

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... it is a reliable test of one's commitment to the Reformed doctrine of election to enquire into his commitment to the Reformed doctrine of reprobation.

See "... (A History Lesson)"

— page 29

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. David J. Engelsma,
Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. Robert C. Harbach,
Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. Mark H. Hoeksema, Rev. Meindert Joostens,
Rev. Jay Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Rodney Miersma,
Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. James Slopsema, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren,
Rev. Ronald Van Overloop, Rev. Herman Veldman, Mr. Kenneth G. Vink.

Editorial Office: Prof. H.C. Hoeksema
4975 Ivanrest Ave. S.W.
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Church News Editor: Mr. Kenneth G. Vink
1422 Linwood, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49507

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Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr.
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

Australian Business Office: Reformed Literature Centre,
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Rockhampton 4700,
Queensland, Australia

New Zealand Business Office: The Standard Bearer,
c/o OPC Bookshop,
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MEDITATION

Rules For Outward Conduct

Rev. M. Schipper

"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Colossians 4:5, 6.

Our text is found in the last section of Paul's letter to the Colossians, in which section the apostle gives final exhortations to the church. In the verses imme-

diately preceding our text he exhorts to prayer. Specifically he has in mind that the church pray for him, that God would open to him a door for the

preaching of the gospel. As the apostle to the Gentiles he was called to go wherever the Spirit would direct him, speaking the mystery of Christ in the world. At the moment he is in bonds because he had spoken concerning that mystery. His heart's desire is that the church petition the throne of grace that, God willing, his bonds would be loosed, that he may fulfill his calling as minister of the gospel.

Prayer is a spiritual art, in the activity of which the church of Christ is continually to persevere, to watch in the same with thanksgiving. Particularly it is that spiritual activity in devotion to God which requires constant application of all the spiritual powers of the believers, in which the latter realize that God gives His grace and Spirit to those that ask Him. It is the highest form of glorifying God. Spiritual watchfulness in the exercise of prayer is necessary that the children of God may know the will of God and pray for those things pleasing to Him and in accord with His will. They must watch against the seducing influence of their own flesh and against the temptations of the world and the devil. They must have a deep and clear sense of their real needs and the needs of God's cause in the world. There must always be a spiritual longing on the part of the children of God for the things of God's kingdom, while at the same time they thankfully acknowledge that God is the overflowing fountain of all good, so that their prayers are at the same time an offering of sweet smell and of praise to God.

Because of the deep concern of the church for the things of God's kingdom, it must follow that the prayers of the church will be especially for the needs of the apostle and his helpers in the ministry of the gospel. The apostle is not so much concerned about the opening of the door of the prison, but the opening of the door of speech. The opening of that door will allow the gospel to be preached and the mystery of Christ to be made known in the world.

Now to this idea the apostle adds the words of our text — on the surface, without any connection whatever.

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time!

Yet it should be apparent that there is a very definite connection. The apostle had just admonished the church to pray for an open door for the gospel in the world. This evidently caused him to think immediately of those who are without, that is, outside of the church in the world. Moreover, he is also mindful of the calling of believers with respect to those who are outside the church in the world. So understood, we can see how the apostle would be concerned, not only that the church constantly pray that the gospel may have free course, but also that the church know her calling as she takes her place in

the world and particularly with respect to the children of this world with whom she comes into contact.

So we have in the text rules set down for the church in her outward conduct.

It must be remembered that the church, the believers, are in the world. The Bible nowhere advocates physical isolation from the world. Indeed, the Word of God is aware of the fact that because of persecution the church would be required to suffer at the hands of the world, and because of the fact that the world would develop in sin and corruption the church would make evil attempts to seek isolation. Perhaps this is what the apostle feared was a strong possibility on the part of the church in Colosse. Does he not call attention to this evil tendency and doctrine of "touch not, taste not, handle not" in chapter 2:20-23? Besides, is it not true that the history of Christ's church in the world is replete with examples of Anabaptistic tendencies, that is, the history of those evil sects known not for their world fight, but for their world flight? To be sure, the Scriptures teach that the church must live in spiritual separation from the world, but this is something quite different from physical separation. To live in physical separation from the world on some lonely island or in some secluded desert oasis is quite impossible, for the simple reason that in such an attempt the church would take the world along in her own flesh. Moreover, was not the Lord Jesus deeply concerned about this when He prayed that the Father would not take His children out of the world, but that He would keep them from evil? And this means spiritual separation. Then we live physically in the world, but spiritually have no part of it. It means that anti-thetically we stand in the midst of the world which we oppose because of our spiritual principles. That is our Christian calling. And this is what the apostle also has in mind in our text.

Those who are without are those who are outside of the church of Christ, with whom we come daily into contact. They are those who are outside the church, and therefore outside of Christ. They are without the grace of regeneration. They walk in darkness according to the flesh. Nevertheless they live in the same world with the believers who are the children of light. They work in the same factories, do business in the same stores, ride the same buses, and fly the same airplanes. They live in houses and perhaps next door to the believers. Hence believers, children of God, have their walk among them, and necessarily come in constant contact with them — with those outside.

What we must see here is the fact that the apostle not only sees us as living among those who are outside, but he stresses the fact that we are to walk in

wisdom "toward" them. Though he expects believers to reveal their true spiritual self, never imitating that world but always revealing their spiritual distinctiveness, yet we are expected to do this "toward" those who are without. We are not to assume a lackadaisical attitude of no interest in them. Our interest must go in their direction. What that interest must be, the apostle explains further in the text.

Walking in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

That is, walking in the sphere of Christian wisdom. The wisdom of believers is not the same as the wisdom of the world. The latter is foolishness, and God make it so, according to I Corinthians 1:20. The foolishness of the world is that it cannot see the wisdom of God. Though the world may have what it calls wisdom, it is not the same as the wisdom of believers who are in Christ. When believers walk in the sphere of Christ, they also walk in the sphere of wisdom. That means that they are motivated by faith and by the grace of the love of Christ, and that, too, toward one another. It also means that they walk according to the Word of God as it is the revelation of Christ. In that revelation of Jesus Christ they have the precepts according to which they must walk in the midst of the world. However, the apostle has in mind a particular application of this wisdom to specific circumstances. According to the circumstances in which we find ourselves we are to walk in wisdom toward those without. This refers, of course, to practical wisdom. As another before me has said, one does not preach the gospel to a man who is at the point of drowning — rather, he helps the man get out of the water. One does not offer the last rites of the church to the man who falls among thieves — but he stops the flow of blood, and gets the man to the hospital. He is the good Samaritan — this is walking in wisdom, and redeeming the time.

Redeeming the time is taking advantage of the opportunity. As the opportunity presents itself, it must be taken advantage of. The Christian therefore must never allow an opportunity to pass by without revealing to outsiders the wisdom in the sphere of which he walks. What he does to and for the outsider he does because he belongs to Christ, because he lives in obedience to Christ, Who commands him to love God and the neighbor. In one word, when the believer walks in wisdom toward those without, the outsider must see Christ in him. That is what the apostle is driving at. But there is more.

The believer must also be gracious in speech.

It is through our speech more than anything else that we also reveal our walk in wisdom. One does not simply walk in wisdom toward those without saying anything. It is precisely through our speech that our walk in wisdom is manifested. Through our speech we

put into words the thoughts of our heart. As one thinketh in his heart, so he speaks. And remember, this speech is that of the believer to those outside, to those who have a different speech, which is corrupt, vile, profane. The speech of the believer to them must reveal the grace of Christ which is within us, or we had better say nothing at all.

It is speech that must be seasoned with salt.

The figure of salted speech indicates that the speech is to be tasty, palatable, flavorful, savory. When speech is seasoned with salt, when it is acted upon by grace, it becomes beautiful and pleasant. Such it is, first of all, in the judgment of God; for it is speech that is in harmony with and according to His standard of truth and righteousness, and therefore according to the Word of God. God speaks in His Word. When our speech is seasoned with salt it compares favorably to the Word of God. When we read of the gracious words which proceeded out of His (Jesus') mouth (Luke 4:22), we can only conclude that they were words that were seasoned with salt. Such must be also the speech of His disciples, of everyone who walks under the banner of Jesus Christ in the midst of the world. Such must be the speech of each one who walks in wisdom toward those that are without. It follows, doesn't it, that that speech will be quite different than the speech of the ungodly. Indeed, the child of God will be known by his speech. If one talks like the world, there is no reason to believe that he is a child of God — he gives no evidence that he is. Our speech must reveal the grace of Christ which is in us. But that is not all.

The apostle adds to this — "that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

The apostle Peter (I Peter 3:15, 16) also writes of this when he exhorts believers to sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. This, he says, they must do to have a good conscience, that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

This is also the idea of the apostle in our text.

No matter whether the outsider mocks with you, speaks with malicious intent, or whether he is dead serious — whatever the circumstances, the believer must always be ready to answer. And when you give answer, you are confronted with a question, a question by those who are outside. The apostle does not say what it is that they may ask. Most probably their question will be one or more of these: Who are you? Why do you live like you do? Why do you go out of your way for me? How do you explain the fact that no profanity passes over your lips? How can you be

concerned about me who did only evil to you? Who is this Jesus Christ Whom you claim to follow, Whom you emulate in your life and walk? What is it that makes you tick?

And you must be ready to give answer!

Here is your opportunity to walk in wisdom toward those that are without. Let him know in no uncertain terms not only who and what you are, but more particularly Who your God is Whom you serve, and Who your Jesus is Who delivered you from the lowest hell and is bringing you into the highest heavens.

These are the rules to live by!

Living by these rules, you will have a good conscience, and the practical evidence that Christ lives in you. So you will realize your calling to love God not only, but also your neighbor and even your enemies. When you love even your enemies, you do not condone his sin and say nothing about his corrupt speech; rather, you reprove him and plead for amendment. To be silent is to sin. To speak the truth to him is to love him.

