

The STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... let men torture themselves as long as they will with reasoning, the cause of the difference made — why God does not reveal His arm equally to *all* — lies hidden in His own eternal decree.... The unbelief of the world, therefore, ought not to astonish us, if even the wisest and most acute of men fail to believe. Hence, unless we would elude the plain and confessed meaning of the Evangelist, that few receive the Gospel, we must fully conclude that *the cause is the will of God*; and that the outward sound of that Gospel strikes the ear in vain until God is pleased to touch by it the heart within.

John Calvin, on John 12:40
(*Calvin's Calvinism*)

See *Editorial*, Page 149

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MEDITATION

“Come, Lord Jesus”

Rev. H. Veldman

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Here we have the positive purpose of the book of Revelation, and, incidentally, of all of Holy Writ. He testifies, witnesses, of these things to draw from the church of the living God, from you and from me, this response: “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Is this our response? Do we pray this, also as far as another calendar year is concerned: 1979? Do we long for His coming? Is it our desire that He come quickly? Throughout this chapter we read of this coming, repeatedly and emphatically — see verses 6,

7, 10, 12, 20. And the Church responds: "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Again, is this our response?

* * * * *

Here we have the response of the Church to Him Who testifies these things. To what does the Church here respond?

Who testifies these things? Obviously, He Who testifies these things is He Who is coming quickly. So, our Lord Jesus Christ is meant. But, in verse 13 we also read of Him that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. And we also know that God is the Alpha and the Omega. So, that our Lord Jesus Christ is also called the Alpha and the Omega means that our Lord Jesus Christ is God — God, therefore, as the God of our salvation, God as revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is as such that He is coming; for Him we look, our divine Saviour. And that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, means that He is not only the beginning of all things, their Creator, but also the end, and that all things must lead to that end, are adapted to that end, as the final revelation of the living God, and as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ, our Lord. He is coming. And to this coming the church responds as we read it in this word of God.

I am coming. We do not read that He will come. Of course He will come. That awesome moment will arrive when the Lord Jesus Christ shall appear upon the clouds of heaven, when the last trumpet shall sound, and all shall see Him.

In this text, however, He is coming. This is the characteristic of the New Dispensation. The Old Dispensation was the dispensation of the types and shadows. It was the dispensation of the typical Christ, Christ as revealed in types and symbols and shadows, inasmuch as Christ Himself had not yet come. It was also the dispensation of the typical antichrist, as, for example, of the monstrosly wicked Antiochus Epiphanes. The New Dispensation, however, is the dispensation of the Christ. Now Christ has come, born in Bethlehem, suffered, died, is risen again, and glorified. The shadows and types of the old day have been replaced by their Reality. And, even as the New Dispensation is the dispensation of the Christ, so it is also the age of the antichrist, even as John says: now there are many antichrists. So, He is coming throughout the ages. His final coming cannot occur until all things have been accomplished as determined by the sovereign will of our God. And He is coming throughout this last hour because He is realizing all these things and causing them to happen.

Two things characterize this coming. First, it is sure. We read: "Surely, I come (am coming) quickly."

Indeed, this coming of the Lord is not the product of fanciful imagination; it is the revelation of the living God. The wise of this world may say that we are demented, mad; the powerful of this world may say that we are dreaming; the rich of this world may claim that we are pessimists. Fact is, however, our Lord Jesus Christ is coming surely.

Secondly, the Saviour is coming quickly. But, how can this be? It is said that the Church of God in the days of its New Testament infancy believed that Jesus would return in their day. However, it is hardly conceivable that the apostles themselves entertained this error. But it really makes no difference what their personal opinion may have been. Fact is, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is speaking here, and He declares that He is coming quickly. He surely knew that He would not return in the days of the apostles. What, then, does it mean that He is coming quickly? We may use the late Rev. H. Hoeksema's illustration in his book: Behold He Cometh. When the Germans were pressing the Allies, had run through Belgium and into France, the United States entered this war in the year of 1917. Longingly the Allies looked for the coming of the Americans, and the Americans assured them: we are coming, and we are coming quickly. However, before America could actually enter the conflict, much had to be done. Gigantic preparations had to be made. That the Americans were coming quickly surely meant that they were preparing themselves with the greatest possible haste, coming as quickly as possible, although to the Allies it may have seemed that their coming was very slow and being delayed. How true this is in this text! Think of what must be done before the last trumpet sounds. Of this we read in this book of Revelation. Think of the four horsemen of Rev. 6. Think of all the signs of Christ's coming: the gathering of all the elect, wars and rumours of wars, pestilences and earthquakes and famines, the great apostasy, and the final appearance of Antichrist. Indeed, Jesus never stands in any other relation to the world but in that of judgment, never in an attitude of grace. To be sure, our Lord is coming quickly. He is in a hurry, a tremendous hurry. He prays what we read in John 17:24. He has no time to lose. All these things must happen, and they must happen quickly. This King of kings and Lord of lords has His heart set upon the renewal of all things. He is not losing any time, is not delaying, but He is rushing things, and that all the more as the end nears. Indeed, "I am coming quickly."

* * * * *

The words of this text: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," are the response of the Church of God. This is hardly true of the church today. Carnality and materialism are rampant today. We live in a day and age of the lust of the eyes and of the flesh and of the

greatness of life. Love for pleasure and amusement and a seeking of the things below are the order of the day. There is money for pleasure, conveniences and luxuries, but the cause of God's covenant, in the church and in the school, often goes a-begging. But, this is not all. Today the truth of our text is also actually denied by what calls itself Church. One actually had the boldness to say that to say Christ is coming soon is the worst thing that can be told the Church of God! Today the Church, instead of preaching the gospel of this text, is actually preaching a social gospel, concerning itself with fighting poverty, racism, racial discrimination, wars and rumours of war, juvenile delinquency. Of course, we must deal with these things. But today this is being done without the cross of Calvary, and as the realization of the kingdom of God and of Christ in the earthly sense of the word. Today the Church is not busying itself, cares not to busy itself with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the clouds of heaven, refuses to see in all these ills and catastrophies the signs of His coming.

And what can we say about ourselves? Are our hearts and minds filled with His coming, His coming soon? We live in ominously serious times; the signs of His coming are being fulfilled before our very eyes. Do we live consciously in the anticipation of that coming? Do we consider what we, especially our young people and children, may be compelled to experience? Are we pilgrims and strangers here below, or have we settled rather permanently in this evil and carnal world?

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Literally we read: "Amen, come, Lord Jesus." Amen, even so, truly, come, Lord Jesus. Amen. Thus it truly is. There is no doubt about it. Come, Lord Jesus. Here we have the Church's expression of its sincere longing and desire for the coming of the Lord. Indeed, the Church does not pray, long for the signs as such, such as wars, earthquakes, pestilences, etc. Nevertheless, we pray: Come, Lord Jesus. O, negatively, this certainly implies that we will have no part of any social gospel so common and prevalent today. We will not advocate any earthly cur apart from the cross and blood of Christ. We will not join the world in its efforts to establish a utopia here below, but we will raise a warning and condemning finger against all such endeavors. Positively, we will long for the coming of the Lord. We do not desire, crave these signs as such. But, when they come we will rejoice. We know that a

world without war would be far more terrible than a world at war; we know it would be terrible if these signs were not to come. And when they come in the light of Holy Writ, we will experience a thrill, a throbbing of the heart and soul, because they are the rumblings of Him Who is coming quickly.

This also determines our calling. As individuals, in all our walk of life, as parents and children, as adults in all our contacts in the midst of the world, we will, of course, do what our hands find to do, but we will long for that coming, speak of it, do nothing to interfere with our expectation of it. However, this calling also concerns us as churches. This longing must characterize all our preaching and teaching. It must characterize all our work as officebearers, also in the year that lies before us. Always we must be watching upon the walls of Sion, constantly alerting the people of God to this coming of the Lord, and warning against all modern day efforts to deny this blessed coming in the humanitarian sense of the word. Indeed, how serious, tremendously serious is this implied admonition in this word of God!

* * * * *

Finally, what motivates this response of the Church? Indeed, the Church of God prays this. That the church today engages in a social gospel, prays not for the coming of Jesus Christ, is surely because it is carnal. And our failure to do so is surely rooted in the same reason. This longing here is expressed by *the* Church, the bride of verse 17, by them who thirst and long for the salvation of God in Christ Jesus.

What is this motivation? We read: Amen, come, Lord Jesus. This Coming One is our Lord Jesus. As Jesus He is our Saviour. That He is our Lord means that we belong to Him, are His property, body and soul, now and forever. He is coming quickly, our Saviour Lord. And if we know our sin and guilt, and the hopelessness of it, and the enmity of a world that lies in darkness, and that in this earthly house of our tabernacle, this body of sin, we shall never be fully delivered, and that we long for that deliverance, this prayer, motivated by that desire, will be very real, very intense. Then, as the bride of our Lord Jesus Christ, we, too, shall say, in unison with the Church of all ages: Amen, come, Lord Jesus.

Behold, I am coming quickly.

Amen, come, Lord Jesus.

Have a Blessed Christ-Centered New Year.

EDITORIAL

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

John Calvin and Erroll Hulse

In his recent articles in *Reformation Today* (Sept.-Oct., 1978) Pastor Erroll Hulse attempts to leave the impression that his double-track theology is supported by John Calvin. More than once in the course of his writings Mr. Hulse appeals to passages from *Calvin's Commentaries*.

