchurch. There may be some delay in copies arriving from the publishers, but it is a book worth waiting for. (P.S. The book is not held in stock, but orders may be placed with the confidence that supplies will be obtained with the minimum of delay. The American price is \$3.50).

"MARRIAGE", by D. Engelsma; published by R.F.P.A., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Ours is a decadent, sex-obsessed society. Pornographic literature is freely available: censorship of books, films and art-forms is being relaxed to the point where it is a farce to say we have censorship: traditional (and Biblical) standards of morality are sneered at and tossed aside: loose and temporary associations of the sexes is rapidly becoming the norm among a great many of our young people: marriage itself is under heavy attack. Books on the subject of sex are flooding off the presses and becoming more and more explicit — and so we could go on, ad nauseum.

Well, *THIS* is a book on marriage (every aspect of it) but, it is different. It is written from an entirely different standpoint from the spate of books on the subject that are available. It is a very able exposition of the theology of marriage. But don't let that mislead you. It is no "dry-as-dust" abstract study which only scholars and theologians can appreciate. On the

contrary! It is simple — direct — and practical; and the fact that it is written to teach the meaning of marriage from the only authoritative standard we have (the Word of God) makes it all the more valuable. To quote from the jacket: "The Word of God requires us to view marriage as the mystery of Christ and the Church. This is the light which illumines every aspect of marriage, which makes clear the calling of husbands and wives in marriage, which distinguishes *CHRISTIAN* marriage from the dark perversions of marriage in the world." From *THIS* point of view, the book does not disappoint.

In 9 chapters the author ably expounds the teaching of Scripture on marriage; and to show the comprehensive nature of the book, we list the chapter headings. "The Mystery of Marriage"; "The Institution of Marriage"; "The Christian Man as Husband"; "The Christian Woman as Wife"; "Sex in Marriage"; "Children in Marriage"; "The Forbidding of Divorce"; "The Marriage of Believer and Unbeliever"; "The Unbreakable Marriage Bond".

In each chapter the author takes a relevant passage of Scripture, and in a careful and thorough analysis of the words and syntax, he unfolds the meaning so clearly, and applies it so directly, that no one could possibly be left in doubt as to what marriage is intended to be and what God requires of those who marry.

Although the student of Scripture will find considerable wealth of exegesis in it, the book is not a mere academic study of selected Biblical passages. Far from it. It is a book that has grown out of a busy pastor's care for the people of his congregation. All the material in the book was preached as a series of sermons "with the practical purpose that the married and youth alike might know and honour God's institution of marriage".

The sermons proved so helpful to the whole congregation that urgent pressure was brought to bear upon the pastor to publish the series so that a very much wider circle of people might benefit from the teaching so ably given. Every point that arises from the exposition of the Bible texts is applied to life situations: in this way we are shown the practical bearing of the Word of God on every aspect of married life.

This is one of those books that you wish could be put into the hands of every married couple and those contemplating marriage. It is *FULL* of practical instruction. For those wise enough to buy it — read it — and apply it, it will prove a most enriching possession as husbands and wives discover the purpose of marriage and what it means to be "heirs together of the grace of life".

I.G.B.

NOTICE

Classis East will meet in regular session on October 6, 1976 in the First Prot. Ref. Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least ten days prior to the convening of the session.

Jon Huiskens
Stated Clerk

ELIGIBLE FOR CALL

The Mission Committee hereby informs the churches that Hudsonville's Consistory has declared our Missionary, Rev. Dale H. Kuiper, eligible for a call in our churches.

Mission Committee
J.M. Faber, sec'y.

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association will be held Thursday evening, September 23, at the Southwest Prot. Ref. Church at 8 PM.

Nominees for the board, (three to be chosen) are George Hoekstra, Gerrit Holstege, Fred Huizenga, Clare Kuiper, Tom Reitsma and Hank Velthuis. Rev. C. Hanco will speak to us on "The Standard Bearer on the Mission field." Mark your calendar now and plan to attend this meeting.

Know the standard
and follow it.



Read the
STANDARD BEARER!

News From Our Churches

At this writing, two of our churches are without pastors. They are Kalamazoo, Michigan and Redlands California. Rev. Marvin Kamps accepted a call to Doon, Iowa and was scheduled to preach his farewell sermon in Redlands on August 22. From a trio of Rev. J. Kortering, Rev. G. Van Baren, and Rev. R. Van Overloop, Redlands has extended a call to Rev. Kortering.

The Hudsonville consistory and the Mission Committee, in harmony with the decision of the last Synod, has declared Rev. Dale Kuiper eligible for call in one of our churches. Rev. Kuiper labored as home missionary in Maine until this spring.

Rev. Arie den Hartog, pastor of our church in Prospect Park, New Jersey sent in the following news item. "Prospect Park has purchased property for the future building of a church. The property is located in a residential area of Wyckoff, New Jersey, which is near to Prospect Park. The property includes five acres of land, since this is the requirement for church property in the Boro of Wyckoff. Also, the property has a house on it that will be used for the parsonage. According to present plans, Rev. den Hartog and his family will be moving into the house some time in the month of July. If some of you in the denomination have heard rumors for quite some time already concerning this great development, these rumors were indeed correct. Our delay in announcing this to the denomination has been due to the fact that we desired to obtain a building permit for the church building before we announced it, since this would make our future plans more definite. We are still presently working on obtaining a permit and since it seems that it might take some time yet, we thought it best to announce this great news to the denomination now. We hope in the near future to give you more information and perhaps to include some pictures. This is a great step of faith for us as a congregation, especially because of our small size and because of the high cost of property in this metropolitan area. We have made this great step with much prayer and with earnest desire to firmly establish our congregation of the Protestant Reformed Church in this area."

Subsequent to receiving Rev. den Hartog's letter, our family traveled to the East and spent the Sunday

of August 1 in Prospect Park. We received a warm welcome from the congregation. They are presently meeting in the Legion Hall on North 8th Street, but they have some rather firm plans to change that. Rev. den Hartog has moved into the new parsonage. Plans have been drawn for the new church building. In view of the fact that the church will no longer be located in Prospect Park, the congregation has changed the name to Covenant Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. den Hartog's new address is 283 Squawbrook Road, Wyckoff, New Jersey 07481. His phone number is 201-891-0902. Our people in Prospect Park are most pleased to receive visitors from other of our churches. Because they are hundreds of miles from any of our other churches they really appreciate fellowship with other saints. It has been our experience that this is also the case in our other churches, a fact you might bear in mind when you plan your family vacation.

Rev. Moore has also written to extend a warm invitation to our people to visit him and his congregation in Edmonton. His new address is: Rev. Richard G. Moore, 12324 -134th St., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5L1V1. His phone number is 455-9803.

Edmonton Church bulletins are a real pleasure to read. They seem to exude joy and thankfulness. This was especially true of the special bulletin on the occasion of Rev. Moore's installation service held last May 27. All the 'dedicated nominees' who preached for and labored with the congregation in Edmonton are thanked by name.

As mentioned last month, a series of messages by Rev. Engelsma is being carried on the Family Radio Network on the program "Conference Echoes." These programs are being broadcast on Monday and Tuesday evenings in the New Jersey area during August and September. The stations include: KEAR FM San Francisco, CA, KEBR FM Sacramento, CA, KECR FM El Cajon, CA WFME FM Newark, NJ, WKDN FM Camden, NJ, WFSI FM Annapolis, MD, WYFR Scituate, MA. Efforts are being made to provide this network with more programming from our churches, including Rev. Van Baren's series on creation.

K.G.V.