Wonderful calling, but with serious implications!

EDITORIALS

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

Editor's Notes

We call your attention to a special feature in this issue, namely, a transcript of Prof. Decker's Convocation Address and an accompanying letter from the seminary faculty. We urge you to read these: it is one way of keeping in contact with our seminary even though you live many miles away.

* * *

A second special feature in this issue is a report on the recent meeting of the General Assembly of the

Presbyterian Church in America by Pastor Eugene C. Case, of Woodville, Mississippi. We take this opportunity to thank Pastor Case for providing this report.

* * *

To help provide room in this issue for some of the special features, the editorial department is slightly abbreviated this time, Next time, D.V., we hope to resume our critique of "Our Song of Hope."

—Attacking Election Via Reprobation— (A History Lesson)

Any veteran reader of our magazine knows that down through the years, even preceding my editorship, the *Standard Bearer* has repeatedly warned that those who oppose the Reformed doctrine of reprobation really do not want the Reformed doctrine of election, that it is a favorite stratagem of the opponents of sovereign election to attack this doctrine by attacking sovereign reprobation, and that, in fact, it is a reliable test of one's commitment to the Reformed doctrine of election to inquire into his commitment to the Reformed doctrine of reprobation.

In our times this is an important subject. For everywhere today the Reformed doctrine of reprobation is being attacked and denied. And, as anyone acquainted with current ecclesiastical events will know, from the pen of Dr. Harry Boer there is a gravamen pending before the Christian Reformed

Church against the doctrine of reprobation as set forth in Canons I, 6 and 15. It is a legitimate question whether this same Harry Boer really believes the Reformed doctrine of election as set forth in the same Canons. And it is also a legitimate question for the Christian Reformed Church to ask itself whether, if it honors Harry Boer's gravamen three years from now, it will be able to maintain at all the doctrine of sovereign election.

No, it is not our intention to discuss these issues at this time. Perhaps that will come at a later date.

But we want to call attention to a lesson from history which confirms our contention mentioned in the first paragraph of this editorial. It is a lesson from history which comes straight from the Synod of Dordrecht, a lesson which is, therefore, all the more valuable.

Recently I was doing a bit of research in a very fascinating volume, the *Acts of the National Synod of Dordrecht*, a large volume of some 950 pages which contains a very detailed account of the entire Great Synod. It is the kind of volume which, when you are consulting it for data on a certain item, you cannot put aside, but continue to page through and read because your eye falls on all kinds of other interesting things. Ministers and theological students who can read Dutch would do well to obtain this volume and read it.

But to return to the subject, as I was doing some research, my eye fell on an interesting account. You see, at the Synod the indicted Arminians, headed by Simon Episcopius, were required to submit in writing their opinions concerning the five articles of doctrine on which they were accused of holding heretical views. Although they delayed long, the Arminians finally presented to the Synod at the thirty-first session, December 13, 1618, their opinions concerning the first article, concerning divine predestination. In another of their many delaying tactics, however, they had failed to submit their views on the remaining four articles. Furthermore, in their ten paragraphs about the first article, the Arminians had gone out of their way to make statements about reprobation which were designed to put the Reformed view in a bad light, and thus to disparage the whole Reformed view of predestination. In no fewer than six of the ten paragraphs they made references to absolute reprobation; and more than one of these paragraphs referred to reprobation exclusively.

What happened at the thirty-second session on Friday morning, December 14?

First of all, the Arminians were ordered to submit in writing their opinions on the four remaining articles, and to do so by the following Monday. Secondly, they were admonished to state their views positively, rather than negatively; that is, they were told to state what they believed, rather than what they did not hold, so that their views could better be judged. And if they wanted to present also their rejection of opposite views, they could add that separately.

And then there follows this significant note: "The president (Johannes Bogerman, HCH) also admonished them that they should confine themselves rather to the questions concerning the comforting truth of election, instead of hatefully dragging in and

discussing the doctrine of reprobation. They answered that they would heed the president's admonition."

At the thirty-fourth session the Arminians presented their opinions concerning the remaining four articles. But to this they added a lengthy statement as to why they wanted to present their negative opinions. And to this they appended again a lengthy statement containing seven alleged reasons, along with several paragraphs of explanation, as to why they wanted to declare their opinions concerning reprobation. In this section they stated, among other things, that the reason why they wanted to state their views on reprobation was "Because the difficulties and doubts which trouble the Remonstrants and their Churches are especially concerning reprobation." That was not true, of course. The fundamental question was whether there was an absolute decree of election, in other words, whether election was conditional or unconditional.

And again, the Arminians state: "We acknowledge with the honorable president that the doctrine of election is lovely and comforting, and that of reprobation unpleasant; but we consider that the consolations which are drawn from absolute and unconditional election are full of dangers, and (if we have insight into them according to their nature) provide men an occasion for sinning; and the opposite doctrine of absolute reprobation is hateful with reason, for it is full of despair and stand opposed to the justice of God."

You see, there is nothing new in history.

The Arminians saw that the easiest method of attacking sovereign election was to attack the Reformed doctrine of reprobation.

Our fathers of Dordrecht saw that this was the strategy of the Arminians and that the real issue was the Arminians' denial of unconditional and absolute election.

Therefore they admonished them: tell us your views of election positively. Don't hatefully drag in the doctrine of reprobation.

Let us learn the lesson. The man who hates the Reformed doctrine of reprobation and calls it unbiblical, un-Reformed, and un-Christian really is opposed to the Reformed doctrine of absolute and unconditional election.

Don't be deceived!

Know the standard and follow it.
Read the STANDARD BEARER!



TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

A Reformed Look at Pentecostalism

Rev. David Engelsma

In the previous article (Sept. 15 issue of *The Standard Bearer*) it was proved from Holy Scripture that the miracles alleged today by Pentecostalism are fraudulent. The Reformed faith disavows miracle-working. Our faith is the doctrine of the apostles, who received it from Jesus. This doctrine has already been confirmed by many miracles. It does not need any further attestation. The only gospel that requires new miracles is a new gospel.

This, however, does not imply that the Reformed religion is a religion without miracles. Pent. would like to leave this impression. It is a gospel with miracles, whereas the Reformed faith is a gospel lacking miracles and, therefore, less than a full gospel.

First, the Reformed faith — and the Reformed believer! — sees the almighty power of God in all of creation and in every aspect of earthly life. The daily rising of the sun; the annual quickening of nature in spring-time; the blooming of a single rose; the conception of a baby; the upheaval of an earthquake; the rise and fall of nations; my health and life this moment; and a piece of bread on my table — all are the almighty, everywhere present, incomprehensible working of the power of the providence of God. The Christ of our faith is the sovereign Lord Who is presently upholding and governing all things by the Word of His power in a most marvellous manner (Heb. 1:3).

Secondly, we claim as our own every miracle that is recorded on the pages of Scripture. The notion that one does not have miracles unless miracles are done by him or before his eyes is foolish. The miracle of the flood; the miracle of the fire of the Lord devouring Elijah's sacrifice; the miracle of the incarnation; the miracle of Peter's raising of Dorcas; and all the others are *my* miracles, as truly as if I experienced them, not only because they were deliverances of the Church of which I am a member, but also because they astound me, make me adore God, and strength-

en my faith in His Word, as much as if I saw them done with my very own eyes. The Reformed believer has an abundance of wonders in the Bible; any additional miracle would be superfluous.

Thirdly, the Word proclaimed by the Reformed Church constantly accomplishes many, great miracles. It raises the spiritually dead; it opens the eyes of the spiritually blind; it makes the spiritually lame to leap as a hart; it pulls down the fortresses of Satan in human hearts and lives (cf. Is. 35; II Cor. 10:3-6). By the power of the Holy Spirit, the truth effects the miracle of salvation: faith; conversion; pardon; and sanctification. These are astounding wonders, far greater, should we be inclined to make the comparison, than miracles of physical healing, to say nothing of the trivial, nonsensical "miracles" so often boasted of by Pent. The spiritual wonders of the gospel, in fact, are the reality of which the physical healing by Jesus and His apostles was a sign.

No, the Reformed Church is not a Church devoid of miracles.

But this, by the way. Our purpose has been to show from Scripture that Pent. is heretical in its doctrine of salvation ("Holy Spirit baptism") and fraudulent in its miracles. This has been done.

The Reformed faith judges Pent. to be a different religion from that of Luther, Calvin, and the Reformed confessions — a fundamental departure from the faith once delivered to the saints.

The Reformed Testing of Pent.'s Spirit

Pent. replaces the Word of God in the Church and in the life of the member of the Church with experience, human feeling. This is one of its basic errors. Essentially, it is an attack on the Word, whether it replaces the Word altogether, or whether it puts the Word in the background, or whether it puts experience alongside the Word. The movement as a

whole runs down doctrine; it speaks disparagingly of orthodoxy. Wherever it appears, it does away with the creeds. One of the "gifts" which it has restored is that of special revelations given directly from God to certain "prophets." This is the denial of the sole authority and full sufficiency of Scripture — a death-blow to *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone). Hearing and believing the Word is no longer the central thing, but the experience of the Spirit-baptism.

This displacement of the Word with experience identifies Pent. as a revival of the ancient heresy of mysticism: immediate contact with God. Pent.'s favorite words are "experience," "feeling," "power," "ecstasy," and the like. This is its Spirit-baptism; this is the nature of the Pent. meeting; this is its appeal to religious people; this is why women have a leading place in the movement.