With respect to this matter of quotations from John Calvin, I wish to make a few introductory remarks, first of all.

In the first place, as I indicated in my previous editorial on this subject, we must remember that John Calvin is not the court of last appeal. Calvin could be incorrect in his exegesis, and he himself would be the first to admit this. Scripture itself is the court of last appeal, even as Scripture is its own interpreter. Hence, when Calvin is incorrect, I do not hesitate to disagree with his exegesis. In the second place, for many reasons it should not surprise us that Calvin would be upon occasion mistaken in his exegesis. Not only was he an extremely busy man and a prolific writer, but he also stood at the beginning of the movement of the Reformation, when Scripture again came into its rightful place in the church. It is not surprising, therefore, that Calvin himself found it necessary to clarify and to correct positions which he assumed earlier in his career. Thus, with respect to the subject under discussion, that of the so-called offer of the gospel, Calvin in several instances speaks more clearly and correctly in his later treatises which have been published under the title *Calvin's Calvinism*. In the third place, it should be kept in mind that the term *offer* in Calvin does not have the same significance as it does in today's usage. In Calvin this term, as derived from the Latin, simply means "to present, to exhibit or set forth." Finally, Pastor Hulse should remember that, whatever Calvin has written on this subject, he does not hold to the theory of two

wills in God: one will according to which God wills the salvation of all men, and one will according to which God wills the salvation of the elect only. This theory of two divine wills is basic to the entire doctrine of the well-meant offer of salvation, as Pastor Hulse very well knows and as he teaches. But Calvin himself explicitly denies such a twofold will of God, as can be easily demonstrated from his writings. Moreover, the late Professor John Murray, to whose writings Pastor Hulse appeals as authoritative, admits in this connection that Calvin insists upon the simplicity of the will of God; and Professor Murray admittedly parts ways with Calvin on this subject.

But now let us turn to some specifics.

First of all, what does John Calvin teach concerning II Peter 3:9? Pastor Hulse quotes from *Calvin's Commentary* on this verse, and at the same time he expresses scorn for the interpretation which would confine the passage to the elect. Now even Hulse's quotation from *Calvin's Commentary* is not as universalist as Hulse seems to think. But we will let that pass. What does Calvin say on this subject in *Calvin's Calvinism*? In his treatise on *The Secret Providence of God*, p. 276, we read:

There is, perhaps, a stronger color in some of the words of Peter, which might have better suited your purposes, where he says that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9). And if there be anything in the first member of the passage that seems difficult of comprehension at first sight, it is made perfectly plain by the explanation which follows. For, in as far as God "willeth that all should come unto repentance," in so far He willeth that no one should perish; but, in order that they may thus be received of God, they must "come." But the Scripture everywhere affirms, that in order that they may "come," they must be prevented of God; that is, God must come

first to them to draw them; for until they are drawn of God, they will remain where they are, given up to the obstinacy of the flesh.

Repeatedly in his articles Pastor Hulse refers to Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" In one paragraph Hulse simply dismisses as a distortion the interpretation which would make "the children" in this verse apply to the elect. Elsewhere Hulse himself distorts the text by conveniently making the text read, "... how oft would I have gathered *you* as a hen gathereth her chicks under her wings, but ye would not." (Italics added) But what does Calvin write? In *Calvin's Calvinism*, in the treatise on *The Eternal Predestination of God*, Calvin quotes Augustine with approval as follows, pp. 104, 105:

This passage of the apostle (1 Tim. ii. 4) was long ago brought forward by the Pelagians, and handled against us with all their might. What Augustine advanced in reply to them in many parts of his works, I think it unnecessary to bring forward on the present occasion. I will only adduce one passage, which clearly and briefly proves how unconcernedly he despised their objection now in question. "When our Lord complains (says he) that though He wished to gather the children of Jerusalem as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but she would not, are we to consider that the will of God was overpowered by a number of weak men, so that He who was Almighty God could not do what He wished or willed to do? If so, what is to become of that omnipotence by which He did 'whatsoever pleased Him in heaven and in earth'? Moreover, who will be found so profanely mad as to say that God cannot convert the evil wills of men, *which* He pleases, *when* He pleases, and *as* He pleases, to good? Now, when He does this, He does *in mercy*; and when He doeth it not, *in judgment* He doeth it not."

Another example. Pastor Hulse writes as follows: "Does God desire the salvation of all the lost; that is everyone of them? I Timothy 2:4 and Ezekiel 33:11 declare as much and our Lord's ministry confirms the same." I could easily demonstrate by means of a lengthy quotation that Calvin disagrees with Pastor Hulse with regard to both passages: for Calvin deals with both of them in *Calvin's Calvinism*. But I will quote only part of what Calvin writes concerning I Timothy 2:4, pp. 103, 104.

The difficulty which, according to Pighius, lies in that other place of Paul, where the apostle affirms that "God will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. ii. 4), is solved in one moment, and by one question, namely, *How* does God wish all men to come to the knowledge of the truth? For Paul couples this *salvation* and this *coming to the knowledge of the truth* together.

Now, I would ask, did the same will of God stand the same from the beginning of the world or not? For if God willed, or wished, that His truth should be known unto *all men*, how was it that He did not proclaim and make known His law to the *Gentiles* also? Why did He confine the light of life within the narrow limits of *Judea*? And what does Moses mean when he says, "For what nation is there so great who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deut. iv. 7.8) The Divine lawgiver surely here means that there was no other nation which had statutes and laws, by which it was ruled, like unto that nation. And what does Moses here but extol the peculiar privilege of the race of Abraham? To this responds the high encomium of David, pronounced on the same nation, "He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them" (Ps. cxlvii. 20). Nor must we disregard the express *reason* assigned by the Psalmist, "*Because* the Lord loved thy fathers, *therefore* He chose their seed after them" (Deut. iv. 37). And why did God thus choose them? Not because they were, in themselves, more excellent than others, but because *it pleased* God to choose them, "for His peculiar people." What? Are we to suppose that the apostle did not know that he himself was prohibited by the Holy Spirit from "preaching the Word" in Asia, and from passing over into Bithynia? But as the continuance of this argument would render us two prolix, we will be content with taking one position more: that God, after having thus lighted the candle of eternal life to the *Jews alone*, suffered the *Gentiles* to wander for many ages in the darkness of ignorance; and that, at length, this special gift and blessing were promised to the Church: "*But* the Lord shall arise upon *thee*; and His glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isa. lx. 2). Now let Pighius boast, if he can, that God willeth *all men* to be saved! The above arguments, founded on the Scriptures, prove that even the external preaching of the doctrine of salvation, which is very far inferior to the illumination of the Spirit, was not made of God common to *all men*.

A little later Calvin explains (pp. 105, 106) that this text refers not to individuals, but to orders of men.

In the same paragraph in which Pastor Hulse refers to I Timothy 2:4 he distorts the text in John 12:40 by separating it from vs. 39. Writes he: "The day of opportunity was over. Salvation was now hid from their eyes. The judicial blindness from God was upon them. Their stubbornness had led to God Himself hardening their hearts and blinding their eyes (John 12:40)." However the text presents matters just the other way around: "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." In-

cidentally, if Pastor Hulse had paid attention to this context, he would never have reached his universalist explanation of the statement in vs. 47 that Christ came "to save the world." But what does John Calvin write about this passage? We find this in *Calvin's Calvinism*, pp. 81, 82:

Now let us listen to the Evangelist John. He will be no ambiguous interpreter of this same passage of the prophet Isaiah. "But though (says John) Jesus had done so many miracles for them, yet they believed not on Him, that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts," etc. Now, most certainly John does not here give us to understand that the Jews were prevented from believing by their sinfulness. For though this be quite true in one sense, yet *the cause* of their not believing must be traced to a far higher source. The secret and eternal purpose and counsel of God must be viewed as the original cause of their blindness and unbelief. It perplexed, in no small degree, the ignorant and the weak, when they heard that there was no place for Christ among the people of God (for the Jews were such). John explains the reason by showing that none believe save those to whom it is given, and that there are few to whom God reveals His arm. This other prophecy concerning "the arm of the Lord," the Evangelist weaves into his argument to prove the same great truth. And his words have a momentous weight. He says, "*Therefore, they could not believe.*" Wherefore, let men torture themselves as long as they will with reasoning, the cause of the difference made — why God does not reveal His arm equally to *all* — lies hidden in His own eternal decree. The whole of the Evangelist's argument amounts evidently to this:

that faith is a special gift, and that the wisdom of Christ is too high and too deep to come within the compass of man's understanding. The unbelief of the world, therefore, ought not to astonish us, if even the wisest and most acute of men fail to believe. Hence, unless we would elude the plain and confessed meaning of the Evangelist, that few receive the Gospel, we must fully conclude that *the cause* is *the will of God*; and that the outward sound of that Gospel strikes the ear in vain until God is pleased to touch by it the heart within.

