

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

... All these passages and more indicate that the church “lives in the public eye.” Believers must, therefore, live in such a manner that no reproach, no shame is brought to the gospel or to the name of God. Positively, believers must shine as lights in the world. They are called to witness, to testify of the wonder of grace performed by God in Jesus Christ for them. . . . That witness must go forth also by the lives which they lead.

See “The Believer’s Calling
in Missions” — page 203

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MEDITATION

The Trial of Abraham's Faith

Rev. H. Veldman

"By faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

Heb. 11:17-19

How strange is this event in the life of Abraham! First, he and Sarah must wait twenty-five years before Isaac is born, till both are utterly impotent to bring forth seed. And then this only son must be

offered up to the Lord. This is the climactic event in Abraham's life. This is evident from the epistle of James, James 2:20-24. This holy writer singles out this event in the life of Abraham.

This incident is recorded in Genesis 22. On the one hand, Abraham's response was immediate. Did he inform Sarah of the Lord's command? And, on the other hand, what a journey this must have been to a mountain the Lord would show him!

A MOST SEVERE TRIAL

God here tries or tempts Abraham. He commands him to offer up his only son. We may well ask: how is this possible? How and why did the Lord command him to do such a thing?

The distinction between trials and temptations must not be sought in the word as such. It is stated that the word trial always has a good meaning in Scripture, whereas the word temptation is usually used in an evil sense. And if it be objected that James, in Ch. 1:13-16, speaks of temptations whereas we read in this text that Abraham was tried, we may answer that the word here is the same word as in James 1:13. The distinction between "trials" and "temptations" lies in the one conducting them. When Satan tries or tempts us, puts us to the test, his purpose is always evil, to lead us into evil. But when the Lord tries or tempts us, He does it to purify us. His motive is always good and salutary.

To understand these trials of God's people, we must understand that we are moral-rational creatures. This characterizes God's entire work of salvation. The grace of God does not simply operate *upon* us but *in* us and *through* us. We are made spiritually active in His work of grace. I assume that from the viewpoint of God's power He could save us and lead us into glory without these trials. But this is not God's way. He purposes to purify and strengthen our faith through many trials and temptations.

As far as Abraham is concerned, he was confronted with a two-fold choice. He could either obey God or disobey Him. He could either sacrifice his son and break his heart, or he could obey the natural desires of his heart and spare himself the agony of sacrificing Isaac. He stood before this choice. And the same trials also confront us. It is always either-or. We are always faced with the alternative: walk in the ways of the Lord contrary to our natural desires, or disobey the word of the Lord and satisfy the carnal desires of our flesh.

This trial of Abraham was most severe.

First, he must slay his son. He must not only watch him die. Were we ever at the deathbed of one of our children? What a tremendous agony of heart and soul to watch the agonies of that final death struggle! Abraham, however, must slay his son. He is commanded by God to sacrifice him upon Mount Moriah. He must thrust the knife into his heart or throat.

Secondly, he must slay Isaac, his only begotten. Genesis 22 adds the observation that Isaac is "thine only son whom thou lovest." One may object that Ishmael, too, was Abraham's son. However, Ishmael was only the son of Abraham, not of Abraham and Sarah. Besides, Ishmael was no longer with Abraham; he had been sent away. And, Isaac was his only son, also as far as the covenant is concerned. So, Abraham must sacrifice Isaac, his only begotten, whom he loved.

Thirdly, Isaac was the only hope of the covenant. The text emphasizes this. We read: "Of whom it was said that in Isaac shall thy seed be called." The meaning of this expression is clear. The "seed" here, of course, does not refer merely to Abraham's natural descendants, the Jews. The seed here is Christ and, in Him, all the elect of God throughout the ages. The Church is meant here, the elect church of God, God's covenant people elected from before the foundation of the world. And now Abraham is called to sacrifice this son. He waited twenty-five years for this Wonder Child. Isaac now has become seventeen years of age. He was the delight of Abraham and Sarah. And Abraham must slay him. Remember: none can ever take his place. God's covenant stands or falls with him. This is Abraham's test, imposed upon him by the living God. What a severe trial!

A WONDERFUL FAITH

That Abraham had a struggle is indicated in the text. We read that he accounted. . . . Abraham, therefore, counted, calculated, computed; he considered the pro's and the con's, the things for and against, and concluded that God was able to raise him from the dead.

Abraham experienced this struggle at the very outset. The Lord had commanded him to offer up his son. In Genesis 22:3 we read that he rose up early in the morning. So, by this time the father of believers had accounted that God was able to raise him up. This implies, however, that he had struggled throughout that night, had now come to his decision.

Then, he struggled while enroute to Mount Moriah. What a tedious, tortuous journey this must have been of three days! While on the way, he must have informed Isaac of the purpose of the journey without informing him that he was to be sacrificed. Indeed, had he wished, he could have retraced his steps. Abraham, however, never falters along the way.

And then we have the final scene. Abraham commands his servants to tarry behind with the asses. Enroute to the top of the mount, Isaac asks his father, according to Genesis 22:6-7. Abraham answers him. Did the father of believers in his answer refer to Isaac, or to a sacrifice other than that of his son

which the Lord would provide?

How wonderful is Abraham's victory! Indeed, Abraham offered up Isaac, his only son. The text emphasizes this. We read in verse 17 that he "offered up Isaac," and the word indicates a completed act on the part of Abraham. Of course, this means that to Abraham the deed was as good as accomplished; he beheld his son as sacrificed and slain.

How did he conquer?

First, he accounted that the Lord was able to raise him from the dead. Now we might be inclined to say that it must have been comparatively simple for Abraham to come to this conclusion. Was not Isaac the long awaited one, *the* child of the promise? Would not "in Isaac his seed be called"? Surely, Isaac must live. So, if he must be sacrificed, he must surely be raised from the dead. And God is able to do this.

Simple we say? Yes, provided that we bear one thing in mind, to which we will shortly call attention. But, does this simple, logical conclusion make Abraham's task less difficult? Abraham, we understand, must still contend with himself, and Isaac is his son, his flesh and blood. Does the fact of his being raised lessen the agony of driving the knife into his heart? Besides, why kill him if he will be raised anyway?

And this we may apply to the Church throughout the ages. How often God's people are subjected to cruel tortures! We read of them at the end of Hebrews 11. And we, too, believe that God will raise us from the dead. But, we must contend with our flesh and blood. Are we always ready to submit our bodies to unbelievable and inconceivably cruel tortures?