That Pent. is experientialism and mysticism is readily illustrated from Pent. sources. The *Full Gospel Business Men's Voice* (a Pent. magazine) of June, 1960 gives a description of his baptism with the Holy Spirit by a minister who, disturbed by his "lack of power," had sought the baptism in fire:

"Directly, there came into my hands a strange feeling, and it came on down to the middle of my arms and began to surge! It was like a thousand — like ten thousand — then a million volts of electricity. It began to shake my hands and to pull my hands, I could hear, as it were, a zooming sound of the power. It pulled my hands higher and held them there as though God took them in His. There came a voice in my soul that said, 'Lay these hands on the sick and I will heal them!' . . . but I didn't have the baptism . . . In an air-conditioned room, with my hands lifted . . . and my heart reaching up for my God, there came the hot, molten lava of His love. It poured in like a stream from Heaven and I was lifted up out of myself. I spoke in a language I could not understand for about two hours. My body perspired as though I was in a steambath: the Baptism of Fire!" (quoted in Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, p. 127).

John Sherrill, well-known Pentecostal, writes of seeing Jesus as a bright white light in his hospital room (cf. his *They Speak with Other Tongues*). Donald Gee, another leading Pentecostal, describes the Pent. baptism this way: "We are taken into God, and the soul will receive a consuming desire to ever more be utterly and entirely lost in Him" — the typical language of mysticism (*A New Discovery*, p. 23).

A second fundamental error of Pent. is that it puts Jesus Christ into the background and puts the Holy Spirit on the foreground. It is forced to deny this, just as Rome is forced to deny that the cult of Mary actually replaces Jesus, but the fact remains. The truth of this charge is obvious on the very face of the

movement. The Spirit is at the center and gets the attention in Pent. The work of the Spirit, not that of the Son, is celebrated and exalted. The very name by which this movement calls itself gives it away: Pentecostalism — a name that has to do with the Spirit. Scripture, however, gives the people of God the name Christian — a name that has to do with the Son, Jesus.

This disparagement of Jesus in favor of the Spirit is rooted deeply in basic Pent. doctrine. Pent. teaches that the child of God must go beyond Christ to the Spirit, must advance beyond merely (!) receiving Christ by faith to receiving the Spirit in the Spirit-baptism.

Pent. insults Christ.

Whatever spirit replaces Christ, disparages Christ, or goes beyond Jesus the Christ is not the Spirit of Christ but one of the spirits of antichrist, for the Spirit of Christ reveals *Christ*, bestows *Christ*, calls attention to the work of *Christ*, and glorifies *Christ*. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26). "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:14).

A third error is its minimizing of faith, stressing instead certain human works. Pent. insists that faith in Christ is not enough; something additional is required; one must go beyond faith to the Spirit-baptism. It slights those who merely (!) believe, ex-tolling those who have stepped up to the Spirit-baptism. Downgrading faith, it stresses all kinds of human works. Pent. puts a premium on certain works that are alleged to be conditions for receiving the baptism with the Spirit: praying intensely, cleansing one's heart from all sin, yielding oneself completely, and the like. The great emphasis, of course, is on the human work of tongue-speaking. Believing on Jesus must take a back seat to this!

It is not strange then that Pent. practically ignores the one fundamental blessing of salvation for the child of God, the blessing received through faith: forgiveness of sins.

Whatever disparages faith, whatever adds to faith, whatever goes beyond faith is of the devil, is another gospel, and whoever falls away to this heresy loses Christ and salvation.

Faith alone! *Sola fide!* All of salvation, by faith only! "For by grace are ye saved through faith . . . not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9). The first verses of Galatians 5 give a sharp warning that there may be nothing alongside faith. To add to faith is altogether to lose Christ and to fall from grace. For salvation, we begin, continue, and end with faith.

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

... OF THE ...

PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

September 30, 1977

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ:

Greetings from Seminary Hill! We thought that perhaps you would like to hear from us at the beginning of the school year.

Our new term began on the seventh of September; and, as has become our custom in recent years, we had a public convocation program at our Southwest Church. This year it was Prof. Decker's turn to deliver the message, and he spoke on "Buy The Truth." A transcript of this message will appear in the same issue as that in which this letter appears, so that all of you may benefit from it. For us as Faculty convocation is a happy occasion, for it always seems good to see our students again and to get back into the harness after the summer period.

Our student body this year is slightly smaller than last year. Graduation plus the fact that some of our pre-seminarians did not return this fall has resulted in the fact that the student body totals fifteen. Eight of these students are in the seminary department, and many of you in the Michigan area have become acquainted with them through their speaking "a word of edification" in the churches. The Seniors Class is comprised of Wilbur Bruinsma, Michael De Vries, and Richard Flikkema. The Middlers Class is Ronald Cammenga, Carl Haak, Ronald Hanko, Steven Houck, and David Zandstra. There is no Juniors Class this year. In the pre-seminary department we have seven students at various stages of their preparatory work. New to our school are Barry Gritters a son of our Redlands, California congregation, and Jon Smith, of Birmingham, Alabama, who transferred to our school from Reformed Theological Seminary, of Jackson, Mississippi. Jon is on a combined program of pre-seminary and seminary work, due to the fact that our pre-seminary requirements are a bit different than at other schools.

Our Faculty is also different this year. Not only is Prof. Decker back with us, after his extended absence of last year, and carrying his full load. But we also have a new face in our teaching staff. Rev. C. Hanko was appointed to assist the Faculty and to give some relief from our rather heavy course loads by teaching two Dutch courses in the pre-sem department. We are happy to have him with us, and thankful for the help he is providing.

And so we have begun what we hope and pray will be another fruitful year. It is always a source of encouragement to us to note how freely and generously our school is remembered in the special gifts department. Just during this past month, for example, we have received a total of \$750.00 in three gifts two of which came from friends who are not of our Protestant Reformed constituency. This is gratifying. Part of this money goes into our Library Fund, to aid in building up our constantly growing library. Part of it is put to good use in obtaining various special items for the school, such as the new copy machine which we obtained last year.

Our space is used up, so we must say farewell. Remember us in your prayers.

With love in the Lord Jesus Christ,
The Faculty

CONVOCATION ADDRESS (SEMINARY)

Buying the Truth

Prof. Robert D. Decker

As I view the ecclesiastical scene, especially the Reformed scene, I am impressed with two facts. The first is the fact that the truth is being sold on every side; one is not even shocked by it anymore. Consider how the truth is being sold. The truths of creation and the fall of man into sin as recorded in the first few chapters of Genesis are denied. These chapters, we are told, contain not a literal account but are teaching models. The truth of definite (limited) atonement is denied in favor of universalism. The truth of the expiatory or atoning character of the death of Christ is denied. The truth of the place and calling of women in God's church is denied. The truth of the miracles and especially the central one, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, is denied. The truth concerning the task or mission of the church is denied. The church, it is said, must be the "healing community" in the midst of the world. The church must work to eradicate poverty; it must work for peace and social improvement. All the while the task of preaching and evangelizing is scorned and the church's calling to be separate from the world is denied. The truth as it applies to the godly life of the child of God, for example in the area of worldly amusements, is denied. Movies and dancing have won full approval in many a church. And, to cite no more, the truth of the inspiration and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures is denied. The Bible is said to be a collection of moralisms couched in myths and teaching models. Or it is said to be man's word about God or concerning his religious experience with God, but it is not literally the very Word of God. All this occurs not just in the church world generally or in the modern, liberal churches, but within the Reformed community of churches.

This brings me to the second fact with which I am impressed: we as Protestant Reformed Churches are

coming to stand more and more alone! That is true both as far as the true doctrine of Scripture is concerned and as far as our manner of life is concerned. This ought not disturb us at all. Let it be alone! Alone with our God and His Christ on the basis of His truth.

That is why we need this Word from Proverbs 23:23. If our churches are going to stand on the basis of the truth, they need ministers who will preach the truth. And that means they need a Seminary in which there are professors who are committed to the truth and who will teach young men that truth. For us as professors and students as we begin another season of instruction and learning there is no more timely admonition than: "Buy the truth and sell it not. . . ."

That which we are exhorted to buy is the truth. That term as used in the text is found often in the Old Testament. Sometimes it has the connotation of firmness or stability or that which is secure or certain. Closely related to those meanings is that of faithfulness. Then too it denotes uprightness, integrity, or justice. But in every instance the underlying idea is that which is opposed to falsehood. The truth is always that which is opposed to the lie. Hence we may define the truth as reality. That's the truth. That which is real is the truth. And the truth is reality over against that which is unreal or contrary to reality. Then too the truth is always the faithful presentation of reality and that too with respect to all things: God, Christ, the church, the world, the past, the present, the future, heaven, earth, all things.

That means, therefore, that God is the truth. That is Scripture throughout. Deuteronomy 32:4 says: "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: . . . a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." The truth characterizes God. He is the God of truth. That

He is the Rock means that He is unchangeable, and that too in justice, for just and right is He. The truth, therefore, is the unchanging, ever faithful, just God. God is the God of truth for He is the eternal reality. He is before all things and He made all things to be a revelation of His glory. As the truth He never denies or contradicts Himself. Always He is the same. He says: "I am that I am." As the immutable One He is the truth, the unchangeable reality.

Thus too the Lord Jesus Christ is the truth. He is the eternal Word by Whom and for Whom all things were made. And that Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. As such He is the complete and perfect revelation of the Father, the God of truth. Christ is the reality. The types and shadows of the Old Dispensation, significant in their time and place, were not real. Christ is the reality to which they pointed. Christ is the reality over against all that is contrary to the truth. He condemned all that is of the darkness and the lie. Christ Himself said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

The Holy Spirit is the truth. As the Spirit of the exalted Lord Jesus Christ He is the Spirit of truth. And as the Spirit of truth He leads the people and church of God into the knowledge of the Word of Christ.