The reader will note that all this is quite different from Pastor Hulse's philosophy about "judicial blindness from God." Incidentally, in the paragraph immediately before the above quotation, Calvin deals with this same passage from Isaiah 6 as it is quoted in Acts 28:25, 26; and he concludes his remarks as follows: "Some persons will here erroneously and ignorantly conclude that *the cause* and beginning of this obduracy in the Jews was their malicious wickedness. Just as if there were no deeper and more occult *cause* of the wickedness itself, namely, the original corruption of nature! And as if they did not remain sunk in this corruption *because*, being reprobated by the secret council of God before they were born, they were left undelivered!"

Let me conclude with one more brief quotation, found on p. 118 of *Calvin's Calvinism*: "For as to that distinction commonly held in the schools concerning the *twofold will* of God, such distinction is by no means admitted by us." Quotations of this kind can be multiplied, but let these suffice as illustrations of Calvin's doctrine. Pastor Hulse should choose, and should not try to follow an Arminian track and a Calvinistic track at the same time.

My Sheep Hear My Voice

Letter to Timothy

January 1, 1979

Dear Timothy,

In our last letter we had turned to a discussion of the work of deacons. I answered in part your questions concerning the recent decision of the Christian Reformed Church to allow women into the office of

deacons provided that they were not considered as elders and given the same authority as elders. But I did not finish this question: we talked about the use of the term "deacon" and the term "deaconess" in

Scripture and found that the argument of the Christian Reformed Church was fallacious on this point. But there is another aspect to this question which we must now discuss.

The whole argument of the decision of the Christian Reformed Church quite obviously hinges on the erroneous idea that deacons do not exercise authority within the Church. That this is the argument (although it is not explicitly stated), is evident from the fact that the decision refuses to allow women to serve as elders or ministers, and refuses to allow a congregation to install deaconesses if these women should in any way share in the work of elders or possess in some way the authority which elders possess.

This position is by no means the position of all within the Christian Reformed Church. There are those who take the position that women may function in all these offices; and they insist that the Churches grievously err when they deny these offices to women. But there are others (and they prevailed at Synod) who believe that women may not serve as elders and ministers, but may serve as deacons, because there is no authority exercised in the office of deacon.

To put it a little differently: there are passages in Scripture which speak of women exercising authority in the Church. But there are differences of interpretation concerning these passages. The two clearest passages are I Corinthians 14:34, 35 and I Timothy 2:11, 12. Those who do not believe that women ought to be elders and ministers appeal to these passages as decisive. Those who do maintain that women may also function in the church as elders and ministers consider these passages to be stipulations which apply to Paul's day, but that they have no normative force for the Church of today.

So there are three positions: 1) Those who maintain that women may not be officebearers at all; 2) Those who maintain that women may be deaconesses but not ministers and elders; 3) Those who maintain that women may serve in any office.

We are primarily concerned now with the second group. And we are concerned with that group because their position is, apparently, that the office of deacon is an office without authority. So we have to show two things. We have to show first of all that the two passages to which we referred above specifically deny women authority in the Church; and we have to show that the office of deacon is also an office of authority. If these two things can be shown, then we must conclude that Scripture forbids women officebearers.

That the two passages referred to earlier deny women a position of authority in the Church is admitted by almost every one. So clear is this that

even those who insist that women are permitted to hold office do not question the interpretation of the passages so much; they rather simply relegate these passages to the dust pile of outmoded practices. They were relevant for Paul's day when women were considered inferior; but they are no longer of interest or concern to us now that we have learned that women and men are on a plane of equality.

The two passages read: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." I Cor. 14:34, 35. "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." I Timothy 2:11, 12

These texts are clear. There are a couple of points which we can briefly notice. 1) They both speak of the Church, and this is usually agreed upon by all commentators. The passage in Corinthians clearly speaks of the Church, for it is mentioned in so many words: "Let your women keep silence in the churches . . . for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." This is also true of the passage in Timothy however. The whole chapter deals with practices in the Church. In the first verses already Paul is talking about prayers which ought to be uttered in the church services which Timothy as a minister of the gospel is called to lead. Never has the Church applied this passage to life in general. Paul suffers not a woman to teach; but no one, to my knowledge, has ever said that a woman may not teach her children in the home; that a woman may not teach in Christian Schools; that a woman may not teach in Sunday School, provided that the Sunday School is kept separate from the institutional life of the Church. 2) They both enjoin women to silence. That is, while both enjoin upon women submission to authority, both also expressly state that women must be silent. They may not teach. And, their subjection to authority within the Church is expressly described as silence in the official and institutional life of the church. 3) Paul states in Corinthians that this is not merely a rule which he thinks appropriate for the circumstances in which the churches of his day find themselves, but he specifically states that this is a matter of the law: "as also saith the law." The whole normative force of the law of God is at stake here.

This teaches therefore, without doubt, that women may occupy no position of authority within the Church — especially not a position of authority in which they *speak*. And so the question is: Is this true of the office of deacons? Everyone recognizes that it is true of the office of elders and of the office of

ministers. But is it also true of the office of deacons? That is the question which needs yet to be answered.

There are several reasons why we must take the position that also deacons exercise authority in the church and are called to speak the Word of God. We shall take the time to enumerate these reasons and briefly discuss them.

1) There are two places where the Scriptures speak of the qualifications of deacons, and both places mention qualifications which refer to a special office of authority and bringing the Word. The first such passage is Acts 6:1-7 where we have the record of the institution of the office. The part of that passage which is of immediate interest to us is vs. 3: "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." Now it ought to be clear to anyone that if these men were entrusted with no other work than to provide sufficient food for the Grecian widows who were neglected in the daily ministrations, they would not have to be men who were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. It takes neither the Holy Spirit nor wisdom to see to it that certain widows have enough to eat. These qualifications speak clearly of the fact that more was required of them. They were to have a work which they could perform only if they were full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom. It is interesting to note, perhaps in passing, that at least two of these deacons also were evangelists who preached the gospel. Stephen and Philip both preached. And while this office of evangelist was unique in a certain sense, nevertheless, the early Church apparently did not think it strange that two deacons should preach. If I were arguing for women elders and ministers, I would certainly appeal to this passage. I would argue: if Scripture permits women deacons, then we have no reason to forbid the offices of elders and ministers to women because it is clear from Acts that the two New Testament deacons also preached.

The same is true of the passage in I Timothy 3 where Paul specifically speaks of the qualifications of deacons. Among other things he mentions: "grave, not doubletongued," "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience," "ruling their children and their own houses well." Now, again, if the work of deacons is only to distribute money, why are these qualifications listed which have nothing to do with this work? Why must a deacon be grave and not doubletongued if he does not "speak" in the church anyway? Why must a deacon hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience if he is not to bring the

Word of God to those in need? Why must a deacon show that he knows how to rule his children and his own house if he is not going to exercise authority in the Church anyway? No, we must conclude that the office of deacon also involves speaking authoritatively the Word of God.

These passages of Scripture are decisive. If women are to keep silence in the Church and not usurp authority over the man, then it surely follows that they cannot function in the office of deacon.

But there is more.

2) That deacons speak the Word of God authoritatively also follows from the very nature of the office. It is a fundamental principle of all Reformed Church polity that Christ and Christ alone is the Officebearer in His Church. This is expressly taught in many places, but Peter says this in so many words in I Peter 2:25: "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." That Christ is the only Officebearer in His Church means simply that all the care of the Church is exercised by Christ. He alone provides for all the needs of His people. He alone, as the good Shepherd, feeds and nourishes them. He alone saves and redeems them. He alone exercises all authority over them. And He does this in such a way that He is their Prophet and Priest and King. He feeds them with His Word. He rules over them and disciplines them. He cares for all their needs. He makes their griefs and sorrows, their sicknesses and poverty, their trouble and distress the object of His sympathetic and merciful care.

But this care of Christ is exercised over all His sheep through the offices which He has ordained in the Church, for He is in heaven and we are on earth. We shall someday be in heaven, and then we shall have no further need of ministers, elders, and deacons for we shall be with Christ. But while we are on earth, we have this need. Christ provides it.

But the authority which He exercises through the offices is exercised through all the offices. There are not two offices which are authoritative and one which is not. This is absurd. If one is not then it is simply not an office in the Church. But all three are offices, instituted by Christ, through which Christ comes to us in all our need.

There are a few more reasons yet why we must consider the office of deacon authoritative; but we shall have to defer discussion of them till our next exchange of correspondence.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

FROM HOLY WRIT

Exposition of Galatians

(Galatians 4:21-31 Continued)

By Rev. G. Lubbers

ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN OF ISAAC'S BIRTH WE (Galatians 4:28)

Paul is continuing to show the allegorical meaning and implication of the birth of the two sons of Abraham, the one from the bond-woman and the other from the free-woman. The one son was born a slave child and the other was born a free man, with the rights of sonship; he is born an heir with right to the inheritance of father Abraham, the right to the kingdom of heaven!