Secondly, Abraham gained this victory by faith. And faith, in Hebrews 11, and also in this text, is the evidence of things unseen and the substance of things hoped for. After all, he must slay Isaac, and that means the absolute end. Beyond this, Abraham could not see; he dealt with things invisible. His conclusion concerning Isaac's resurrection was not a conclusion of reason, but of faith. Besides, never had a resurrection occurred in the history of the world and of the church. But he believed in God and in His

promise. This faith drew from the father of believers the conviction that God would raise Isaac from the dead. And this applies also to the Church throughout the ages. To believe is contrary to the flesh, a taking hold of the invisible. We must believe that God is, that He loves us, that all our sins are forgiven, that a life awaits us in heavenly glory and immortality. And all these things are invisible, contrary to all that we see, also contrary to our flesh.

A GLORIOUS FRUIT

What a glorious fruit for Abraham! First, he also received him in a figure. He had really sacrificed his son, in his mind and thoughts. And now, not actually, but in a figure, also in his thoughts, he received him again from the dead. He not only saw Isaac as slain, but also as raised from the dead. Secondly, Abraham experienced the strengthening of his faith. Now this is always God's purpose when He tempts or tries His people. And thus it was with Abraham. A man becomes physically stronger as he exercises. This is also spiritually true. It is for this purpose that these trials are necessary. As we are tempted and endure and experience the wondrous power of God to sustain us in our trials we grow and are strengthened. We do not grow in the knowledge of what *we* can do, but only in what faith, God's gift, can enable us to do. And, receiving Isaac from the dead as in a figure, Abraham also received from God the blessed revelation that it was the will of God, not only to call his seed in Isaac, but also that this would occur in the way of death and resurrection. Indeed, the father of believers saw Christ's day afar off and he rejoiced in it.

And for us? Beneficial and blessed are the afflictions and trials of the people of God. They always serve the strengthening of our faith. Enduring them we experience the power of God's grace anew. They serve to purify us. They enable us to count all things but loss for the sake of Christ. They serve to impress upon us the folly of the things below and the glory of what awaits us. And, tried by fire as silver and gold, we believe that all the sufferings of this present time are never to be compared with the glory that shall follow. Indeed, we are always more than conquerors through Christ Who loved us.

THE STANDARD BEARER

is a thoughtful gift for a "Shut-in".



Editor's Notes

Price Increase. The pressures of inflation have forced the Board of the R.F.P.A. to increase the subscription price of our *Standard Bearer* to \$9.00 per year. Substantial increases in publishing costs at every level make this necessary. We trust that our readers will understand and will realize that at less than 50¢ per issue the *Standard Bearer* is still a good magazine bargain. Let me take this opportunity also to suggest and urge that our churches inflate their collections for the Standard Bearer.

* * * *

Book Close-out. As noted before, our Publications Committee is in need of hard cash to proceed with various publishing projects. Inflation is striking in this area also. In order to realize some cash, the RFPA Publications Committee announces the following:

1) A bargain basement close-out on *God's Covenant Faithfulness*. All remaining copies of this book, which will *not* be reprinted, will be sold for \$2.95. Since this is already a 50% discount, this price is not subject to a further RFPA Book Club discount.

2) We have a small number of copies of *Reformed Dogmatics* and *Behold, He Cometh!* on hand which are still available at the old price of \$9.95, subject to Book Club discount. Both of these books are already in process of reprinting, but inflation is forcing us to increase the price of both to \$12.95. If you want a bargain, hurry! The old price will hold only as long as the supply lasts.

* * * *

Begging for Help! Our next large RFPA book will be my *The Voice Of Our Fathers (An Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht)*. It is already in process, but cannot be completed until we have more cash on hand. It is estimated that the total cost of this project will be in the neighborhood of \$14,000. Since the beginning of our organization we have not asked for contributions. But we could surely use some good-sized gifts right now. I am thinking in terms of gifts of \$500 or \$1000. This would speed up our publishing process. We do have several projects on our waiting list! Send your gifts to: RFPA Publications Committee, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, MI. 49501.

EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Why?

From time to time I receive inquiries, both orally and in writing, as to why the *Standard Bearer* speaks out critically and sometimes rather sharply on various issues related to the subject of the free offer of the gospel and common grace. Occasionally it is not even inquiries which I receive, but rather bluntly critical accusations. Some will inquire as to why, when various other publications express themselves in one way or another in favor of the well-meant offer, the *Standard Bearer* speaks out often in reply and criticism. Others inquire as to what we hope to

accomplish by speaking out. They ask, for example, whether I hope to convince men like Dr. Daane or Dr. Boer of their error. Or do I hope to convince Pastor Hulse, of *Reformation Today*, that he is on the wrong track? Or do I hope to make the Christian Reformed denomination see the error of its way? Others are averse to controversy in our columns, quite in general. Still others express that controversy with respect to "liberals" is all right, but that with respect to the "conservative" family controversy and criticism are to be avoided.

Hence, although upon occasion I have dealt with these and similar questions before, it may be helpful to do so again and in greater detail.

First of all, and from a purely practical point of view, it happens from time to time that we write on a controversial subject because we are *asked* to do so. Sometimes a reader-friend will send us a church paper or a clipping to call it to our attention. Sometimes a reader will specifically ask us to reflect on a certain writing. Thus, for example, when several months ago I commented on a couple articles in *Reformation Today* which were plainly Arminian, this was in response to an urgent request from a reader in England who has learned to know our *Standard Bearer* as a champion of the Reformed faith. And when we receive such requests to write on crucial issues, we try to be helpful.

In the second place, why do we write? Because others write, and because it is our perfect right to reply and to take issue. It seems a bit strange and inconsistent that there are those who have no objection when in certain quarters men promote their errant views on such a subject as the general, well-meant offer of the gospel (free offer), but take great umbrage when a magazine such as ours takes issue and sharply contends against such writings. Simple fairness would seem to dictate that we have as much right to write and to be read on such issues as those of opposite views.