That truth is made up of several parts. This is brought out beautifully in the text when it speaks of wisdom, instruction, and understanding. The translation is incorrect in that it has "also" as if the text reads: "Buy the truth, and also buy wisdom, etc." This is not correct. The idea of the text is that these three, wisdom, instruction, and understanding, are three parts of the truth. When we buy the truth, therefore, we are buying wisdom, instruction, and understanding.

Along with the truth we also receive wisdom. That term, wisdom, in Scripture means: "wise in the sense of intelligent, the ability to judge or discern." Hence wisdom is the gift of knowing reality and living in harmony with that reality. Wisdom is always practical. It is being able to discern the Lord's way and ordering one's life in harmony with that way. The second part of the truth according to the text is instruction. This word is used in the Old Testament Scriptures to refer to the correction of children by their parents or of men by God. Sometimes it is also translated admonition, or discipline. Hence this is the discipline of the truth: that which corrects us from error and keeps us in the truth. And finally there is understanding. This term really means insight. With the truth we are given insight into reality. That is the truth in all of its riches: God as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ; wisdom, correction, and understanding.

That eternal, unchanging reality, the truth, is pre-

served for us in the Holy Scriptures. Scripture is the truth precisely because it is "God-breathed" (II Timothy 3:15). It is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Scripture is the product of the work of God through His Spirit, for "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (II Peter 1:21) This means that Scripture is not, as many teach these days, the words of God *and* the words of man. Nor is Scripture the record of man's witness to God or an account of man's religious experience or encounter with God. O no! Scripture is in all its parts the very Word of God. We must maintain this most emphatically. The Bible is God's Word, given by the miracle of inspiration and preserved throughout the ages for the sake of the church. This means that Scripture is the whole truth. It is the truth about everything. It presents all of reality in its proper perspective. There is nothing: no field of endeavor, no area of knowledge which can be understood apart from the light of the Scriptures. And Scripture is the only truth. There is no truth apart from the Scriptures. Everything apart from the Scriptures is of the creature and thus is the lie. The Scriptures are the only source of the truth. It is too bad, but a fact nonetheless, that these things need emphasis in our time, for there are few even in Reformed circles who maintain this view of the Holy Scriptures.

Scripture reveals the truth about God. The Bible tells us all about Who He is, His attributes and perfections. Scripture informs us that God is the Creator of all things but also the God Who upholds and governs all things to attain the purpose He has ordained in Christ before the foundations of the world. Scripture tells us that God is the God of all glory Who is God alone and Who must be worshipped and praised by us. Scripture presents us with the truth concerning man. Scripture teaches us that man was created good and in the image of God. Scripture tells us that man chose for Satan and the lie, turning against the living God. As a consequence man is guilty, totally corrupt, prone to all evil and incapable of any good. Scripture gives us the truth concerning Christ. That He is the only begotten of the Father, that He is Immanuel, that in Him the fulness of God is revealed as the God of our salvation, that Christ is the only Savior of God's elect, and that in His death and resurrection He brought life to all of God's people — all this Scripture reveals concerning Christ. Finally Scripture presents the truth concerning all things: that the world did not come about by evolution, but was created by the mighty Word of God; that the earthly is only preparation for the heavenly and, therefore, that we must not seek earthly things; that in all events good and bad, past and present, God is actively saving His church and

bringing about the consummation of His eternal counsel in Christ.

This, in brief, is what Scripture is, and this is what Scripture teaches. Scripture is the truth. This has serious implications as far as our attitude toward and approach to Scripture is concerned. Precisely because Scripture is all of that, it may not be contradicted. All that speaks against the Scriptures is the lie. Nor may Scripture be doubted. We do not approach the Bible to see whether or not it is true. Nor do we set ourselves up as judges of what belongs to Scripture and what does not. Positively we must approach the Bible in the faith that everything we find in it is the absolute truth of God which must, therefore, be believed and obeyed. We bow in humble submission to Holy Scripture. In that humility of faith we must do all of our work in teaching and learning in the Seminary. Scripture is the truth.

That truth of the Scriptures we have in our Reformed Confessions, the Three Forms of Unity. Scripture records the revelation of God. And that revelation came in time and history gradually, in types and shadows, in Christ and through the Apostles and Evangelists. That truth is objectively contained in our Confessions. These sum the truth. The Confessions are the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit as according to His promise He guides the church into all the truth. Through the ages, often in controversy and over against false teachers, the church stated its confession. Thus in the confessions the truth of Scripture is arranged systematically and logically. All the various truths of Scripture are put together as they comprise the body (unity) of the eternal truth of God's Word. That is the truth! Do you wish to know the truth of Scripture? Go to the Confessions of the Reformed Churches. That needs emphasis in our times. Today it is said that those confessions are no longer adequate. They do not meet the needs of our modern day. Thus we witness a growing movement to get the creeds revised. We must not become a part of such a movement. Those Confessions contain a priceless heritage of the truth. Thank God for them.

That is the truth which we must buy: the precious heritage which God has given to His Church to believe and walk in; the truth of the Word of God as set forth in the Reformed Confessions and as, by the grace of God, preached and taught in our Protestant Reformed Churches.

"Buy the truth and sell it not . . .," that is the admonition. "Sell it not." That implies that we have it, it is in our possession. Indeed it is! God has given us in the Scriptures and our Reformed Confessions a priceless heritage of the truth. It is a fact that the truth is still preached from our pulpits, taught in our catechism rooms and in the Seminary. The truth is

still being defended by us. I am not at all ashamed to say: our churches and Seminary have the truth. That is no reason for pride. God's grace has kept us in the truth, not we. Thus in deepest humility and with profound thanksgiving we may say that we have the truth. Now then, "sell it not!" Do not get rid of it, do not let go of the truth. Do not sell the truth by compromise, not even a little. Whatever you do, do not sell the truth, not for any reason. Our churches and Seminary are small, but we must not sell the truth in order to grow and become large. The churches and Seminary may very well become smaller on account of the truth. Let that be. Do not sell the truth.

Rather we must buy the truth. This cannot be taken literally, as if we were admonished to buy the truth with money. That is not the idea. The truth is priceless. Besides, the Scriptures warn us against making merchandise of the truth. We have a figurative expression here. The term means purchase, get a hold of, take possession of something, make something your very own. And that refers to our response to the truth. When the truth is revealed to you or made known to you, when it is preached or taught you, then buy it, i.e., get a hold of it, take possession of it, know it and believe it and make it your very own. That is our calling! And there are no options here. God says to us: Buy the truth and sell it not.

And as God calls us together as a Seminary for another season of teaching and learning, this is our calling. The faculty must buy the truth and sell it not. They must not compromise the truth; they must never let it go. They must hold it fast! All of the instruction of the professors, all of the various courses, must be instruction in the truth of Scripture. Hence they must prayerfully and diligently study the Holy Scriptures and the Reformed Confessions in order more and more to gain an insight into and a deeper understanding of the truth. In this way only will they be able to teach the truth and defend it.

That is also the calling of our students. They must receive that truth. They must learn it and know it. To be sure! But more than that, they must also believe the truth and walk in it. They must make it their very own possession. Apart from that they can never be ministers of the Gospel in God's church. This means they must study, prayerfully and diligently they must study. They must not be lax or lazy in their work. The truth demands our very best efforts. In this way and in this way alone they will become equipped to shepherdize the flock of Jesus Christ.

That is our calling! Buy the truth and sell it not. May God in His mercy grant us the grace to be obedient to that calling for the blessing of the churches and for the glory of His Name.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

October 15, 1977

Dear Timothy,

It has been a while since we were discussing together some aspects of Paul's teaching in his letter to Timothy. The summer months interrupted our correspondence somewhat; and we were temporarily distracted by our discussion on questions of the meaning of the inspiration of Scripture.

But now the opportunity is again present to return to this discussion. You will recall perhaps that we were talking about what Paul writes in chapter 4, vss. 7 & 8, and, more particularly, about what is meant when Paul admonishes Timothy to exercise himself unto godliness. We talked about that in a general sort of way; now the time has come to get down to some specifics.

While the things about which I intend to write to you in this connection are not specifically referred to in the text, nevertheless, they belong to the exercise of godliness in a very concrete way. And they are important enough to discuss at some length. The list of subjects which I intend to discuss is by no means exhaustive. Hence, if there are other aspects to this question which you would like to discuss, be sure to let me know.

When we were talking together about this matter of exercising one's self unto godliness, we talked also briefly about the fact that the minister must be a good example to the congregation. Paul specifically mentions this in vs. 12: "... but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." It is this matter of example in various areas of life that needs to be discussed. The particular aspects of the question which I will be writing to you about come to mind only because they seem to me to be pressing problems of unusual urgency in the days in which we live.

I suppose if one were to look for one unifying idea which binds together all the various ideas we will be discussing, it would be this: the pastor who wishes to be a good example to his congregation must learn to give up many things which in themselves would not be wrong for him to have or to do — for the sake of being such an example.

In a way there is a principle of human nature here. The child always goes slightly beyond his parent in the imitation of his conduct. The student always

carries a bit further the lessons he learned from his teacher. If a parent occasionally is guilty of criticizing his pastor in the presence of his children, the children will make this a regular practice. If a teacher once in a while engages in wicked gossip the student will make it a pattern of life. There are two reasons for this. One is that we all enjoy sin because we have yet a nature that delights in sin. And in committing sin we always look for excuses to justify our sin. The easiest and most convenient way to justify sin is to blame someone else for what we do wrong. It happens then that we find it very easy to point to the example of those who are to be good examples to us and justify our conduct by pointing to what those whom God has placed over us do. But it is exactly this urge to justify our own conduct which leads us to carry an occasional sin to the extreme of making it a pattern for our lives. "My pastor does it" is a most convenient excuse to cover our own sins. The second reason is that principle of the second commandment that God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him. God also visits the iniquities of teachers upon their pupils and the sins of pastors upon their congregations. While this does not obliterate individual responsibility, it is nevertheless an inviolable rule of God's organic dealings with men. This "visiting of iniquity" means a multiplication of sin. Israel's relatively isolated sin of worshipping the golden calf at Sinai was after all a sin that developed in Israel's history until it became full-blown idolatry after the pattern of all the abominations of the heathen.