Now this allegorical implication is here applied to the New Testament church of Christ, called out of every tribe and nation, the "many children of the barren woman," who must rejoice with a loud and victorious exaltation to God. Only those who belong to this church of Jesus Christ are heirs of the kingdom of heaven. The children who are born after the flesh are "cast out." (Gen. 21:10) Jesus says of those who come to him, hungering and thirsting, that they shall never be cast out. (John 6:37) The LORD cast out the heathen before Israel and gave them the land for a perpetual possession. (Ex. 34:24; Josh. 13:12; Psalm 78:15, 80:8) That was His mighty judgment in which he vindicated His people, fulfilled His promise, and rewarded the wicked. (Gen. 9:25; 15:16) When the Lord casts out He drives away from His presence. For such is the meaning of the term "cast out" in the Hebrew. It means to *cause* to depart. Such is not our lot. We are the sons who may abide forever in God's house as sons. (John 8:35)

There are two different readings here in the text in Galatians 4:28 in the Greek text. Our KJV follows the reading "we are" (*eemeis esmen*), while the other

reading given is "ye are" (*humeis este*). In the first instance Paul emphasizes that what is true of Isaac's birth is true of the entire church, all the elect in Christ; in the second reading Paul emphasizes that what is true of Isaac's birth in its allegorical interpretation is true of these Galatian believers, these "brethren." Now this discrepancy in reading is not of great moment. Whether the one reading or the other is chosen, the truth of the Gospel remains that all God's redeemed children, born from above, are born according to the Spirit, as was Isaac by promise. For in both verses 27 and 31 we read of "our" and "we," the first person, referring to the entire church. *We* are not children of the bondwoman, the Jerusalem which is now, but we are children of the free, Jerusalem which is above, born from above. (See John 3:3) *All* God's elect children are born by water and by Spirit. And to this "all" the Galatian believers also belong! We, therefore, prefer the reading given in our KJV of the Bible!

THE SON OF THE BOND-WOMAN CAST OUT (Galatians 4:29, 30)

There is something in this history of Abraham and his two sons which fills my heart with deepest awe and reverence. We stand here before the mystery of God's sovereign good-pleasure. He will have mercy upon whom He has mercy, as was made known to Moses at the mount of God. (Ex. 33:19; Rom. 9:14, 15) And here we are told: nay, but who art thou, o man, that answereth against God. (Rom. 9:19) We take the shoes from off our feet, and bow before God as did Paul in Romans 9:1-5. We shall keep this latter in mind when we write these paragraphs.

Our text speaks of the divine oracle as it proceeded from the lips of Sarah. Surely, Sarah was not uttering her own selfish feelings, hurt maternal, natural feelings, when she uttered these fiery words to her husband, Abraham; but she was uttering what the Holy Spirit gave her to say. She was turned into God's prophet by God Himself. Does not Paul say here in Galatians 4:30, "but what saith *the Scripture*." The Holy Scripture of God speaks clearly, and we had better listen carefully. When we read Genesis 21:10-12 we might be tempted to say: what saith the angry Sarah, and might begin to try to show that she of all women had the least reason to talk. Was she not the one who suggested to Abraham that he take Hagar, her Egyptian handmaiden to wife, to raise up seed upon her knees? Had she not thought that in this way the promise to Abraham could be fulfilled? Was it not she who had master-minded this ill-planned birth of Ishmael from Hagar, the bond-woman? Had not the free-woman erred here? Yea, she had grievously gone astray. And the LORD had not given her much joy in this; she had no laughter. Only ill came forth from it. How could Sarah, as a mere woman, command such a word to Abraham, and that Abraham would believe? Was Abraham twice the mere tool of his wife? Was she out of her role of calling Abraham her "lord"? (Gen. 18:12; I Peter 3:6) Not at all. Sarah speaks the word of the LORD as the free-woman, whose children will be born by the Spirit and who belong to the Jerusalem which is in heaven.

Here we take the shoes from off our feet once more!

First of all the text says that the "bond-woman" must be *cast out*. There had been, first of all, the crisis in Abraham's home between this bond-woman and free-woman as soon as the bond-woman had conceived by Abraham according to the flesh. It was then that we read that "her mistress was despised in her eyes." Instead of gladly submitting as a handmaiden slave, she has a deep attitude of spiritual contempt for Sarah. She must have been informed by Sarah and Abraham concerning the purpose of her having been given to Abraham. She would serve that purpose, not for the sake of Sarah, but for her own exaltation. Then she fled from Sarah, when Sarah asserted her authority as mistress, and is told by the Lord to return to her mistress and to subject herself. Although it seems that Sarah is unjustly severe, Hagar must return. She must give birth to Ishmael in Abraham's family, and he must grow up to be a "son" of Abraham, a son, born after the flesh. (Gen. 16:7-16) But the time comes some fourteen years later when this woman must be "cast out" by Abraham, as head of the church. She is not "divorced" by Abraham, for they were never married;

she is cast out upon the Word of God through Sarah. She was a mere "bond-woman" who had no rights of a wife with a husband. Such is the allegorical meaning here. We do well to "hear" what the law says. (Gal. 4:21)

However, there is here more which we must notice. The son of this bond-woman too must go. His basic attitude revealed itself against the free-born son, even as that of his mother revealed itself against the mother of the free-born son, Sarah. Ishmael was now a lad of some fourteen years old or even more. The time had come to wean Isaac, and Abraham makes a feast in his honor. He made a "great feast" in thankfulness to God that He had fulfilled the promise to him: "Sarah shall have a son at the appointed time." Here was a son for whom he had waited in hope against hope, and from whom would be born a great people, as the stars of the heaven in multitude. Here was the son, whom God had raised as it were from the dead. And the banner of faith and hope was waving on Abraham's premises and tent as he was a stranger in a strange land. It is in honor of the great son and heir of this father of all believers. (Rom. 4:17-21) It was Isaac's day, and it was more than Ishmael could take. Ishmael comes to the point of the parting of the ways and to the point of no return.

Notice very carefully what Paul says here in Galatians 4:29. We read, "he that was born after the flesh *persecuted* him that was born after the Spirit." Now the text in Genesis says that Ishmael was "mocking" Isaac. The term for mocking in the Hebrew means: to laugh at, to hold in derision and scorn. And this "mocking" was what expressed Ishmael's spiritual attitude toward the fulfilment of the promise of God, which fulfilment had utterly failed in the birth of Ishmael. And Ishmael knew that he was merely a son of a slave woman in the house of Abraham, his natural father. He was not an heir in the house. And he deeply resented this "great feast," this grand commemoration of the fulfilment of God's promise. His laughter to scorn was what expressed the attitude of the "persecutor." The form of the persecution in this case was laughter and derision at the joy of salvation which was expressed in the birth of Isaac. God did the impossible for man. Isaac is the very embodiment of this miracle. And Ishmael knew it right well, as did also Hagar his mother. And Hagar must have concurred in this "persecution" of the free-born son.

And now both must go!

"Cast out this bond-woman and her son." This Abraham must do in the name of the Lord, and not in Sarah's name. Does not the Lord say unto Abraham, "let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of the bond-woman: in all that

Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice"? (Gen. 21:12) Such is the word of the Lord to Abraham, the father of all believers. It is God Himself speaking through Sarah. And this is called by Paul "the Scripture."

Why must Ishmael go? Ishmael is not an heir-child of Abraham. He is a mere slave son. He must go. He must be "cast out." That is the word which stands. And, as we have seen above, this "casting out" is the lot of the wicked. It means to be cast out of the kingdom of heaven, being shut out from the tender mercies of the Lord.

Someone will say: this was all true only "allegorically" of Hagar and Ishmael. And then reference is made to the fact that God says of Ishmael, "for I will make him a great nation." (Gen. 21:13) He will do this for Abraham's sake, for he is thy seed. (Gen. 21:13) Yes, God did make a great and mighty nation of Ishmael. Personally Ishmael grew and dwelt in the wilderness and became an archer. He became a warlike man, a bow-shooter, dwelling in the wilderness. And he returns to Egypt, the habitat of his mother, for a wife. And he does become a great nation, twelve

princes according to their nations. (Gen. 21:20, 21) Yes, Ishmael died in the presence of all his people. (Gen. 25:18) It is possible that the "archer," the warlike man, even died in battle. The KJV writes in the margin "fell" before all the people. Thus died Ishmael as one "cast out" because he persecuted him that was born according to the Spirit. He died an enemy of the people of God, the head of a great nation. Out of this nation shall some elect be saved "for Abraham's sake." That Ishmael is cast out is no mere allegory. It is historic fact! (Gen. 21:13; Acts 2:11)

This lesson of the history of the two sons of Abraham the Galatian believers, and we, must take to heart. Those who will to be under law must hear the "law" as this is contained in "the Scripture" in which God reveals to us what happens to all the sons of the bond-woman, who do not ever abide in the house, made free by Christ Himself on the Cross. (John 8:35, 36) They and we must beware lest we be "cast out" of the house by clinging to beggarly principles which cannot help the helpless and dead sinner.

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

The Reformed Doctrine of Reprobation

By Rev. David Engelsma

The relationship between reprobation and election is this: they are one, inseparable decree, not two, separable decrees. This is the clear teaching of the Canons of Dordt, although this is sometimes overlooked. In I,6, the Canons state that the receiving and not receiving of faith proceeds from God's eternal *decree* (not "decrees," in the plural); according to this *decree* (not "these decrees"), He softens the hearts of the elect and leaves the non-elect to their own wickedness. The conclusion of this Article speaks of "the *decree* (not 'decrees') of election and reprobation."