In the third place, we write not only because we consider it our right to do so, but still more because we consider it our calling and our duty. This is true, first of all, quite in general. It is our calling to condemn and expose the lie and to vindicate the truth. But more specifically, this is our calling particularly with respect to those aspects of our Reformed faith which are most intimately connected with our origin and history as Protestant Reformed people, and therefore with respect to those errors which are most intimately connected with that origin and history. I refer to the truth that God's grace is sovereign and particular, for the elect alone, never common. I refer to the truth that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth, that it is the sure and unconditional promise of God to the elect alone, never a mere, general offer, dependent on the will of those who hear. I refer to the truth of the antithesis, the truth of world-fight, as over against either the error of synthesis and amalgamation or the error of world-flight. I refer to the truth of total depravity, the truth that the natural man is incapable of any good and inclined to all evil by nature, as over against the error that the natural man by a non-saving operation of the Holy Spirit is capable of doing much good. It is for the vindication of these truths that our *Standard*

Bearer was called into being; and it is for the exposure and refutation of these errors that our *Standard Bearer* was called into being. Though times have changed, and though there has been development both with respect to the truth and with respect to the lie, principally the battle is the same and our calling is the same. And as the Lord gives us grace, we shall be faithful to that calling. Should we fail, the *Standard Bearer* would lose its reason for existence.

But there is another viewpoint from which we may ask this question, "Why?"

We may ask it from the point of view of our readership. With respect to our readers, why do we write about these matters, matters of concern in other churches and in other magazines, matters which might seem to some to be of no concern to us, and perhaps even none of our business?

In the first place, taking into consideration the fact that by far the largest part of our readers is Protestant Reformed, we answer that we write for their instruction. They must know what is going on. And this is particularly true with respect to the very issues which I mentioned above. Why? In general, because these controversial issues directly concern our heritage. Specifically, this is true because we do not live in isolation, but in close contact with others, outside of our small Protestant Reformed circle. This makes it imperative that we know what we believe, that we understand the times, that we are aware of the issues, and that we discern the connection between various errors in 1980 and the errors of 1924. This is even more imperative when we take into account the passing of generations. The generation which has to any degree a direct knowledge of the events and issues which brought about the origin of our churches is almost gone. New generations, the second and the third and even the fourth, are taking their place. It ought to be a matter of great concern to us — to our pulpits, to our catechism rooms, to our parents, to our schools — to see to it that these new generations know and understand thoroughly what being Protestant Reformed is all about. And it is one of the chief concerns of our *Standard Bearer* to assist in this.

Closely connected with this, in the second place, stands the fact that in a negative kind of way the history and developments of the present are vindicating our Protestant Reformed battle of 1924 and our stance today. I have referred to this phenomenon before. In 1924 and the years immediately thereafter, our leaders warned and prophesied that inherent in the Three Points of Common Grace there was a denial of particular atonement, and that some day the error of general atonement would rear its ugly head in the Christian Reformed Church. That prophecy came true with the Dekker Case of the 1960s. In those

same years our leaders warned that implicit in the First Point of Common Grace was a denial of sovereign reprobation, and that some day this error would be openly expressed. That prophecy is coming true today before our very eyes.

Now when the *Standard Bearer* calls attention to these things, this is not merely by way of warning to what is after all a very limited Christian Reformed readership. But it is for our own instruction. And it is for our own encouragement. For the very fact that these prophetic words of a Hoeksema and an Ophoff of yesteryear are fulfilled is a very strong and clear indication that they saw correctly with respect to the Three Points. It is a vindication of their position — and ours.

But there is more.

Although our circulation is small, there is nevertheless a considerable number of readers of our magazine outside our Protestant Reformed denomination. These readers are found throughout our own country and Canada. They are found in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands and Australasia and South Africa and Singapore and elsewhere, throughout the world. They are found among Reformed and Presbyterian and Reformed Baptist people.

And we have something to say to them. I dare say that it is something which they cannot hear from others — not because we are better than others, but because of the peculiar struggle and history of our Protestant Reformed movement. Perhaps some of our readers are surprised and even taken aback — and possibly even mistakenly offended from time to time — at our incessant battle and our controversy against the free offer and its proponents. They ought not to be, but in a way I can understand this.

Let me point out to such readers, in the first place, that we occupy a unique position as Protestant Reformed Churches. I know of no other Reformed denomination which has been through the doctrinal struggle through which we passed in 1924, which continued as a denomination ever since that time, which passed through a closely related doctrinal crisis

again in 1953, which was compelled in the process of that struggle to develop the Reformed truth positively and to defend it, and which continued to exist in close proximity to the mother denomination which expelled us for the sake of the truth. By God's grace we have consistently maintained our position as churches.

Closely connected with this, in the second place, stands the fact that in the course of our struggle we have had the opportunity to observe firsthand the devastating effects of the doctrine of a free offer. As I mentioned earlier, in our mother church it has led to the further errors of general atonement and a denial of sovereign reprobation. Do you wonder, then, that we speak out sharply against this error, no matter by whom it is promoted? I know there are those who do not deem the matter so important, who have thought the *Standard Bearer* was too sharp in its polemics. There are those who like to be satisfied with being conservatively Reformed, or Presbyterian, in a general kind of way, those who fear the divisiveness of an issue of this kind, those who think we should be satisfied with being evangelically Reformed without being polemical and without attacking those who take an opposite stand with respect to common grace and the free offer. But let them consider the fact that ultimately this is impossible. And let them consider the fact that we of the Protestant Reformed denomination are able to speak from *experience*. We know from experience and from observation that it is impossible ultimately to deviate or to maintain a weak stand or a neutral stand or even a discreet silence with respect to the error of the free offer and at the same time to maintain such fundamentals of the Reformed faith as particular atonement and sovereign predestination. Eventually he who attempts to hold to a two-track theology will be forced to the point of either . . . or.

To witness of these things, both within and without our Protestant Reformed circle, is one of the primary tasks of our *Standard Bearer*.

Pay attention!

Test-tube Babies

This issue has now come home in concrete form to our country. Not long ago there were news headlines concerning the success of attempts in England to produce a "test-tube baby." It was to be expected that before long this scientific "advance" would result in a proliferation of attempts by medical science to imitate this feat, and that before long the

attempt would be made in our own country also to experiment with the production of such "test-tube babies." Recently it was reported that in one of our eastern states approval was granted for the establishment of a lab, or clinic, devoted to this purpose. You may depend on it that this is but a beginning, and that the attempts to promote what is called "in vitro

fertilization" (the fertilization of a human egg outside of the womb in a test-tube, followed by the implanting of the thus initiated fetus in a woman's womb) will multiply.