So there is this important matter of example.

Perhaps the place to start is in the matter of Christian liberty. I start here because it seems to me that the principles are clearest here.

It is not my purpose to discuss at length the whole concept of Christian liberty. This is a rather involved subject, worthy perhaps of extended discussion, but not especially relevant to what we are now talking about. I only want to talk about this area in a general way to illustrate the point I am trying to make.

You know that Christian liberty covers a broad range of Christian conduct. Through the marvelous grace of God in Christ we are set free from the

bondage of the law. The Christian may not have his life controlled by a series of dos and don'ts. Paul speaks, in the first verses of this chapter, of the fact that every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. The Christian's life may not be curtailed by law upon law and precept upon precept.

As Paul points out in I Cor. 8 and other passages, within the area of Christian liberty there are actions which are violations of the conscience for one child of God, while these same actions are no violations of the conscience for another saint. Thus, what may be wrong for one is not necessarily wrong for another. One person sins when he eats meat sacrificed to idols; another may eat that same meat and not sin at all.

Now what particularly concerns me here is the fact that a pastor who is determined to exercise himself unto godliness and who is a good example to the flock will also, of necessity, curtail his own Christian liberty. There may be any number of things which he may do in good conscience before God and therefore without sin, but which he will not do for the sake of the flock for which he is responsible. He will do this willingly and eagerly out of love for the sheep over which God has placed him. He will do this without grumbling and complaining, for his concern for his sheep is very great.

I hesitate to use specific illustrations because it is so easy to be misunderstood. But perhaps the risk is worth taking.

I am not saying that he curtails his own Christian liberty because he might be an offense to his weaker brother. Paul certainly lays down this principle as a fundamental principle of Christian conduct in I Cor. 8. "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." This is certainly always the calling of every Christian; and he who ignores it imperils his own soul. The pastor must also adhere to this principle.

But this very principle implies a bit more because of the position which a minister of the gospel occupies. It is involved in being a good example.

There is one area which deeply concerns me. There are in the Church of Christ (perhaps because of the affluence of our modern age) many who drink too much liquor. I am not saying necessarily that they are alcoholics — although in my judgment anyone who has to have his drink every day comes perilously close to being an alcoholic. But I am convinced that among some of us there is a tendency to drink too much. The excuse which is often offered for this is that this belongs to the area of Christian liberty. It does indeed. But what is so often forgotten is that Paul (in Gal. 5:13) warns against using liberty as an occasion

for the flesh. A minister, aware of this danger in the congregation, will have to curtail his own Christian liberty in this respect in order to set a good example. Even if an appeal by an alcoholic to the minister's conduct is unjustified — because the minister has only an occasional drink — yet the minister ought to be careful that no such appeal can ever be made. When Nathan confronts David with his sin of adultery and murder, he speaks of the fact that David, by his sin, had given *occasion* for the enemies of God to blaspheme. The key word is "occasion." He must never even be the occasion for anyone to justify his conduct by an appeal to the conduct of the minister. In writing concerning the qualifications of an elder Paul says, in I Timothy 3, that he must "Have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." A pastor's life must be exemplary in every respect even if he must curtail his own Christian liberty to attain that.

The same thing is true of Sabbath observance. It is impossible and wrong to lay down laws for Sabbath observance. The principles of Scripture are clear enough. But if a minister should treat the Sabbath as any other day and flaunt openly his Christian liberty in this respect, he does evil to the congregation, promotes the sins of those who are ready and eager to violate the Sabbath, and harms irreparably his own ministry.

Yet the point is that the minister must not only negatively refrain from certain acts which he could in fact in good conscience do; he must be a positive example to the flock. I suppose this is really the reason why most of our ministers do not possess a TV set. It is not that our ministers believe that TV is wrong in itself. But the misuses of TV are many and great. Each man must, ultimately, answer to his own conscience before God what he watches on TV. But a minister does well when he sets a good example. And the best way, on the whole, to do that is to keep the thing out of his house. And, positively, he must show by good example, the proper use of time.

And so we could go on.

The objections which will be raised can, in some measure, be anticipated. For one thing, someone will object that no one may infringe on my Christian liberty and curtail it by objections which are groundless. Someone, e.g., may not force me to part my hair on the right because he happens to be offended when I part it on the left. Someone may not refuse me the right to have a drink now and then because he uses this to blame me for his excessive use of alcohol. All this is true beyond doubt. But it ought to be remembered on the one hand that I may voluntarily curtail my own liberty out of a sense of obligation to the flock over which the Lord has placed me. And, on

the other hand, more is demanded of him who occupies a position of responsibility in the Church (or, for that matter, in the home, the school, the state or shop) than of others who are under authority.

Another may object that it is better to teach Christian liberty by practicing it and receiving all God's gifts with thankfulness and use them in moderation. There is force to this argument. If the

congregation over which the Lord has placed you is strong enough to grow by this type of instruction, by all means use it. But be sure that this is true.

Well, the time has come to close this letter. I am sure that these comments arouse questions in your mind. Let me hear from you.

Fraternally,
H. Hanko

SPECIAL REPORT

Presbyterian Church in America: Faith General Assembly

By Pastor E.C. Case

The Fifth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, meeting in the auditorium of the First Baptist (that's right folks, Baptist) Church of Smyrna, Georgia, was called to order by retiring moderator William A. McIlwaine on the evening of September 12, 1977. The Baptist facility was used because there is no PCA building in the Greater Atlanta area, nor in many other areas for that matter, large enough to handle the 600 plus commissioners who would eventually come together for this meeting.

After hearing and approving the report of a committee dealing with Presbytery boundaries (which included the erection of a new presbytery, Central Florida, and the merging of Vanguard and Tennessee Valley Presbyteries), the Assembly elected Mr. John Clark, a ruling elder from First Church, Macon, Georgia, as the new Moderator. Mr. Clark has been an able and active leader in the PCA since the early days of the still young denomination.

The business of the Assembly, in its plenary sessions, began in earnest on Wednesday morning, September 14, with the report of Ad-Interim Committee on Constitutional Documents. Lively debate was immediately stirred by a section of this committee's report dealing with "the husband of one wife" passage in I Timothy 3. The issue involved was that of church officers who have been divorced and remarried.

The committee, on the basis of statements in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 24, held

that men who have been divorced on the grounds of adultery or willful desertion by their spouses, whether they remain single or remarry, may serve as officers in the church. The committee further held that men who have been divorced on other than Biblical grounds should be denied office until they have publicly repented of their sin. It was not clear whether this public repentance would include separation from a second wife, if there had, indeed, been a remarriage, but such would have been the effect of an amendment from the floor which would have made those unbiblically divorced, and then remarried, ineligible for office in the PCA as long as the first spouse is alive.

The matter of whether the remarriage of divorced persons is ever allowable, even when the divorce has been granted on Biblical grounds, was not addressed. Such remarriage is permitted by the chapter of the Confession cited above (though this writer does not agree with the allowance of the Confession at this point). An important question that was raised, however, involved the doubts of some as to whether any divorced man could meet the requirement of I Timothy 3, to the effect that the bishop must have his house in order.

The whole issue was finally sent to a new committee for further study.

Also committed for further study was the report of the Ad-Interim Committee on the Number of Offices in the Church, which has been hanging over the head of the Assembly since the third meeting in Jackson in

1975. The question involved is whether the offices of the church be two (elder and deacon) or three (minister, elder, and deacon). A variation of the first view holds that there are two offices, but with a distinction of task between those who rule and those who both teach and rule. A new view, called the "Triune office view" was introduced at this Assembly; the product of the rather fertile imagination of Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, formerly of South Africa, presently a PCA pastor in Kosciusko, Mississippi. Where and when all of this will end is very much an open question.

One of the most disturbing things about the Assembly, in this observer's opinion, was its willingness to address itself to issues which hardly seem the province of an ecclesiastical court. This was particularly manifest in the adoption of a resolution wherein the Assembly moved to petition the President and Congress of the United States in the matter of the proposed withdrawal of American troops from South Korea. The Assembly says it is opposed to that.

Now, no one is more sympathetic to the cause of South Korean independence than this writer. And, one can easily understand the concern of the brother who introduced this resolution; himself a refugee from Communist oppression in Hungary. It is also to be admitted that the Confession of Faith allows for such "humble petitions in cases extraordinary." (Chap. 31:4) The question which must be raised, however, is whether this is, indeed, an extraordinary case. And, if it be deemed such, we must further inquire as to whether the Confession is, at this point, in harmony with Scripture.

It is interesting to note that in the Scriptural proof-texts offered in support of this article (Luke 12:13, 14; John 18:36), there is no support to be found for synods or councils intermeddling in civil affairs, but a great deal of support for the first statement in this chapter and section of the Confession: "Synods and councils are to handle, or conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical." This statement is also given support by the record of the First General Assembly of Christ's Church (Acts 15), where the matters handled were exclusively ecclesiastical. That individual Christians, or groups of Christians, may address their government is beyond dispute. That church courts, as such, may do this, is quite debatable.

Moreover, it is disturbing to think that future assemblies are going to have more and more of their time taken with such matters. Two other resolutions, one expressing opposition to "godless Communism," and the other requesting that we petition the President and Congress "to honor and scrupulously keep its (i.e., the United States') treaties with and commit-

ments to other nations," were referred for study to be handled at the next Assembly. And, one wonders what new causes will be before us by then.