Article 15 of the first head of doctrine is the article in which the Canons explicitly confess reprobation. Reprobation is not presented as a second, distinct, separate decree alongside election. Rather, it is presented as part of the decree of election: "not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree." Now, reprobation is not only a passing by — "preterition," as Reformed theology calls it; it is also a positive determination to damn those passed by. Nevertheless, this passing by of some men in the decree of election *is* reprobation — those so passed by are, by virtue of this fact, set apart for

destruction. Thus, the Canons teach reprobation as one decree with election, so that the denial of reprobation radically affects election, indeed *destroys* the Reformed doctrine of election.

“But this is merely what the Canons teach, “exclaim the enemies of reprobation,” and we are exactly criticizing the Canons. The Canons err by being logical in this matter of the relationship of election and reprobation.”

“The Canons are too logical” — this is the accusation. When this charge is leveled against the Canons, some chickens are coming home to roost in Reformed circles. For a long time, men have disparaged, and even condemned, sound, logical thinking in theology. Now, men stand up and tell us, with a straight face, that God can choose some men out of the human race, without rejecting the rest. (I do not think that my wife would appreciate a logic that would allow me to choose her as my wife out of all the women of the world, without rejecting all the others as my wife.)

The Canons are logical, as is all truth, but this is not why they teach reprobation. The Canons teach the relationship between election and reprobation, not because they desire at all cost to be logical, but because they are determined at all cost to be Biblical — Biblical about election. The Canons have read the Bible and have found there that not all, but some only are elected. It is the teaching of Scripture that election is the eternal choice of certain, definite individuals unto salvation, in distinction from other individuals who are not elected; election is the choice of some, not all. To be sure, election is, first, the election of Christ. To be sure, election is the election of Israel-Church, the Body of Christ. But these vital truths in no way derogate from, much less totally obscure, the equally vital truth that, in Christ, God chose certain, definite individuals and that the elect Church is composed of a definite, fixed number of individuals. Biblical election is personal, individual, discriminating, selective; it chooses some, and it passes others by. The very word that the Holy Spirit uses in the New Testament for election expresses this: *eklegomai*, ‘I choose out.’ Men may not like this; they may even think this unfair and go to work to change the doctrine. There is one thing that they may not do: they may not call their invention, “Biblical election.”

For the doctrine of election as the choosing of some in distinction from others, and the inseparable relationship of election and reprobation that follows from this, is “the express testimony of sacred Scripture,” as the Canons state in I,15. We must be clear on this. The Canons do not say that there is express testimony in the Bible for reprobation (although there certainly is). This is what Harry Boer makes the

Canons say in his gravamen. He writes that his gravamen will show that “The ‘express testimony of sacred Scripture,’ I/15, which the Canons claim teach the doctrine of reprobation is in fact not to be found in the Scriptures.” Again, “In this gravamen the following paragraphs examine whether the data which the Canons themselves adduce as ‘the express testimony of sacred Scripture’ in support of the doctrine of reprobation do indeed carry the weight of evidence they are alleged to contain.” Having looked at a few passages, Boer declares, “This concludes the examination of ‘the express testimony of sacred Scripture’ for the doctrine of reprobation as given by the Synod of Dort itself.” Because he has made the Canons say that there is express testimony in Scripture for reprobation, Boer thinks that his work is over when he has explained away a few texts that speak explicitly of reprobation.

But the Canons do not say this. The Canons say that it is the express testimony of sacred Scripture that *not all, but some only are elected*, while others are passed by in the eternal decree. In order to overthrow reprobation, therefore, Boer must not only explain away the texts that concentrate on reprobation, but he must also go to work on all the passages in Scripture that teach that some only, not all men, are elected. Dr. Boer has a monumental job on his hands. To do it, he will have to outlive Methuselah. When he has finished, we will have a new bible. For this testimony abounds in Scripture. It is impossible not to see it. If someone says that he cannot see it, this only proves that no one is so blind as he who will not see.

This testimony is writ large across the pages of the Old Testament. God chose Israel in distinction from all the other nations, whom He suffered to walk in their own idolatrous, unrighteous ways, until they perished. Moses proclaimed to Israel, “thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, *above all people that are upon the face of the earth*” (Deut. 7:6). This gospel of sovereign, discriminating grace is preached to elect Israel in the context of a promise that God will destroy the nations before Israel and a command to Israel to “smite them, and utterly destroy them” (vss. 1, 2).

In Psalm 147:19, 20, the Psalmist declares, “He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. *He hath not dealt so with any nation*: and as for his judgments, they have not known them.” This sovereignty of Jehovah is not burdensome to the Psalmist, so that he must needs lodge a gravamen against it. On the contrary, it is the cause of a hearty “Hallelujah.”

Election, as the choice of some in distinction from others who are rejected, is not only *in* the Old

Testament, here and there; it is fundamental to the Old Testament's message.

It is also the express testimony of the New Testament. Jesus taught, in John 10, that there are some who are His sheep, in distinction from others who are not His sheep, and that they are His sheep because His Father gave them to Him. For the sheep, He lays down His life; to the sheep, He gives faith; to the sheep, He gives eternal life.

Romans 9:10-13 teaches that God elected Jacob, rejecting his twin brother, Esau. This is an illustration of the assertion of verse 6, that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." God's election of Abraham's children was a choice of some in distinction from others.

This is the testimony of every passage that teaches the election of particular persons, e.g., Ephesians 1:4: "According as he hath chosen *us* in him before the foundation of the world. . . ."

The denial of reprobation attacks election, and it attacks election by denying that election is the choice of certain, definite individuals. The personal character of election is at stake. Let no pastor say, "The controversy over reprobation is no concern of mine; let the theologians debate that." Let no believer say, "A gravamen against reprobation?; well, that's a theological game for the clergy." No! Emphatically, no!

The denial of reprobation means that a pastor can never again say, in Christ's Name, to any believer: "Your salvation is grounded in your personal election, and therefore your salvation is sure." It means that never again can any Reformed believer confess with Q. 54 of the Heidelberg Catechism: there is a church chosen out of the human race to everlasting life, and "I am and for ever shall remain a living member thereof."

This attack on personal, definite election becomes apparent also in the writings of the enemies of reprobation, although they are at pains to obscure this, at present, by fulsome praise of election. In his

influential book, *Divine Election*, G. C. Berkouwer never once said, much less stressed, that election is the choice of a certain number of individuals. James Daane is bolder. In his *The Freedom of God*, he opposes the idea that election is the choice of a certain number of individuals and remarks that election is not a matter of numbers. Over against this, we simply reply that election *is* a matter of numbers. It is not *only* a matter of numbers, but it is a matter of numbers. It is so much a matter of numbers, that the denial that election is the choice of a certain, definite, fixed number of individuals is the denial of Biblical election.

A radical difference is noticeable between these men and the Canons *as regards the truth of election*; over and over, the Canons teach that election is the choice of a definite number of individuals. (This indicates that adoption of a gravamen against reprobation will necessitate the revision of the entire Canons, not only two Articles. The Canons, like the seamless robe of Jesus, are of a piece. Pulling out one thread — and that, the thread of predestination — will unravel the whole.) I,7 describes election as the choice of "a certain number of persons." I,10 says that God "was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt *some certain persons*. . . ." Article I of the Rejection of Errors under the first Head teaches that God chose "*certain particular persons* to whom above others he in time will grant both faith in Christ and perseverance." Article III of this section condemns the error of those who teach that God did not choose "*certain persons* rather than others."

The election that remains after reprobation is denied is either universal election or the election of an indefinite group — all those who will believe and persevere in believing. This is an election dependent on the will of man; an election that is highly uncertain; and an election that gives absolutely no comfort to any sin-stricken soul that has fled in faith to Jesus Christ.

(to be continued)

A LETTER OF THANKS

The following is a letter of sincere thanks from the Board of the Reformed Free Publishing Association to Mr. Gerrit Pipe for his many, many years of faithful and dedicated service, in which he was active as Treasurer and Business Manager, and during the past ten years as Mailing Agent in the distribution of our *Standard Bearer*.

Dear Gerrit:

Let's go back a few years — in fact, quite a few years. It was in 1944 that you first appeared on the scene as an active member of the Board of the R.F.P.A. In September, 1944 you were elected Treasurer of our Association. At that time only a small — handful of our Protestant Reformed people sub-

scribed to our *Standard Bearer*. Very few outside our denomination were even aware of our publication, and very little interest was shown. Gradually, however, our subscription list grew. As it continued to grow, your work also increased. You were asked to become Business Manager as well as Treasurer of our Association, and this you willingly and eagerly agreed to do. This meant more work was placed upon your shoulders. Not only was the financial report to be made each month, but your responsibilities also included the mailing of renewal notices, changes of address, etc. With the cooperation of your dear wife, Agnes, all of these details were promptly accomplished. Then, upon your retirement as a foreman at Steelcase, you volunteered to become our mailing agent. This place you continued to fill until Novem-

ber, 1978. All of these assignments without remuneration.

For these many years of faithful and dedicated service, we, the Board, can only thank you for a job well done.

But above all, Gerrit, we thank our faithful covenant God for dedicated men in our Protestant Reformed Churches who, by His grace, have made it possible to begin and continue our *Standard Bearer* for more than 54 years.

Gerrit, thanks again! And may God continue to bless you and Agnes in the coming years.