Ironically, is it not, that the same society which promotes unlimited abortion and murders countless infants in the womb also promotes the production of such test-tube babies? And is it not ironic, too, that the very production of a test-tube baby involves (see below) abortion?

Yes, the Lord snares the wicked world in its own worldly wisdom and wickedness.

From time to time we receive a little paper called *National Christian Action Coalition ALERT*. The December, 1979 issue carried an article from which we think it worthwhile to quote at length.

The article begins as follows:

The traditional Christian family, as we know it, is quickly becoming a memory. One of every two marriages now ends in divorce. The increase in the use of contraceptives has made procreation purely voluntary, rather than natural and affectional. Feminist Betty Friedan applauds "the pill" as one of the most important scientific developments of this century, for it made the "women's liberation" movement possible. In the last decade, we have seen the family further eroded by public acceptance of "alternative lifestyles," "open marriages," "no-fault divorce," cohabitation, and public promotion of "non-traditional families."

The article then goes on to quote the opinion of a Dr. William Marshner, Chairman of the Department of Theology at Christendom College, as follows:

"such is the societal tinder to which today another major innovation, the test tube baby, may well apply the match. Alterations of the style in which human life is transmitted have come closer and closer, through layer after social layer, to the biochemical core of the process itself. Now, with the test tube baby, it is no longer a question of not choosing the family but of obsolescing it technologically.

"For the first time, human gametes, utterly disengaged from the persons at their source, can circulate freely and congregate *in vitro*. Embryos so initiated can be transferred to the womb of any woman willing, or coerced. Famous persons can be paid handsome fees to put their sperm or their ova into circulation. An ordinary woman, living a dull life in middle America, can begin to ask herself new questions, remarkably independent of her love life or even of her marriage: When she wants a child, shall she go to bed, or shall she go to the lab? Shall she 'know' a man she knows, or shall she conceive by a man she admires? Shall her child spring from a man as ordinary as herself or from the seed sold at the International All-Star Sperm Bank, a subsidiary of Upjohn?

"With such thoughts and plenty of private capital, eugenic crusades, heretofore distastefully elitist and repressive, can be given a show-business sparkle. Moreover, laboratory embryos can be transferred to the wombs of lesbian women, repealing the law as old as protoplasm which binds maternity to heterosexuality.

"Or, more ominously still, the same technique of embryo transfer can be nationalized and employed solely by government license, to give children to women previously sterilized by government decision. The *total* control of population can become government policy.

"But if this latest step toward societal mutation, or, to change the figure, this match against the tinder of a nation already, in the long view of history, reproductively abnormal, is to be kindled by federal grants for research on *in vitro* fertilization and embryo transfer, in this year when the first test-tube baby was successfully carried to term in England, it will not be done in the name of vast possibilities like these, nor will it be averted by prophetic cries against them. The technique for winning public acceptance for morally dubious policy innovations is by now familiar. Attention is distracted from the long, historical perspective and the broad, social impact; attention is concentrated on a small number of hard cases. Advocates of abortion law reform hammered away at the rape case, the incest case, the case of severe damage to maternal health. Today the advocates of *in vitro* fertilization and the back-up research to perfect it are ethically acceptable."

Perhaps some of the above may be deemed imaginative. Nevertheless the tremendous potential for evil involved in this newest success of medical science is vividly pointed out.

The article concludes by pointing to the evil of abortion involved in the very production of test-tube babies, as follows:

Why are we opposed? Other than the clear anti-family indication expressed above, *in vitro* fertilization opens the door to mass-produced abortions. Human life begins at the point of fertilization. These "researchers" and doctors who are experimenting with test tube babies don't just fertilize one egg; they work with several, choose the "best"; and destroy the rest. These eugenic abortions are based solely on human judgment. The child is treated as a consumer object whose worth depends on the color of its eyes, its sex, and "healthy" appearance.

The ethical and moral implications of *in vitro* fertilization are staggering. . . .

Certainly, no child of God can be lured by this latest medical advance.

When you have the opportunity, raise your voice against its promotion and approval — on Christian grounds.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

February 1, 1980

Dear Timothy,

We were talking about the power with which we are endowed by God to know ourselves. You will recall that we ended our last letter with a discussion of the apparent conflict between the Scriptural injunction on the one hand to live lives of self-forgetfulness, and on the other to be constantly busy with knowing ourselves in some sense — as in self-examination.

Now, before we attempt to resolve this problem, we ought to be reminded of something else which Scripture says concerning us. Scripture tells us, in one way or another, that we cannot really know ourselves. Scripture is rather insistent upon this point. And the main reason why we cannot know ourselves is *sin*. Just plain sin. Sin makes it impossible to know ourselves as we truly are.

There are several ways in which Scripture drives this point home to us. For one thing, Jeremiah writes in chapter 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Now, it is true that the prophet means here that the depths of depravity in man are so great that it is impossible for anyone to plumb these depths. We are always surprised at how evil man really is. But the prophet means also to say that this is true of each man personally. He is so desperately wicked that he cannot even see his own sins and the depths of his depravity. He cannot know himself as he truly is.

It is for this reason that one of the chief characteristics of men is that while they have 20/20 vision when it comes to seeing the faults, weaknesses, and sins in others, they are totally blind when it comes to seeing their own faults. You have yourself

seen it happen time and time again (perhaps in your own life) that people will condemn fiercely faults in others of which they are themselves especially guilty. Jesus has this very thing in mind when he warns: “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” (Mat. 7:3-5.) Jesus means to say here, not only that we have beams in our own eyes which need casting out; he means to say, not only that these *beams* are much larger than the small *motes* in the eye of our brother; but He also means to say that we cannot possibly see what is wrong with our brother until we have taken out of our lives the sins which are present with us. Only when we first get the beam out of our own eye will we be able to see the mote which is in our brother’s eye. But it is so terribly hard to see that beam in our own eye. And, as long as we do not see the beam in our own eye, we cannot see clearly even whether the brother has a mote in his eye.