All of this, of course, puts the PCA in a rather awkward position in relation to the denomination from which most of our present membership separated — the Presbyterian Church, U.S. One of the greatest complaints about the PCUS assemblies was their taking stands on various political and social issues which were regarded as being outside of the province of the Church. These stands were, it should be noted, almost uniformly liberal in nature. One wonders, now, if the PCA is to become the "flip-side" of the PCUS; also making statements on political and social matters, but from a conservative point of view.

Also disturbing is the fact that the Assembly, in response to a request from something called the Hawaii Right to Life Committee, voted to send a man to Washington, in conjunction with other "conservative" Protestant leaders, to meet with the President to impress upon him the fact that opposition to abortion is not just a Roman Catholic cause. One suspects that the President already knows that, but undaunted, the PCA has decided that we must have our man in Washington, if only for a brief time. Nor was there much concern expressed over the fact that we are aligning ourselves, in this matter, with a secular society whose membership, in some parts of the nation at least, includes such groups as the Mormon church. The question, of course, is whether our common stand with such groups in opposition to the sin of murder by abortion justifies this proposed cooperation.

There is much else that we could report, but our space grows short, so we will limit ourselves to two final items which should be of interest to *Standard Bearer* readers.

The first of these involves the attempt by New River Presbytery to get the Assembly to commend the *Presbyterian Journal* for "the valuable service it renders." The result, however, was closer to condemnation than commendation. The Committee on Bills and Overtures which handled the matter, recommended (interestingly, with the urging of the editor of the *Journal*) that New River's overture be received as information. Obviously, they were trying to avoid a debate over the editorial policies of the *Journal* which have, in recent years, been antagonistic to a consistent Reformed position and sympathetic to charismatic tendencies in and out of the PCA. The plan went awry, however, when a motion was made from the floor, the substance of which called upon the Assembly to express disappointment over editorial policies of the *Presbyterian Journal* which appear to contradict the Reformed Faith, especially in regard to the spiritual gifts.

The motion was easily defeated, but it was amusing to note that even some of those who spoke against the motion expressed dismay over the direction the *Journal* has been taking. All in all, the *Journal* wound up with something less than the vote of confidence New River Presbytery had sought.

The other item of interest is the fact that the Assembly reaffirmed its commitment to meet next June in Grand Rapids, in conjunction with the Synod meetings of the other bodies which are a part of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council. These include the Christian Reformed Church, which is the host for this little party; the Orthodox Presbyterian Church; the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America; and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod.

Practically speaking, this meeting in Grand Rapids makes no sense whatever. The PCA doesn't have a single congregation in that area. Moreover, the great body of the church is in the States South of the Mason-Dixon line and east of the Mississippi River. There are a few congregations elsewhere, but these represent only a fraction of the total body and none of them is even close to Grand Rapids. Still, some in the PCA are bent on dislocating the whole Assembly to meet "up nawth" so that we can prove the unprovable — that we are a "national" church. And

they are getting their way. The last Southern invasion of the North took place in July, 1863, ending at Gettysburg. One hopes that the disaster of that little excursion is not somehow repeated in an ecclesiastical context come next June.

In conclusion, let it be noted that the generally negative tenor of this report should not be taken to mean that everything in the PCA is on the downhill grade. Some of us were encouraged, for example, by the election of certain individuals of strong Reformed conviction to some of the Assembly's Permanent Committees. Also, one should take into account that, on balance, the Assembly did more re-committing and postponing than anything else. So, there are still opportunities and crucial debates in the future.

Perhaps the best summation of the Assembly would be that which was spoken to this writer by a veteran of many ecclesiastical wars with whom we had the privilege of sitting through most of the meetings. At one point, after a motion he had supported had been defeated, he noted that it got more support than he thought it would. "There's more life in this group," he said, "than I thought there would be when we started out."

One hopes he is right.

But, then, one wonders sometimes.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Rich Get Richer

Rev. Mark Hoeksema

In Revelation 6:5-6 we find the narrative of the opening of the third seal in the general context of the signs that point to and bring the coming of the end of all things. The content of that seal is a rider upon a black horse, which rider holds in his hand a pair of balances or measuring scales. In interpretation of this black horse and rider we are told in verse 6, "A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine."

If we interpret this seal in the light of Scripture, then we find that the black horse is symbolic of famine that shall occur in the last times, along with the hardship and suffering and death that accompany famine. This famine, however, is pictured not as universal, but as selective, as seen from the idea of the

balances as interpreted in verse 6. Not all people upon the earth shall be affected by the shortage of food, but only certain ones, for the black horse and rider will carefully mete out famine and plenty as with a very precise and accurate scale. Those who are touched by the famine are the poor of the earth, the common people, for a measure of wheat and three measures of barley will sell for a penny. A penny represents the wages of one man for one day, his livelihood, and a measure of wheat or three measures of barley represent the amount of food necessary to sustain a bare existence. The meaning is therefore that the famine is of such a kind that it requires the full resources of a man just to acquire his daily bread. There is no extra food, but only that which affords subsistence; nor is there money left over for the pur-

chase of more food or other goods. Man is just barely able to scratch out an existence, living from hand to mouth. In sharp contrast to such a life, the oil and wine must not be touched or affected in any way. Oil and wine are symbols of luxury, of the finer things of life, of wealth and great plenty, of feasting and high living. The meaning is clearly that the rich are not to be touched by this famine, but must be allowed to continue their lives of plenty. (We cannot help but be reminded of the rich man spoken of in Psalm 73). The overall picture, then, is one of great contrast between untold wealth and abject poverty, of the infinite gulf between the have and the have-nots.

All of this is meant by way of explanation of the title of this article. You will probably recognize it as the first half of a popular saying or proverb of today, the other half of which is, "and the poor get poorer." These words are often spoken by way of complaint by the workingman to his fellows as he contemplates his position in relation to those who are wealthy. It seems that the common people cannot "get ahead," and sometimes cannot even keep up or stay even with the cost of living, while such matters as daily bread are insignificant trivialities to the rich. Surely these words are not meant as an expression of a Scriptural truth, but as the lament of discontent with life. Occasionally Christians are even heard to say these words in the spirit of discontent or mild rebellion. This should not be, of course, but sometimes it is so. But although this little saying is not meant to express a truth of the Scriptures concerning the end times, the fact is that it is precisely accurate, for this is exactly the teaching of the third seal of Revelation 6.

The contrast described in the third seal was forcefully illustrated in the September 12, 1977 issue of *TIME* magazine. One article described the bumper crop that is even now being harvested in the U.S.A. American farmers are reaping about 2 billion bushels of wheat, 6 billion bushels of corn, and almost 2 billion bushels of soybeans. And this is the third year in a row of bumper crops in some areas, so that there is no room to store the crops, and so that there is a drastic drop in prices, according to the laws of supply and demand. The article went on to mention the economic implications of this oversupply for this country (the irony of it all is that many farmers have produced so much but are receiving so little for their products that they are being forced out of business by rising production costs). But all of this is not of concern here. Rather, consider the simple fact of abundance: *billions* of bushels of grain, *millions* too many, grain piled on the ground, even on main streets of small rural towns. There is so much food right now that we do not know what to do with it all!

In the same issue of *TIME* was another article on the creeping deserts in many parts of the earth. The

article described the recent advance of deserts into previously fertile or semi-fertile areas because of poor land management practices and over-population in semi-arid areas. The results of all of this have been tragic, resulting in much suffering and poverty, and even death in some African nations. In 1974 alone more than 100,000 people perished from famine just in the southern Sahara region. And there are many more places on the earth that are nearly as bad. There are literally millions of people who live from hand to mouth, and when there is any unusual drought, they die by the thousands. They are able to get a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny, but they get nothing when there is no food.

All of this illustrates that the matter of the division between rich and poor is not only an individual thing. It is true, of course, that within almost any nation there is this stark contrast between the few wealthy and the masses of the poor. But this is true also on a national level, so that some nations wallow in superabundance while others have their very existence threatened by lack of daily bread. And to see both extreme riches and extreme poverty at the same time, and written about in one issue of a news magazine is striking indeed. Surely we may draw from all of this the conclusion that the contrast between nations serves only to highlight the internal contrasts within nations, for the running of the black horse is a world-wide phenomenon.

All of this is most significant for the people of God today. We are able to see the signs of the times exemplified in the running of the black horse, and then we know that the end is near. And the more the black horse becomes evident, the nearer is the end. But if we say only that the contrast between riches and poverty is a sign or indication of the coming of the end of all things, then we have missed a very important point. The book of Revelation teaches us that this sign, along with the others detailed in Scripture, actually cause or bring the end as well. The church is saved in the way of all sorts of calamities; Zion is redeemed through judgment, so that the same judgments that bring ruin and destruction upon the world and the wicked are the means of the salvation of the church. Moreover, the signs in their causative function also increase in intensity as the end becomes closer. The truth is, then, not only that the manifestations of these signs become more visible, but also that more and more clearly they cause the end to approach.

This may be understood if we pause to consider the implications of the running and work of the black horse and his rider in the earth. What is produced in the world is social difference, class structure, the basic difference between rich and poor, all due to

economic differences. Moreover, the result is inevitably social chaos wherever the black horse goes; sometimes this takes the form of internal trouble or revolution in nations, sometimes this takes the form of nation rising against nation, which is in itself a sign of the end. All of this has always taken place to a certain extent; that is the nature of the signs, for they do not concern unusual or new phenomena, but things that are considered normal and usual, but which have great significance and which increase in intensity. There has thus always been the difference in the social structure of the peoples of the earth, but that distinction is becoming more and more pronounced in our world, and will continue to grow.