Sincerely,

The Board of the Reformed
Free Publishing Association

IN HIS FEAR

Our Expectation in the New Year

Rev. M. Joostens

This time of year is a time of reflection and anticipation. We reflect upon the accomplishments and setbacks of the year that is past. Nineteen hundred and Seventy-eight is past, never to return again. For this is the inescapable character of time which keeps all of us in its grasp as long as we live. The Psalmist calls time an "ever rolling stream." The events and happenings of the past are securely locked in the book of God to be revealed only at the last day. We cannot change the past, but only reflect upon our accomplishments and failures.

But this is also a time of anticipation! Anticipation and expectation of that which is to come. Oh, I know that even 1979 stands fast in all its detail in the counsel and mind of the Almighty. Nevertheless, God has, in his inscrutable wisdom, hidden the future from our view. We do not enter the future with some kind of fatalistic determinism, but rather with an eagerness to pursue our desires and fulfill our longings. So we stand before this year as rational moral creatures of God that are able and called upon to think and act responsibly with regard to the future!

This confronts us, as God's children, with a most

serious and basic question. How can we maintain our distinctiveness from the world in our expectation with regard to the future? What may or may we not seek after? What are and are not proper resolutions for this coming year? The Scriptures teach such a distinction. For example, I find a passage much to the point in Proverbs (10:28), "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness: but the expectation of the wicked shall perish." Expectations for the future are common to all. The world and the church make plans. Both enter the new year with eager anticipation. Yet the righteous are vastly different from the wicked in their anticipations and expectations. The antithesis between the church of Christ and the world is seen most clearly in their expectation for the future. Speak to an ungodly man as he stands upon the threshold of another year and it will soon become apparent to you how great a difference there exists between yourself and him. He speaks of that which he looks forward to in the new year. He has his hopes and dreams. But those expectations are wholly carnal and mundane. He speaks about the treasures and wealth he will amass unto himself in the coming year. He expects to stash away for himself of the good things of this earth. He makes plans to build bigger

and better barns. His aim and desire is toward his own glory and welfare. Psalm 49 comes to mind,

Yet within their heart they say,
That their houses are for aye;
That their dwelling places grand
Shall for generations stand.
To their lands they give their name
In the hope of lasting fame, . . .

In short, the wicked expect with eager anticipation to lay up for themselves treasures upon this earth.

But, meet some of God's children on the Lord's Day as they go up to worship their God and ask them about their expectation in the new year. You will receive an entirely different answer. God's people also have expectations for the year 1979. They will say to you, never mind the pleasures and lusts after carnal and corruptible things. The things of this earth must pass away. It does no good to set your affections on the things here below, for what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world unto himself but lose his own soul? You will find his expectations to be in a spiritual vein. He will say, I don't know what the Lord has in store for me. It may be poverty or prosperity, but in all these things my expectation will be for His grace and the guidance of His good and Holy Spirit.

You see, that's the difference. The world is not able to judge the worth of things in the light of the eternal purpose and will of God. They make things an end in themselves. We know much better. At least I think we do. We know that the prosperity of this earth is not an end but only a means toward a greater and better end. Our hope and longing also in the new year is for the kingdom of God to prosper and come. While the world expects wonders here below with their noses to the ground, the child of God has his eyes upon the realization of that which is laid aside for us in Christ Jesus. By faith, with Abraham, we look for the city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God. But, you say to me, that is narrow minded, that leaves no room for the things of this earth. Are there no worthwhile pursuits for the child of God in the new year? But there are! More than this, all things are ours for the sake of Jesus our Lord. But they must be sought after for the expediency of the kingdom of God!

Furthermore we ought to know that the outcome of our expectation is inherent in the expectation itself. Again, to refer to the wisdom of Solomon in Proverbs 10:28, "... the expectation of the wicked shall perish." What a condemnation of all the hopes and desires of the world! The Lord says that they shall be put to naught and devoid of fulfillment. Though they strive to establish large empires, procure peace and tranquility, make new strides in technology and science to enhance their lives, their expectations

shall remain empty. And how true this is! There is no satisfaction and fulfillment in the world. There is no contentment among the ungodly. The carnal flesh has an insatiable appetite of lustful desire. And in all their gain and achievements, the curse of the Lord abides in their houses. (Prov. 3:33) Even if they are able to boast in their achievements and earthly gain, their end is destruction. For in all these expectations they never transcend the earthly and mundane. Their hopes and desires are of the earth and subject to time. They lay up treasures here below, none of which will stand them in good stead in the hereafter. While they enjoy their plenty and revel in sin they fill their cup of iniquity and push themselves lower in the abyss of hell where their fire shall not be quenched.

But for us, how wonderful are the words of the wisdom of the preacher! Our expectation shall be gladness. This is a wonderful contrast. The expectation of the children of God shall be attained in joy. We shall be made full in our hopes and desires for the future. But let us be careful! We read, "... the expectation of the righteous." We are righteous not because of the efforts of our flesh but in the blood of Jesus Christ. We are justified by faith. Therefore, it must be clear that the Preacher is speaking of the hopes and anticipations that grow out of this righteousness. In other words, when our desires are carnal according to the flesh, as they often are, then we must not expect them to be fulfilled in joy. Rather as the world, they shall be devoid of fulfillment. They will bring no satisfaction. But those desires and expectations that find their birth in our faith will end in joy. Such faith strives after the kingdom of heaven. It is the hope of eternal life as it lives even now within us in principle. Is this not our expectation in the year 1979? We pray for His kingdom to come. Our resolutions are vows before God to strive after sanctification and not all kinds of other silly vows which are made so glibly.

In the new year let us seek the kingdom of God first! This must be chief in our life. If we so walk, then we have the promise of God Himself that we will not be disappointed. Oh, this does not necessarily mean earthly prosperity. This was the misunderstanding of Asaph in Psalm 73 before he went into the sanctuary and understood the end of the wicked to be destruction. But it means that we will not be let down by the grace of God. He will lead us in the way everlasting, toward one longing when we shall be delivered from all the weary night of this life into the glory of heaven.

What is our longing in the year that lies ahead? Do we share our hope with the ungodly? It will come to naught. But if in all our expectations we seek the expediency of His kingdom, we shall not be disappointed.

ALL AROUND US

The Turning of the Screw

Rev. G. Van Baren

The cause for the Christian education of our children is under attack. At times the attack is more open than at others. Only recently the voters of Michigan turned down a certain "voucher plan" in which the state would give to each parent a "check" which could be "cashed" at whatever school such parent would have his child educated. This, of course, could be applied also to any Christian school for Christian education. Though the Christian schools of this area generally supported the plan, we did oppose it. We were convinced that it would give the government also ultimately the control of the schools which received such vouchers.

Now other threats have arisen. I call your attention to two: the attempt of the IRS to force schools to prove that they are non-discriminatory or lose their tax-exempt status; and, though unrelated, the events of recent months in Jonestown. Many articles have appeared in many church papers and magazines about the IRS plan. *Human Events*, Dec. 9, 1978, summarizes the position of the IRS:

Here is what the IRS is proposing. If a school was "created or substantially expanded" at or about the time of public school desegregation in the community and has little or no minority enrollment — if less than 20 per cent of the percentage of the minority population in the community served by the school — then this school is "reviewable." Minority is defined as: blacks, Hispanics, Asians or Pacific Islanders, and American Indians or Alaskan natives.

Once a school has been categorized as "reviewable," in order to retain its tax-exemption or to receive one — although the Congress has literally said

nothing on this subject — the school must prove that it is "racially non-discriminatory" by showing the existence of at least four of the five following factors:

1. Availability of and granting of scholarships or "other" financial assistance on a "significant" basis to minority students;
2. "Active and vigorous" minority recruitment programs, such as contacting prospective minority students and organizations from which prospective minority students could be identified;
3. An "increasing" percentage of minority student enrollment;
4. Employment of minority teachers or professional staff, or
5. Other "substantial" evidence of good faith, including evidence of a combination of "lesser activities," such as:
 - Continued and "meaningful" advertising programs beyond the requirements of Revenue Procedure 75-50, or "contacts" with minority leaders inviting applications from minority students;
 - Participation with integrated schools in sports, music, and "other" events or activities;
 - Making "school facilities" available to outside, integrated civic or charitable groups;
 - Special "minority-oriented curriculum" or "orientation programs," and
 - Minority "participation" in the founding of the school or current minority board members.

The *Banner*, Dec. 1, 1978, in "Markings" by Buursma, writes:

... Although at first reading the law seems to offer no threat to Christian schools organized long before desegregation of public schools, Dr. Michael T. Ruiters, director of Schools International, dissents. The "position of our Christian schools against racial discrimination is well documented, but for many of us who have always understood that the American system was 'innocent until proven guilty' this is objectionable."

Since the proposal has been made public, thousands of letters have flooded the office of IRS Commissioner Jerome Kurtz expressing concern or outright disapproval. Gary North of Durham, North Carolina, is quoted by the *Presbyterian Journal* as saying that this represents "a desperation move by the secular humanists in the public educational establishment to protect their monopoly."

... George Orwell's 1984 and the specter of "big brother" government encroaching upon us looms ever nearer.

The proposed ruling appears indeed to treat schools as guilty unless and until they prove themselves to be innocent — contrary to all the common understanding of justice in this country. But even worse, there is the threat to the "religious freedom" in this country. If a school is compelled, under the guise of "racial equality," to hire a number of minority teachers, have a number of minority students, elect a number of minority board members, what of our religious principles? Will schools be compelled to do this — even though such can not subscribe to the constitution (requiring agreement with the three forms of unity)? This appears to be the case. Religious freedom is shoved aside while big government insists who can teach, who can attend the schools, who must serve on the school boards.