The same thing is true of self-examination. We cannot really examine ourselves at all. This is a spiritual impossibility simply because it is a spiritual exercise. Sin is so totally devastating that it makes us spiritually blind. We are, because of our sin, so blind that we cannot see our sin. If we are to examine ourselves, we need a spiritual power which we do not possess of ourselves. This must come from God. That is why the unregenerated man can never confess the truth of total depravity. And, indeed, the truth of total depravity makes him furiously angry. Even the regenerated child of God has a great deal of trouble

with this when it becomes concrete. He probably has no trouble with the truth of total depravity as an abstract doctrine. But there is nothing which makes people so angry as to have their own sins pointed out to them. They have a natural inclination to rebel against this. Everyone of us has a lot of Arminianism in himself when it comes to the truth of total depravity as applied to his own life.

Two things are necessary if we are really to examine ourselves. One is that we have the Holy Spirit within ourselves Who gives to us the spiritual ability to do this; the other is that we always examine ourselves in the light of Scripture. These two are really the same. Together they mean that only the Holy Spirit can tell us the kind of people we really are. The Holy Spirit tells us objectively in the Scriptures. Apart from the Scriptures we can never form an accurate and correct picture of ourselves. Apart from the Scriptures we will always think of ourselves as better than we really are. But the Scriptures tell things about us which are really true. They tell it as it really is. And the Holy Spirit, by His work within our hearts, imprints that truth upon our self-consciousness. The Holy Spirit makes what is objectively set forth in Scripture a truth which we truly appropriate and confess. And it is this which leads inevitably to confession of sin and a deep cry for forgiveness.

This is the reason why The Psalmist, as, e.g., in Psalm 139:23, 24, prays: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." The Psalmist is not praying this prayer that God may acquire some information about us which He does not possess. But it is only in this way of God's searching and trying that we are able to know ourselves.

Now there is an important principle here which concerns our entire mental and spiritual well-being. There are, on one extreme, people who in a bad sense of the word never seem to give a thought to themselves. Sometimes these people are reckless and easily endanger their own lives. They seem so utterly unconcerned about themselves that they foolishly plunge into every kind of danger without giving any thought about what it will do to them. They are, what we sometimes call, scatterbrained and irresponsible. There is often in these people, however, a deep selfishness — even though it is hidden. It is a selfishness which manifests itself in a proud disdain for their own safety and well-being but which is rooted in a desire to appear before men as brave and courageous. There is, often in these people, a recklessness which is born out of a desire to be "thrilled" by one new experience after another. And so, even though it seems as if they are self-forgetting, this is a

facade which covers up a deep selfishness after all.

But there are also people who are inordinately preoccupied with themselves. Sometimes this is sheer selfishness. Their motto in life is: "Me first, and the devil take the hindmost." They are so totally absorbed in themselves that they seek only their well-being, their comfort, their enjoyment, their pleasure. This is a very great evil. It especially characterizes our age. Again and again *Time* magazine, to cite but one example, calls our present times, times of individualism. And by this fancy euphemism, *Time* means only that we live in times when every man is concerned only about himself and gives no thought to anyone else.

There are people who are preoccupied with their health. They are so concerned about their health that they are always sick with something or other. They are called hypochondriacs and they make it possible for doctors to live a good life with large incomes.

There are people who are preoccupied with their own life. They are always worried about every aspect of their life. They are the ones who are always taking these foolish and stupid tests in the *Readers Digest*: "Is your marriage healthy? If your score is 20 or better, you have a healthy marriage. If your score is below 12, you had better see a marriage counsellor." They are preoccupied with following all the rules in bringing up children. They read manual after manual, column after newspaper column. And, because every man has a different idea and a different program, they are always mixed up and never know what is right and what is wrong. But they are sure something is wrong. And the more they read, the more certain they become that things are not right.

They are preoccupied with their mental health. They are always engaging in some sort of self-analysis, some kind of self-psychoanalysis, and they find all sorts of things to be wrong with them. You have no doubt been struck with the fact that it is not at all unusual for people who have mental problems to be so completely absorbed in themselves that they cannot hear anything else but what immediately concerns themselves. You often have the feeling: if only they would forget themselves once, they would be cured of all their mental problems. But they are trapped in a vicious circle of thinking so completely of themselves that they are bound to find something or other wrong. They analyze and ponder every thought, every desire, every motive, every action, every event to find some significance in it which will lead to a greater understanding of self. Modern psychology is, in large measure, geared to such self-understanding. "Know yourself!" That's the watchword of today's world.

This sort of a thing leads to untold grief and

countless problems. And we must learn to put a stop to this. But how?

The solution to the problem lies in the Word of God. Every bit of our knowledge of ourselves must come from the Word of God. We must fasten ourselves to that Word. We must always see ourselves only in the light of that Word. That Word must always be the mirror into which we look. Never must we come to any conclusions about ourselves apart from it. That is our only escape. If ever we try anything else, we will go wrong.

If we do this we will discover the great spiritual truths of Scripture, first of all. We will see ourselves as totally depraved sinners who are completely unworthy of the grace of God. But, in the same Scriptures, we will see ourselves also as those who are redeemed by the blood of Christ. We will see ourselves as sanctified through the power of that blood — even though it be in principle now.

We will see ourselves reflected in that mirror as those who, because they are redeemed only in principle, have to struggle daily with sin and its power in our lives and about us. We will see ourselves as

victorious in Christ through the power of confession and forgiveness in Christ's blood. We will see ourselves as those who have been given a place and a calling in God's kingdom and Church. We will see ourselves as those who labor in that calling with much sin and imperfection, but as those whose labor is never in vain in the Lord. We will see ourselves as destined to live in heaven with Christ, freed from sin and blessed beyond measure in the tabernacle of God.

And the more we see ourselves in the light of Scripture, the more also we attain to the true self-forgetfulness of which Scripture speaks as we labor in the consciousness of God's grace.

Both come together here. Both come together (our necessary concern with ourselves and our calling to self-forgetfulness) in seeing ourselves as God describes us on the pages of Holy Writ. The closer we live in this consciousness, the more we shall also live happy and serene lives in the midst of the world. Our troubles are rooted in our failure to attain this. Our solutions lie in the doing of this.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

The Believer's Calling in Missions

Prof. Robert D. Decker

It is rather commonly thought among us that believers really have no essential calling as far as mission work is concerned. Other than supporting the mission program of the churches by means of prayer and offerings, believers have no mission calling. At least they are not directly involved in mission work. That task belongs to the missionaries and preachers

and to the consistories and Synods and Mission Committees. This notion is all wrong and we ought to rid ourselves completely of it. The believer has not only a significant calling in mission work but an essential one. The New Testament makes very plain that without the believer and his witness there can be no mission work at all.