In this light we are able to understand the sign of the black horse. It is perhaps true that objectively the famines and difference of social class are not increasing in frequency or even in severity. But surely it is true that the black horse is much more visible than in former times even from the viewpoint of the publicity and knowledge regarding famines and social upheavals, due to the modern communications media. And it is also true that the contrasts of plenty and famine are increasing in their significance for the world as a whole. Marshall McLuhan has observed

that we live today in a "global community." No longer are nations isolated from each other, but their economies, governments, and futures are closely intertwined with one another. Though perhaps it is not possible to point out or prove the exact implications of the present contrast in food supplies, we may be sure in the light of Scripture that they are there. When we put all of this into the context of the rise of antichrist and the eventual unity of the entire world under his wicked rule, and when we remember that this world order shall not be permanent but will end at the battle of Armageddon, then these events take on significance for us. We must know the testimony of Scripture so that we can see these signs in their manifestation. And we must believe that God in His sovereignty controls all these things, and that, notwithstanding all efforts of men, He uses social differences and calamities for the coming of His kingdom, and will continue to do that even up to the very end. It will be interesting to follow the progress of this social situation, to observe man's efforts to remedy it, as well as God's direction and use of this phenomenon. Our calling is then to be aware of this sign, and to put our trust in God, believing that He will use it for our salvation in the coming of the kingdom of Christ.

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

A perceptive analysis

Recently there appeared in two issues of the *Banner* a set of articles worthy of note. In the issues of Aug. 19 and 26, Robert De Lange, missionary at Charlotte, Michigan, sought to pinpoint some of the causes of the crises in the Christian Reformed Church. His analysis, to me, appears very accurate and to the point. Were his conclusions to be adopted within the C.R.C., I am convinced there would be a radical change in that denomination. The writer points to the evidences of Arminian approaches within his denomination. He explains that much of the difficulty in the C.R.C. can be traced back to this Arminian tendency. He did not, obviously, point out that the common grace issue of 1924 gave a tremendous boost to this Arminianism in the C.R.C. — specifically the adoption of the idea of a "well-meant offer of the gospel." Yet one could wish and pray that the C.R.C. would take the message to heart. I'd

like to quote a few of the pertinent points of the articles.

The crises to which I'm referring affect a great deal more than merely the C.R.C. They are really tests of the whole Reformed system of theology. What seems really to be at stake are some ancient issues now being replayed.* I believe that the methods and strategies of evangelism, the demise of morale and morals, the decline in church growth, attendance, and commitment can be attributed in a large degree to an increasing emphasis on Arminian concepts in the Reformed community, along with a steady decrease in the emphasis and practical implications of Calvinism, as defined by the Synod of Dort, 1618-19.

... Many Christians today are searching for personal assurance of the certainty of their faith and salvation. Closely tied to such a search is the need felt by others that their particular congregation needs renewal, almost to a rebaptism of the Spirit. Perhaps

the reason such needs are felt is that while we have confessed historic Calvinism, we actually practice more of an Arminian emphasis.

... If it is *God* who is the initiator and loving Father of our salvation and faith, then we have no choice but to submit in obedience to His call. In so doing we discover that through this obedience we find joy, peace, and motivation, because God alone is the provider of all good and perfect gifts.

Could it be that while we confess the Canons of Dort, in reality we find the practice of Arminianism much more to our tastes, that we like being our own masters, and that we think it is really up to us to take it or leave it? But what kind of assurance, hope, or basis for motivation is that? It leaves us with the delusion of assurance that is as whimsical as the human spirit.

Third, within the arena of church growth discussions and methods of evangelism, we can see a good deal of Arminian input. We seem to be under a lot of pressure to implement church growth in terms of increased conversions and to use all the principles of Big Business in order to be popularly appealing. To be sure, the very purpose of the church is missions. But I'd like to suggest that the issue of size, number of conversions, popular appeal, and strategies of evangelism are largely influenced by the Arminian-Calvinism distinction.

For example, if man is ultimately responsible for his salvation, then it makes very good sense to enter the game of commercialization. Faith is then a product of man. And like man's other products and services, his faith too must be sold; the better the salesman and the program the higher the sales. Once we enter that game, however, the reverse also tends to be true; the poorer the salesman the worse the sales. Could this be the incentive behind some of our current desires to initiate bigger and better, more enticing evangelism programs, and the subsequent push to train slicker salesmen?

If, on the other hand, God is ultimately the initiator and actor in the plan of salvation, then man's efforts must be concentrated on being obediently faithful — which *may* or *may not* entail better advertising. The question of goods and services is no longer the primary issue or motivation, and the fruits

of faithfulness remain wholly the blessing of God alone — which may or may not be high conversion returns.

In a subsequent article, the author points out the positive calling of the Calvinist and what is involved in that. He emphasizes that the central calling of the church is to be *obedient*.

The primary motive, then, behind any method of evangelism or church growth discussions must be obedience. It is not, first of all, to secure some sign of personal assurance of belief — although we might surely hope that such assurance is forthcoming. By concerning ourselves primarily with being obedient, we are no longer worried about “making a sale,” because the “sale” is not ours to make but God's. By being obedient, we place the emphasis, first of all, on being “kind to one another,” (Eph. 4:23), and “living peaceably with all men, so far as is possible” (Rom. 12:18). By being obedient we realize that God is at work, through us, to make known His electing love to others as He chooses, not as we may choose.

... The importance of stressing obedience as the response to God's election is that it maintains the distinction between what *God does* and what *man is able to do*. It constrains us both in perspective and methodology to remember that our concern is not, first of all, to secure a high rate of conversions. The issue is not, first of all, whether or not we have led anyone to Christ, but whether we have been obedient. ...

... Further, since we are not the ones ultimately responsible for the plan of salvation, but God alone, the mission in which we are engaged cannot fail. The genius of the Calvinistic system of thought is that it embodies completely the fact that *God conquers Satan*! God is not dependent on man's willingness to cooperate. The whole of salvation is completely God's action. That is why it cannot fail. And that's assurance! That's motivation! He did what man could not do in order that man could be truly man again, obedient creature to the Creator.

I would strongly recommend both articles for more careful study. One could wish more of such would appear in the *Banner*.

Membership decline

From the *Clarion* comes the report of declining membership in the Reformed Churches (Synodical) in the Netherlands. Before 1970 these churches had a growth rate of some 10,000 per year. After 1974 this growth rate almost completely disappeared. In 1977 these churches have been losing members. In 1976

the membership decreased by some 2,400 members. The trend is similar to that seen in many churches who have been departing from their old heritage. At least some of the members who depart, appear to do so because they are not being fed with the pure Word of God in the preaching on Sunday.

What now?

So asks the last *News Bulletin* of the Association of Christian Reformed Laymen. These write:

As a result of this sad state of affairs, the C.R.C. through its Synods, has lost at least two of the marks

of the true church as given to us in the Belgic Confession, Article XXIX, namely: The pure preaching of the Word and Church discipline.

Do you believe this is too harsh a statement? Well, let's look at the record of the last ten years at synod. We present the following partial list of well-documented cases:

1. Prof. H. Dekker (1967) – Denied the doctrine of limited atonement. Synod slapped his wrist but failed to discipline. He is still teaching in the Seminary.
2. Prof. L. Sweetman (1968) – Preached admittedly questionable sermon in Fuller Ave. C.R.C. in Grand Rapids. Protest against it was not upheld by Synod. He is still teaching in Calvin College.
3. Dr. Willis De Boer (1970-1972) – Views on early chapters of Genesis were protested by Central Ave. Holland, C.R.C. Protest not upheld by Synod. He is still teaching in Calvin College.
4. Dr. Allen Verhey (1976-1977) – Denied plain statements of Scripture in his classical examination as a candidate. Was ordained anyway with approval of Classis GR East. Protests to

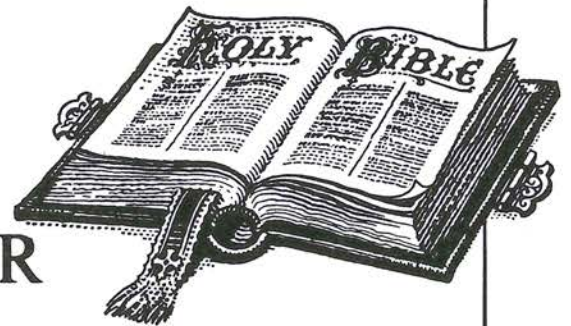
synod were not dealt with honestly but were shunted aside in 1976 and 1977 on technicalities. More of the same is likely when the case comes up again in 1978.

5. Dr. Harry Boer (1977) – Questions the doctrine of reprobation. Presents a gravamen to the effect to Synod 1977. Synod declares "open season" on the Canons of Dort for the next three years. Unthinkable a few years ago!

This is indeed a "harsh" statement. Consider: if two marks of the church are gone, it can not be maintained that even the third (proper administration of sacraments) is still present – for it is intimately related to the first (pure preaching). This, however, places the writers in a terrible position. By their statement, they continue as members in a false church, which one who maintains the Netherlands Confession, may never do.

One can sympathize with those who believe strongly that their church departs from the faith once delivered to the saints. But, if they maintain their claim, they are presently in an utterly untenable position.

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Book Reviews

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, by Michael Green; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977; 223 pp., \$2.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This volume is a part of a series of books being published by Eerdmans. On the back cover we are told:

Edited by Michael Green, these books are intended to take a fresh look at controversial areas of the Christian faith. The writers, from different nations, cultures, and confessional backgrounds, all anchor their work in the Bible. Though fully abreast of the latest scholarship in the area about which they write, they focus in these volumes on the current, practical meaning of their topic for the general reader.