The threat is not so terrible at present insofar as it only threatens loss of tax-exempt status. I am convinced that we can continue without such tax-exemption. However, any reasonable person can understand that government is not going to stop with this. Soon these same requirements may be demanded if a school is to continue to operate. That is where the "crunch" will be coming.

In the meantime, we ought not to sit idly by. Though the hearings on this IRS proposal should be over by the time you read this article, we can still make known our own convictions on this. Let each write his congressman and senator. Better late than never. And write the Director of Internal Revenue, Internal Revenue Building, 1111 Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C.

The second threat to our schools, and also churches, arises from the event which took place in Guyana — the murder of a congressman and of newsmen, and the following mass "suicides." Recently, an article appeared in the *Grand Rapids Press*,

Dec. 6, 1978 entitled, "Backlash Against Religion Feared in Wake of Jonestown Tragedy." The article states in part,

Fear of a backlash against all religions has spurred some leaders of major denominations to come to the defense of smaller, fringe groups in the aftermath of the Jonestown tragedy. Some officials say that a wave of investigations, new laws, financial restrictions and public hostility against the small groups could expand into widespread reaction against all sects. A few incidents have already been reported.

"One man's faith is another man's fraud," said the Rev. Dr. Dean Kelley, an official in the National Council of the Churches of Christ, who added, "I'm afraid it's going to be open season on the so-called cults."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints recently said that a new form of paganism — which he called "irreligion" — might soon become the state of religion. He added, "This new irreligious imperialism seeks to disallow certain people's opinions simply because those opinions grow out of religious convictions."

What has this to do with our churches and schools? One can sense a certain mood in the country which suggests less and less tolerance toward religion — especially when it is contrary to that commonly held. There seems to be a questioning of the "right" to maintain small churches and little organizations. But worse, there seems to be increasing the denial of the "right" of parents to instruct their children. In the Guyana affair, commentators who conceded that it was an individual's "right" to believe as he would, yet insisted that no one has the "right" to force those beliefs upon his children. The argument seems defensible in the Guyana affair. What "right" do parents have to teach their children an obligation to mass suicide when the time comes? What right have they to command their children to swallow poison? Obviously, none. But I am rather certain that this whole argument is going to be used also against our Christian education of children. It will be said that we have no "right" to separate our children from the rest of those within the country; that we have no right to instruct ("brainwash," some say) our children in the truths we hold dear. It is being said more frequently that children should be confronted with the various alternatives — and allowed to choose for themselves.

Indeed, the days of the antichrist are at hand. This ought to impress upon us the urgency of teaching our children faithfully while we yet may in relative freedom. Such opportunities may not long be given us.

Another case of attack against Christian schools appears rebuffed for the time being. As reported in the *Presbyterian Journal*, Nov. 22, 1978, the case went as follows:

Members of the Kentucky Board for Elementary and Secondary Education have unanimously voted to appeal an Oct. 4 ruling limiting their jurisdiction over private Christian Schools.

In the ruling, Franklin Circuit Court Judge Henry Meigs had stated that regulation of such schools by state board, except for minimum fire, health, safety and attendance requirements, violates the state and federal constitutions.

Henry Pogue Jr., who chairs the board, indicated

that the case might eventually have to be taken to the U.S. Supreme Court because of the issues involved.

The controversy arose last year when state officials said children attending unaccredited Christian schools are considered truants and their parents are subject to criminal prosecution. The Kentucky Association of Christian Schools filed a suit against the state agency, and Judge Meigs issued a temporary injunction against the state last year. His recent ruling made the injunction permanent.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

I Corinthians

God is Faithful

Rev. J. Kortering

This letter of Paul is rich in pastoral concern. The church of Corinth had need of the shepherding presence of Christ. There were many sins in that church that cried to the God of righteousness. The faithful members must have been discouraged with their brethren. Paul himself must have sighed more than once when he learned of the sins committed by the membership.

What must Paul do as a pastor? He must write a practical letter. No, he does not want to come with a rod (chapter 4:21). He comes to them with the Word of God, brought in love and tenderness, full of Christian restraint. The great theme of this message is *God is faithful!* Twice he refers to this promise (1:9) and (10:13). With God, all things are possible, also in giving the grace needed to deal with such a weak congregation. The faithfulness of God assures the effective ministry of the Word.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE EPISTLE

The church of Corinth began when Paul visited Corinth on his second missionary journey. While he and Silas had intended to go into Asia, the Spirit suffered them not (Acts 16:6). Instead, the vision of

the Macedonian Man was given to Paul with the urgent request, "Come over and help us," Acts 16:9. The Holy Spirit blessed Paul's ministry in Macedonia. Corinth was a city in Greece to which Paul and Silas and also Timothy went to preach. It was, however, not just another city. Corinth was an acropolis (city built upon a rock) which was strategically located for the military security of the entire area. It was also the center of commerce, since it was on the isthmus which joined the peninsula with the mainland. It also was beautifully adorned for comfortable living.

Besides being prosperous and well populated, the city was infamous for its sinful ways. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* has this to say: "At night it was made hideous by the brawls and lewd songs of drunken revelry. In the daytime its markets and squares swarmed with Jewish peddlers, foreign traders, sailors, soldiers, athletes in training, boxing, wrestlers, charioteers, racing-men, betting-men, courtesans, slaves, idlers, and parasites of every description. The corrupting worship of Aphrodite, with its hordes of hierodouloi (temple prostitutes) was dominant and all over the Gr-Rom world. 'To behave as a Corinthian' was a proverbial synonym for

leading a low, shameless, and immoral life.”

No wonder Paul wrote, “And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling,” (2:3). What missionary and new pastor does not have that same fear when he takes up labor in a large, strange city? Who is able to bring the gospel to such a people? Where does one begin? What does one do and what must he say? This letter gives us many worthwhile insights into Paul’s missionary methods while at the same time it sets forth his pastoral concern for the church newly established.

According to Acts 18:2, Paul sought out tent-makers, since that was his occupation. He made acquaintance with Aquilla and Priscilla who were tentmakers. Through this contact, Paul soon had opportunity to preach in the Jewish synagogue. By the grace of God Crispus and Sosthenes, chief rulers in the synagogue, believed. It did not take long before the usual opposition came from the Jews; but the house of Justus, a proselyte, was opened to him, and in that home he preached to both Jews and Gentiles. A church was organized and Paul labored among them for 18 months.

Part of Paul’s labors on his third missionary journey was to spend three years working in Ephesus. It was during this time that Paul heard about the spiritual condition of the church at Corinth. Undoubtedly, Apollos and Sosthenes, who continued to labor in Corinth, kept Paul informed on the situation in the church. Paul also received word from the house of Chloe (1:11). What impressed him most was an official letter from the congregation which contained questions seeking his advice (7:1, 8:1, 12:1, 16:1). This letter was brought to him personally by three men, Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17). This gave occasion for Paul to write this letter and to deal with the problems that concerned them. The year for this letter is estimated to be A.D. 55, about three years after his first visit to Corinth.

A MESSAGE OF CORRECTION

Taking into consideration the nature of the problems raised in this letter, it is comforting to examine Paul’s address (1:1-9). He identifies himself as Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the church of God at Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints. He commends them for their faithful use of Christ’s gifts (1:7). There is a lesson here for us: before we deal with the sins of God’s people and of Christ’s church, we must focus on the evidence of God’s grace and see what good there is. This will put us in the proper frame of mind to keep our spiritual balance.

The importance of this can be seen in the problems raised in the letter which came to Paul from the congregation. These were big problems. Some dealt

with marriage, others with eating meat offered to idols, and with the use of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues. In addition to these, other issues were brought to Paul’s attention by other people. These included: party strife, incest by a member and lack of discipline, lawsuits between members, the rule of women in the church, abuse of the Lord’s Supper, the doctrine of the resurrection denied. Which one of our pastors would like to accept a call to the church of Corinth? Is Paul furious? Listen, “I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you in Jesus Christ,” (1:4). That’s evidence of a true pastor!

Let’s follow the counsel which Paul as an instrument of the Holy Spirit now gives to them and to us today.

1. Divisions in the church and the need to bow before the gospel of Christ (1:10-4:21). There were parties in the church who created division by following certain leaders. Some followed Paul, probably the Gentile element. Others followed Apollos, who was eloquent and polished. Still others were of Cephas, perhaps the Jewish members of the church. And finally others said they followed Christ — it might be that they had heard Christ preach and claimed more authority, or they were disgusted with all the rest and insisted they should all follow Christ (1:12). Paul instructed them by pointing out that ministers of the gospel are not like philosophers who have their schools of followers about them. Instead they are servants of Christ who direct their attention to their Lord and Master (1:10-17). Because this is true, ministers are not in competition with each other; rather they complement one another in their service of Christ (3:1-8). The success of the ministry does not lie within the power of the minister, but with the Holy Spirit Who gives him the means whereby he builds the temple of God (3:9-33). Hence the congregation must evaluate the minister, not on the basis of natural talents, but on the evidence of his being a faithful servant of Christ (4:1-21). What makes a faithful servant of Christ? Two things: the message he brings is Christ and Him crucified and not the wisdom of the Greeks; and the communication of that message is by preaching and not dialogue common to Greek philosophy (1:18-31). By following this instruction, the minister will flee foolish pride, and the congregation will avoid party strife. The entire congregation will be thankful for each minister that Christ gives to the church.