The believer has a calling first of all in the office of believer. As children of God, the redeemed in Christ, all the believers share in the anointing of Christ. They are prophets, priests, and kings in Christ. The believers speak the praises of God, are consecrated in His service, and rule over the works of God's hands, all in Christ. The New Testament everywhere testifies to the fact that Christ calls and ordains missionaries and sends them out through the office of believer. This is the way Christ gathers, defends, and preserves His elect out of the nations. Christ never works apart from the church. His work is accomplished always through the church and the office of believer. This means most emphatically that apart from the office of believer there can be no mission work at all. It is the church, believers as members of the Body of Christ as manifest in the institute of the church in the world, which preaches the gospel in all the world. It is not just men, individual missionaries, who preach in Jamaica or Singapore or East Lansing or Birmingham. The Church does that. Thus according to Acts 13:1ff. The Holy Spirit said to the believers, the church in Antioch: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." After fasting and praying the believers laid their hands on them and sent them away.

In close connection with this is the fact that through the consistory the believers supervise both the work and the life of the missionary. Apart from this rule of Christ through the church the missionary cannot function. It is clear, therefore, just from this point of view alone, that the believer has a direct and responsible place in the work of missions. In fact, Scripture teaches that the believer in the office of Christ is indispensable to mission work.

In addition, the believers have the calling to support the work of missions. From a material point of view the believer must liberally provide for the earthly needs of the missionaries and the mission. God calls believers to do this. Certainly, without the faithful support of the congregations there can be no mission work. But there is more, much more. Believers must support the missionaries in prayer. In a very touching plea the Apostle Paul exhorted the Ephesians to pray for him: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:18-20). The Apostle made the same request of the Thessalonians: "... that the Word may have free course, and be glorified ..." (II Thess. 3:1). And that same request is made of the believers in Colosse (Colossians 4:2).

There can be no question of the fact that the Apostle was deeply conscious of his need of the prayers of the believers in all his preaching and teaching of the gospel. It is obvious that, apart from the support, encouragement, and certainly the prayers of the believers, the missionaries cannot labor. This is no little matter. If there be no support and if there be no prayers on the part of the believers the missionary cannot make known the mystery of the gospel. Once more, the plain fact is: believers are indispensable to missions!

As prophets, priests, and kings in Christ believers are also called to witness in the world. The New Testament is full of this. Scripture exhorts us to have our conversation honest among the Gentiles. The purpose is that they may see our good works and glorify God in the day of visitation. That term, "conversation," means manner of living. This includes all of our speech and all of our actions, our lives in every detail and from every point of view. Our manner of living must be a testimony to the Gentiles, the heathen (Cf. I Peter 2:12). According to I Peter 3:15 we must be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks a reason of the hope that is in us. Again the purpose is that unbelievers who falsely accuse our good conversation in Christ may be ashamed. We must be ready to testify to those who ask concerning the hope that is in us. That implies that we are living in such a way that our hope is obvious to those about us. I Corinthians 10:31-33 teaches that whether we eat or drink or whatever we do we must do all to the glory of God. We must not give offense, either to the Jew or the Gentile or the Church of God. We must follow the Apostle's example who sought not his own profit but the profit of many that they might be saved. And, to cite no more, Acts 8:4 tells of the Jerusalem Christians who were scattered abroad by the persecution which followed Stephen's martyrdom. They went everywhere "preaching the Word." Literally, they were evangelizing the Word, announcing the good news of Christ. The believers themselves did this; they spoke the Word everywhere. They did this not in the sense that they were official preachers. There were preachers among those scattered, Philip for example, who preached in Samaria. But the believers witnessed.

All these passages and more indicate that the church "lives in the public eye." Believers must, therefore, live in such a manner that no reproach, no shame is brought to the gospel or to the name of God. Positively, believers must shine as lights in the world. They are called to witness, to testify of the wonder of grace performed by God in Jesus Christ for them. They must call people to faith and repentance in Christ. They must not keep still about God and about Christ and about His Word. They must be

ready always to give an answer to everyone who asks concerning the hope that is in them. That witness must go forth also by the lives which they lead. They must live always and in every sphere in obedience to the will of God. They must do that as husbands and wives, as parents and children, as youth and aged. They must do that in their work as well as in their recreation. In that way the lives of believers will be a witness to the power of God's grace in Christ in them. No offense will be left. Christ will be seen in them. God's great glory will shine in them. J.H. Bavinck put it nicely when he wrote: "Thus the church must in her exemplary conduct, in her mutual love, in her mercy toward all, in short in all her conduct, reflect something of the greatness of Christ, to the end that the witness of the missionaries may be supported and the church may grow." (*Introduction To The Science Of Missions*, p. 48)

That witness of the believers will bear its fruit. Negatively, it will provoke the hatred and opposition of the ungodly. The wicked cannot stand the light of the gospel and they will inevitably and persistently oppose the witness of the believers. Believers must expect to be persecuted by the world precisely because of their witnessing to the gospel. This ought in no way cause them to fear or to be discouraged. The witness of believers renders the ungodly without excuse and they will be ashamed in the day of judgment. Positively God uses the means of the witness of believers to bring His elect into the church. There they will come under the preaching of the gospel, hear Christ, believe, call upon His name and be saved. The Heidelberg Catechism speaks of this when it speaks of the necessity of good works, in Lord's Day 32: "Since then we are delivered from our misery, merely of grace, through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we still do good works? Because Christ having redeemed and delivered us by his blood, also renews us by his Holy Spirit, after his

own image; that so we may testify, by the whole of our conduct, our gratitude to God for his blessings, and that he may be praised by us; also that everyone may be assured in himself of his faith, by the fruits thereof; and that, by our godly conversation, others may be gained to Christ." Note that the last reason given why believers must do good works is that by their godly conversation others may be gained to Christ.