Michael Green, Rector of St. Aldate's, Oxford, has added another book to the mountain of literature on Pentecostalism. It is somewhat doubtful whether this book makes any significantly new contribution to the field. I found the book very weak in important areas and not overly helpful in the apologetic against Neo-Pentecostalism. The weaknesses are many more than the strengths.

In the first place, the book is doctrinally weak. It is doctrinally weak first of all because there is no real theology of the Holy Spirit developed – something which is a crying need in the current discussion. It is doctrinally weak secondly because it takes erroneous positions on some key points. Consider the following quotes concerning the personality of the Spirit:

We have seen that the Spirit of God which appeared fitfully, in a variety of forms, and prophetically in the Old Testament days shone steadily, personally, and fully in the Man of Nazareth. No longer is the Holy Spirit encountered as naked power; he is clothed with the personality and character of Jesus. If you like, Jesus is the funnel through whom the Spirit becomes available to men. Jesus transposes the Spirit into a fully personal key. Jesus is the prism through whom the diffused and fitful light of the Spirit is concentrated. (p. 42)

By the time of the New Testament Epistles, on the other hand, the Spirit is the fully personal embodiment of the Godhead. How comes this change?

It is simply due to the fact that the diffused, little-defined, fitfully-manifested and sometimes sub-personal presence of God as Spirit which we found in

the Old Testament, becomes clearly focused for the first time in Jesus of Nazareth. . . . No longer sub-personal, the Spirit is stamped with the personality of Jesus. (p. 51)

There is also an Arminian emphasis in the book: the Holy Spirit is dependent upon our acceptance of Him before He can begin His work, pp. 87 & 88; there is a general operation of the Spirit in all men leading to Christ. But the most serious weakness is the author's willingness to make major concessions to Pentecostalism. In chapter 10 he concedes tongue speaking, prophecy, interpretation, and all the gifts mentioned in I Cor. 12 as present day gifts of the Spirit.

The book is not of very great help in the defense of the faith over against Pentecostalism.

A HALF CENTURY OF THEOLOGY, G.C. Berkouwer; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan; 268 pages, \$6.95 (paper). [Reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema]

We have already reviewed the Dutch edition of this work and also devoted a rather lengthy critique to Chapter 4 in the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. Now we have the English translation by Lewis Smedes. Smedes has done an acceptable job of translating, too, although a book almost always loses something in translation.

On October 12, 1973, Dr. Berkouwer retired as professor of the Theological Faculty of the Free University of Amsterdam. This event occasioned his looking back upon a half century of being busy with in the Gereformeerde Kerken and as occupant of the Chair of Theology at the Free. And the book under review is the result of his retrospective look. In these theological memoirs he traces the important currents in theology (in his view) from 1920 to the present, and he gives account of his motives in his theological and ecclesiastical labor.

In a way this is not a typical Berkouwer book. While in the nature of the case there are many references to the views of others, at many points there is much more of Berkouwer in this book than in some of his *Studies in Dogmatics*. Through reading this book one certainly obtains a better insight into the theological approach of the author.

Of special interest is his reference to the fact that

he developed his own view of election and of election in relation to the preaching of the gospel (and remember: Berkouwer has openly denied double predestination) in reaction to Herman Hoeksema's view (or a caricature of that view). It is interesting to note that Berkouwer states of Hoeksema, "I have seldom met a theologian who consistently reasoned things through from an adopted standpoint."

This book will not have a wide readership, since it is of special interest only to those with theological interests.

But by ministers and theological students it should be read by all means, and I recommend this strongly. Regular readers of the *Standard Bearer* will know that I count Berkouwer an enemy of the Reformed faith. But he is a force to be reckoned with. There is probably no one person more responsible than is Berkouwer for recent trends in the Dutch churches; I hold him more responsible than men like Kuitert, Baarda, and Wiersinga. Moreover, Berkouwer has undoubtedly influenced theology far beyond the boundaries of the Netherlands. He has many a disciple in this country also. Besides, his *Studies in Dogmatics* have been widely hailed; and only very rarely did one read a critical review of any of them.

Berkouwer must be known and understood, therefore, in order that we may reckon with him and his theology. This book is a help in understanding the man and his theology. For this reason I recommend it.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Southwest Protestant Reformed Church of Wyoming, Michigan would like to borrow up to \$100,000.00 to finance the construction of their Phase I building project. Those interested in loaning \$1,000.00 or more for periods of five years, ten years or fifteen years at interest rates of 7%, 7½% and 8% respectively are requested to contact Mr. John Vander Woude, 7085 Sunset Dr., Jenison, Michigan, 49428 (Phone 616-457-0553) for particulars.

— NOTICE OF LECTURE —

On October 27, 1977, at 8:00 P.M., in The Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, our Annual Reformation Day Lecture will be given. Prof. H.C. Hoeksema will speak on "REFORMATION — OPTION OR MANDATE?" Plan to attend, and urge others also to hear this interesting and timely lecture.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith Protestant Reformed Church expresses their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Herm Schipper in the loss of his mother, Grace Schipper at the age of 91 years.

May our God strengthen them by His Spirit and Word. "For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." (Psalm 48:14)

Rev. M. Joostens, Pres.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 19, 1977, our parents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN WIGGER, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to God for the years that they have had together and for the covenant instruction we have received. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless them and guide them in the years ahead.

Their children,
Mr. and Mrs. Bern Wigger
Jennifer and Stephen
Mr. and Mrs. Ben Wigger
Mr. and Mrs. Chuck Ensink
Scott
David Wigger

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Aid Society of our Hope Church in Grand Rapids express its sympathy to one of our members, Mrs. C. DenBoer in the loss of her husband, Mr. Cornelius DenBoer, on Sept. 21, 1977.

May she find comfort in the words expressed in Job 19:25 & 26. "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Rev. R. Van Overloop (Pres.)
Mrs. P. Knott (Sec'y)

News From Our Churches

Rev. J. Slopsema has received the call to be pastor of our church in Randolph, Wisconsin. Randolph's trio also included Candidate Kenneth Koole and Rev. Rodney Miersma. Rev. M. Joostens of our Faith Church has declined the call to be pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Christchurch, New Zealand. Rev. Gise Van Baren has accepted the call to serve as pastor of our Hudsonville Church. Rev. Van Baren has served First Church in Grand Rapids for about 12 years.

Several bulletins have carried news concerning the work of our missionary pastor, Rev. Robert Harbach. The Faith Church bulletin carried the following from one of Rev. Harbach's letters "After about 2,532 miles from Grand Rapids, we arrived safely in Victoria on Vancouver Island in British Columbia on August 30. We immediately began regular church services in a Holyrood House in the city, preaching the Gospel to a small group of just over a dozen. . . . We are thankful to the Lord and happy in Him to be back in the field and busily serving Him in the cause of the Gospel. . . . Weather is beautiful and warm. Roses and fall flowers are much in evidence. We enjoy God's glorious handiwork in creation. Most of all His presence and promises are ever faithful, ever sure. Sincerely in our Sovereign God. . . ." Apparently, all the 'red tape' involved in granting Rev. Harbach a work permit in Canada is not quite accomplished as yet. Such things as Medical Clearances and the like must be rubber stamped, examined, and slowly passed from office to office. Meanwhile, Rev. and Mrs. Harbach are 'moteling' it.

Rev. Bekkering sent in some news to end the news "blackout" from Houston, as he put it. The Bekkerings have been rather busy getting situated in their new home and in a new congregation — The Trinity Protestant Reformed Church of Houston, Texas. Plans are being put in place to hold a Reformation Day Lecture in Houston. The new Trinity congregation has "already experienced the communion of saints that we have with the other members of our denomination in that Rev. Miersma saw to it that Houston received part of the communion service that formerly belonged to our Forbes, North Dakota, congregation. That, sort of, keeps it in the family." Rev. Bekkering also writes that he and his congregation are looking forward to having visitors from the North come and worship with them as they enjoy the mild Houston winters. As most of our churches have, Houston has begun catechism classes for the children.

In addition to classes for the various age groups, Rev. Bekkering scheduled 15 minutes of singing between classes, for "all the children together." Candidate Koole preached for the Houston congregation during the months of July and August until Rev. Bekkering arrived.

And, speaking of Candidate Koole, he and his wife rejoice in the birth of a son, Justin Michael on September 10.

Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan, is making good progress toward completing a final set of plans for the building of their new sanctuary. The first of these blue prints was on display for the congregation.

Rev. Herman Veldman marked two rather special anniversaries during the month of September — one of which also involved Mrs. Veldman. Not only did Rev. and Mrs. Veldman celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary, but Rev. Veldman also marked the 45th anniversary of his ordination to the ministry of the Gospel.

The Council of our Southwest Church sent their pastor, Rev. Veldman, to Skowhegan, Maine, to investigate a report of increased interest there. Rev. and Mrs. Veldman planned to be gone for three weeks.

Southwest Council scheduled a special congregational meeting on October 6 to adopt the final plans for the new church building they plan to build soon. The recently completed drive in the Southwest congregation resulted in \$14,505 in cash and pledges for their construction program.

The congregation of our church in South Holland, Illinois, was canvassed recently for orders for the recently announced book by Rev. H. Hoeksema, *When I Survey*. . . . fifty-eight orders were placed for the book — a very good response.

Last month, you may recall, we made mention of the fact that the *Standard Bearer* had added a new reader in the Republic of Nauru, a place which the U. S. Postal Service did not seem to know anything about. After some research, our business manager located Nauru in the central Pacific Ocean, just south of the equator at long. 166°, 56° E. The island's population is about 7,000 on a land area of about 8.2 sq. miles. The Nauruans have one of the highest per capita incomes in the world, due to rich phosphate deposits on the island.

K.G.V.