2. The sin of incest and its related lack of discipline (5:1-13). A member of the church of Corinth had married his father’s wife (vs. 1). We note that there was a variety of sexual evils present in this congregation. Corinth was well known for its fornication and adultery associated with the worship of

Aphrodite. Some members of the church were recently converted from heathenism, and this explains why these sins were as pronounced as they were in Corinth. This man's sin was in that he married (he had, vs. 1) his father's wife (stepmother). This was incest as forbidden by the law of God (Lev. 18:8) and so terrible that even the heathen abhorred it. Yet the church of Corinth did not discipline this member. Paul ascribes this lack to their pride, vs. 2, for discipline of a member of the church involves *mutual* acknowledgment of sin, something pride detests. He therefore exhorts them to proceed with public excommunication with the acknowledgment that if such a person does not repent, he will continue in the grasp of Satan and be lost. He presents two reasons why this is so necessary: first, to lead such a gross sinner to repentance. Paul did not lose sight of the fact that discipline is positive, unto salvation, vs. 5. The second reason is that the church may remain pure, since such discipline will remove from her midst the evil leaven, vs. 7. Even as the Old Testament Church kept the feast of Unleavened Bread, acknowledging the putting away of sin, so the New Testament Church must observe a daily feast by putting away the evil leaven of sin out of their lives. Paul quickly adds that this does not mean that the Corinthians may not have any dealing with the wicked people of the city; rather this concerns those who claim to be members of the body of Christ but do not walk in sanctification (vs. 10).

3. Going to law before the heathen (4:1-11). There were legal squabbles between members of the congregation. These pertained to property rights, debts, and such like. In anger, they had law suits against each other to try to reclaim what they considered to be their lawful property. Paul forbids this for three reasons. First, considering that they themselves will one day judge the heathen and even

preside over angels, vs. 2, 3, they should be ashamed that they even need heathen judges. Shame on them that they can't settle these matters among themselves. Second, being converted, how can they esteem the heathen rather than their fellow members when it comes to securing justice, vs. 4-6. They should call on someone from their own midst to help settle differences. Thirdly, their spirit is wrong: they are determined to get their rights at any cost. They should rather consider all the implications of such a public hassle between Christians and rather take loss than make the name of Christ a public reproach, vs. 7.

He then turns the tables and points to those who cause these offenses in the first place. Why is it necessary for some members of the church to go to court against fellow members? The answer is that some members are guilty of defrauding their brothers. This is serious, for the unrighteous shall not enter into the kingdom, vs. 9, 10. Rather, they should live as those who are sanctified in Christ, vs. 11.

The point that we should see in this admonition about not going to court is this: *Christians* should not go to court against each other. It may be necessary when dealing with the ungodly to appeal to the law for protection. Paul appealed to Caesar also. So also the church may seek the protection of law against some unlawful attempt to tax, to confiscate property, and such like. It is altogether different when members of the church, who profess to follow Christ, do this. The main thrust in such instances is that they should seek to find some leader, some wise and respected one out of their midst who can moderate the differences and resolve them amongst each other. It is even better to suffer wrong than cast public abuse upon the church of Christ or fellow Christians by means of such lawsuits.

(to be continued)



Book Reviews

DAYLIGHT (Daily Readings with the Bible), by Andrew Kuyvenhoven; Paideia Press, 1977; 376 pp., \$5.95 (paper), (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This book contains 365 one-page meditations on different texts out of the Scriptures to be used for daily devotions. Many of them were formerly prepared for "Today" (once called "Family Altar"). They are generally divided into subjects such as "Living with God," "The Gospel according to Paul," etc. Some, quite naturally, are better than others; most are not of an exegetical nature but are rather brief meditations "hanged on" a given text; all tend to be practical rather than doctrinal. They can be read with profit by those who enjoy devotional literature.

I BELIEVE IN EVANGELISM, by David Watson; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977; 188 p., \$2.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This is another book of the "I believe" series put out by Eerdmans Publishing Co. and edited by Michael Green. Evangelism is defined by the author as follows: "To evangelize is so to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through him, to accept him as their Saviour, and serve him as their King in the fellowship of his Church." The author believes that most evangelistic efforts are fruitless and discusses how effective evangelism can be performed. He believes in the special gifts of the Spirit as effective tools for evangelism, speaks of the social dimension of evangelistic work, and pleads for changes in church structure, for the use of modern communications and for various art forms as means to press this work. The problem of the book is the failure of the author to accept the authority of the New Testament in the whole area of evangelism and in the proper use of method.

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by

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

This is a 108-page booklet containing a complete set of outlines on the Book of Acts. These outlines were compiled and reproduced from a series which appeared in *Beacon Lights* in the 1950s. They are well-suited as a guide and help in society Bible discussions. Each section is briefly introduced, and then follows an outline in question form. Price: \$3.95

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RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Mary-Martha Society of the Redlands Protestant Reformed Church, expresses its sincere sympathy to two of its members, Mrs. John Ekema and Mrs. Everett Van Voorthuysen in the loss of their mother and mother-in-law, MRS. EVERETT VAN VOORTHUYSEN.

May God comfort, strengthen and sustain them and their families by His Word and Spirit.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. J. Kortering, Pres.
Mrs. Dennis Van Uffelen, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan, expresses its Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Dale Mensch, in the loss of his father, REV. HERMAN MENSCH, on December 7, 1978.

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

Rev. W. Bruinsma, Pres.
Mr. R. Noorman, Sec'y.-Treas.

News From Our Churches

Our Southeast Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan has extended a call to Rev. Jason Kortering of Redlands, California, to serve as their pastor.

The Mission Committee of our churches has decided to begin preaching services in Charlotte, Michigan beginning January 7, 1979, at the request of four families there.

The Foreign Mission Committee has requested through the consistories of Hope Church in Walker, Michigan, and Doon (Iowa) that permission be given for Rev. Marvin Kamps and Elder Dewey Engelsma to go to Singapore. Apparently permission has been given, as present plans are for these two men to leave in early January. They expect to labor in Singapore for a two month period. Last Spring Elder Engelsma and Rev. James Slopsema of Edgerton, Minnesota, spent several weeks in Singapore working with a large group of young people who expressed interest in the Reformed faith and in the work and teaching of our churches.

The above items were all gathered from the Hudsonville Bulletin — a veritable gold mine of information — at least in the December 10th edition.

Hudsonville has undertaken a very interesting project in that they have engaged the professional services of a local studio to supply the church with a colored pictorial directory. The committee which is in charge of this project states that "this directory, complete with names, addresses and telephone numbers, will be a valuable asset to our church, particularly the new families." The committee has distributed a nine point list of guidelines concerning grooming, dress, glasses (to wear or not to wear) which appear to be quite complete. This should be a very fine directory. Each church family that sits for their photograph will receive a free directory. The studio hopes to make a profit on this venture by selling portraits to those who wish them.

A group of about 50 alumni of Covenant Christian High School have formed an Alumni Choir. The choir presented an evening of music for the holiday season after the evening service in First Church on Sunday, December 3. It was apparent from the quality of the presentation that these young people were singing because they wanted to. The group plans to continue. Hopefully those of us in the Grand Rapids area can look forward to more fine music from this group. They have asked Mr. Roland Petersen, who was their

choir director at Covenant, to lead them.

Professor Robert Decker of our Seminary gave a lecture in our Randolph, Wisconsin, church on Wednesday, November 15. His topic was "Women in Office." A very timely topic.

The Randolph congregation gathered for a number of worthy occasions during the month of November. In addition to the lecture, the church enjoyed a Fellowship Supper on Friday the 10th. On the Friday after Thanksgiving, the Christian grade school gym was reserved for members of the congregation in order that all might enjoy an evening of recreation and fellowship. It sounds as if these gatherings involved a bit of work on the part of the ladies of the congregation, as they were asked to provide refreshments for the lecture and the gym nite and serve the Fellowship Supper.

There have been quite a number of changes at our Southwest Church of late. The congregation moved into their new church building in August, installed a new pastor in October, and made a number of changes in their order of worship effective Sunday, November 12. These include: that the silent personal prayers before the service are made at the same time by all the members of the congregation, the 'Amen' is now sung at the conclusion of the hymn of praise "Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow," and that the Scripture reading follows the singing of the third Psalter number and just before the announcement of the text upon which the sermon is based. The scripture reading is then followed by the sermon. The Council brought these changes to the congregation supported by a number of rather convincing grounds.

November and December are the months when our churches schedule their annual congregational meetings to elect office bearers and adopt a budget for the coming year. Some of these meetings are scheduled at rather unique times. For instance, our church in Pella, Iowa, holds their annual meeting after the Thanksgiving Day worship service.

Our Reformed Witness Hour has made available a cassette tape of anthems and songs sung by the Reformed Witness Hour Choir on the radio broadcast. Also available is a tape of Psalms. These tapes may be obtained for \$2 each by writing The Reformed Witness Hour, PO Box 1230, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501.

K. G. V.