The conclusion is apparent. Even though believers are not ordained missionary preachers they have a calling, a very serious and even indispensable calling with respect to mission work. That calling of the Church is rooted in its eternal election of grace in Christ Jesus. The spiritual isolation, the *uniqueness* of its essence as the elect Body of Jesus Christ, has for its purpose the manifestation of God's praises. In I Peter 2:9 the Scriptures teach us that believers are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people. The purpose is that they should show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. God has set apart the Church for Himself in the midst of the world. The church is a chosen generation, a priesthood of kings, an holy nation separated from sin and consecrated to God, and thus a peculiar people in the midst of the world. That the church is that, elect in Christ, implies a serious calling. That calling is to manifest God's praises. The church does this chiefly by means of the preaching of the gospel, but also by means of the godly lives of its members. By that mighty power the elect are gathered out of the nations; the ungodly are condemned and the Kingdom of God comes in Jesus Christ in all of its glory.

Let believers everywhere be faithful in their office as prophets, priests, and kings in order that the mission work of the church of Christ may prosper unto the gathering of the elect and the coming of Christ.

ALL AROUND US

"Porneia" (Fornication)

Rev. G. Van Baren

I have observed some very good reviews on the *New International Version* of the Bible which has recently been introduced. It is the result of long and patient years of hard work. It is meant to be a

translation as close as possible to the original languages — yet expressed in common and easily understood English. The translation has been done by men of a conservative, Reformed background. Per-

haps the acclaim accorded this translation is merited. I have not personally made any kind of careful study and comparison of the version with the original. However, as in any translation, there is often room for disagreement with the translator. There has come to my attention recently an occasion for such disagreement — where it seems to me that the translators have obviously and deliberately changed the plain meaning of a word: the word “fornication.”

I encountered this in connection with “Pressure Points” in the *Banner* of December 14, 1979. A letter was written to Mr. De Mey, the author, which stated in part:

I have always been a firm believer in the fact that only fornication is a basis for divorce (Matt. 19:9). This text eliminates the ground of alcoholism. . . .

Mr. De Mey answers (in part):

First, as stated in the article, I believe divorce should be the final option after all other possibilities have been exhausted. . . .

Second, I believe that, as in church discipline, divorce proceedings should begin only with the hope and prayer that the act will bring the alcoholic back to God and his family by making him realize his need for treatment. As noted in the August article, we have seen this happen on more than one occasion with residents of the Jellema House.

Another point the letter writer raises is that Matthew 19 verse 9 says that only fornication is a basis for divorce. I have used the New International Version which uses “marital unfaithfulness” as grounds for divorce. I submit that alcoholism can constitute “marital unfaithfulness.” When a man uses the money for alcohol, the money his family needs for their support; when he no longer is capable of making decisions as the head of the household; when alcohol controls him rather than his controlling alcohol; then I believe that is “marital unfaithfulness.”

I do not now intend to comment on the reasoning of De Mey concerning the grounds of divorce. I am concerned about the quotation he gives from the new NIV of the Bible.

In checking the passage De Mey mentions, one finds he is correct. The NIV states: “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.” The NIV translates Matthew 5:32 the same way: “But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to

commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery.” The Greek word “porneia” occurs 26 times in the New Testament — and the King James version translates it each time as “fornicator.” Related words are all translated similarly (“commit fornication”; “fornicator”; “whore-monger”; etc.). Any lexicon gives this same basic meaning.

What is wrong with the NIV translation? First, fornication is a sin which is not limited to the married. The word can equally apply to one who violates the seventh commandment while not married. Surely it would not be reasonable to warn the unmarried that they must not in the state of singleness commit the sin of “marital unfaithfulness.”

But secondly, the translation of NIV is an error of logical reasoning. While it might be argued that fornication is, in the state of marriage, “marital unfaithfulness,” it can not be maintained that therefore this is a legitimate interpretation. “Marital unfaithfulness” is a far broader term than “fornication.” De Mey correctly understands that “marital unfaithfulness” can include “alcoholism” of a partner in marriage. The trouble is, that many other things also represent “marital unfaithfulness.” Any sin of one spouse against the other is in fact a form of “marital unfaithfulness.” If I unjustly shout at my wife or falsely accuse her of certain acts, that is also “marital unfaithfulness.” What the world terms “mental cruelty” or even “incompatibility” can as well be termed “marital unfaithfulness.” My point is that the NIV translation basically allows for anything as ground of divorce. “Marital unfaithfulness” is not only inaccurate translation, but an extremely broad concept.

I have heard the argument in past years that “marital unfaithfulness” is properly a ground for divorce. I have heard the idea expressed that “fornication” suggests this broader view of “marital unfaithfulness.” Now the NIV give the appearance of legitimacy to this idea.

I submit that this is an extremely dangerous and erroneous translation. It can only serve to encourage divorce within the church. It is too bad that the word of Christ has so been twisted.

But, perhaps the learned translators have good grounds for their translation. I am not an authority, I admit, of the Greek language. Perhaps they can show that their translation is correct. Can you help me out, brethren?

Know the standard and follow it.
Read **The Standard Bearer**

Why Educate Our Children?

From the *Presbyterian Journal*, December 5, 1979, one finds an interesting quote which expresses strikingly the differences in goals in educating children:

Once in a delightful while your opponent in an argument will catch you off guard by stating his position so clearly that you find you need say nothing more. His very clarity tends to demolish his position.

Such was the case in the controversy now raging in California over a statewide "family choice in education" referendum scheduled for next June. If approved, the measure would allow families to send their children to either public or nonpublic schools. Either way, the parents would receive a payment voucher from the state.

The liberal educational establishment, of course, is horrified at the possibility. Indeed, a report published by the Association of California School Administrators claims:

"Parent choice proceeds from the belief that the purpose of education is to provide individual students

with an education. In fact, educating the individual is but a *means* to the true end of education — which is to create a viable social order to which individuals contribute and by which they are sustained.

"Family choice is, therefore, basically selfish and anti-social in that it focuses on the wants of a single family rather than on the needs of society."

As we said, sometimes no response is needed. — Joel Belz.

The above quote reminds again of the goals of men in educating children. Children of God are indeed interested in providing "individual students with an education," yet far more. It must be an education which is based upon the truths of the Word of God as maintained within the church. This, the world flatly rejects. And it is because of the fear that the "liberal educational establishment" desires to destroy the private and Christian school systems, that we have opposed receiving any kind of assistance from the state. It has repeatedly been seen that state support eventually also means state control.

The Sin of Sodom

Sodomy, or homosexuality, or "gay" movement, all suggest the same sin. It is openly condemned as sin in Scripture. Yet increasingly it is regarded not as sin, in fact not even as "disease," but a legitimate expression of sexuality. Churches have been permitting this sin to exist within its confines. Increasingly, those who so sin are allowed in the ministry while practicing the sin. A report of this is presented in *The Christian News*, December 3, 1979:

A United Methodist minister who is a practicing homosexual has had his right to continue in a parish position upheld by the denomination's "supreme court," the Judicial Council.

In its semi-annual meeting here, the nine-member council declared that the United Methodist Discipline provides that "every member of an annual (regional) conference continues the member in good standing and in the effective relation."

The ruling involved. . . . After he announced his homosexuality in 1977, he was asked by the New

York Annual Conference to take a leave of absence for a year. When he refused to do so, the 1978 session of the conference upheld his ministry since his congregation overwhelmingly indicated it supported him.

Mr. Abels' status was questioned at the 1979 session of the annual conference last June, but he was again appointed to the congregation. The conference then voted to ask the Judicial Council for a ruling. . . .

The ordinations of homosexuals is expected to be a major issue at the 1980 General Conference of the United Methodist Church, to be held in Indianapolis next April. Upon learning of the Judicial Council's ruling, Mr. Abels said he was "delighted," and added, "At least I know I'm safe until next April, and actually I see things changing for the better."

So goes the "church world." Indeed, it is being fulfilled, "Many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many."

IN HIS FEAR

Assault on the Christian Home and Family: The International Year of the Child

Rev. Wayne Bekkering

The attack of Satan upon the Christian home and family is nothing new, only now it has become more bold. Always have the home and family been of prime concern for Satan, because they are two of the foundation stones of society — that is, society defined loosely as the sphere in which the church functions or the circle in which God's people live and move in connection with all other men and things. Society as we know it depends on the home and family. All of our life and activity stem out of the home and family.

Satan's goal is to homogenize the human race into one pliable mass. A mass blindly insensitive to the unchangeable standard of God's righteousness. A mass dedicated to the satisfaction of its insatiable lusts. A mass with no god except man-centered humanism. A mass seemingly cut loose from any standard of morality and manifesting itself to be thoroughly lawless. Of such a mass Satan supposes that he will be lord supreme. He dreams that his original goal to have God's throne will soon be realized. Triumphantly he will declare, "Behold the people is one, and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do."

The devil has a problem. The problem is that the home and family foster a certain independence. The home and family are the means whereby many important things are transmitted from one generation to the next. In this way are our national characteristics continued, our peculiar customs carried on, our children educated and our religious heritage passed along. Some of these things are obviously more important to us than others, but they are all propagated by the home and family.

Satan knows that as long as the home and family remain in their present structure his goal will be

impossible to attain. Too much influence is left with the individual home and family unit. Too much latitude is given for the continuation of other goals than those that directly bring about Satan's one-world kingdom.

The home and family will have to be moved out of the way.

One of the many means that Satan is using to attain his goal is the International Year of the Child (IYC). If we just look at the IYC on the surface and uncritically, there seems to be a good emphasis on the needs of children all over the world. The IYC seems to be seeking good ways of alleviating problems that afflict children everywhere.

Let us, however, look more carefully at the IYC. It is always a good thing to look at the principles upon which anything is founded in order to determine where it is coming from and where it is going.

The IYC began in the United Nations. It was first proposed by a representative of the community of Non-Governmental Organizations at the UNICEF Executive Board meeting in 1974. The matter was referred to the Economic and Social Council, which requested the Secretary-General of the U.N. to submit to the 1976 General Assembly "a report on measures and modalities for ensuring the adequate preparation, support and financing of an international year of the child, to be preferably the year 1979." On the basis of this report the Economic and Social Council recommended the proclamation of the Year, and on 21 December 1976 the General Assembly passed the resolution authorizing it.

Let us briefly discuss what Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and UNICEF are. NGO's are various organizations that are not under direct

governmental control or regulation. They are organizations that are seeking to better society in general or some segment of society in particular. These organizations are basically humanitarian. That means that they are not operating on principles drawn out of God's Word and to God's glory. Even though many of these organizations are churches or religious groups they nevertheless show themselves to be humanists. Jesus says in Matt. 12:30, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

Just to give you an idea who some of these NGO's are, here is a sampling out of a list of more than 150 who have endorsed the IYC: AFL-CIO, American Medical Association, Church Women United, Girl Scouts of the USA, National Council of Churches, National Education Association, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc., Salvation Army, and the United Way of America.

UNICEF means United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. It was established in 1946 to assist children in war-devasted countries. Since then it has shifted its emphasis from *temporary* and *emergency* to *long-range* and *permanent*. It has also greatly broadened its scope to include social, educational, and cultural considerations.

Let us take note of some interesting statements out of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the U.N. concerning the IYC. "Recognizing the fundamental importance in all countries, developing and industrialized, of programmes benefiting children not only for the well-being of the children, but also as part of *broader efforts to accelerate economic and social progress*." (emphasis mine, W.B.) "Recalling in this connexion its resolution of 24 October 1970 containing the International Development Strategy for the Second U.N. Development Decade, and the Declaration and the Programme of Action on the *Establishment of a New International Economic Order* of 1 May 1974, and of the resolution of 16 September 1975 on development and international economic co-operation." (emphasis mine, W.B.) This reference to the "Establishment of a New International Economic Order" seems extraneous to the subject of the IYC, and yet it is integral to its very beginning and goal.

We ought also to be aware that the IYC is not just an isolated aspect of the assault on the home and family, but it is connected with other U.N. programs.

In 1959 the U.N. passed a resolution called "Declaration of the Rights of the Child," but little was done then to implement it. The U.N. declared 1975 to be International Women's Year, and designated 1976-1985 as International Women's Decade. In 1976, the U.N. named 1979 to be International

Year of the Child, with UNICEF as the agency in charge of implementation. This is not all. There are more numbers on the program. By Executive Order, President Carter has authorized the 1980 White House Conference on Children, and the 1981 White House Conference on Families. If these follow the pattern of the 1970 Conferences, participants will not debate whether or not the federal government should rear children; they will merely discuss *how*. The prevailing philosophy has already been established.

We should notice from the above that there is a common source for both the International Women's Year (IWY), and the IYC. Both are flowing in the same stream to the same end-goal. This is made obvious from a quotation out of a "Report of the World Conference of the IWY", published by the U.N.: "Non-governmental organizations, especially women's organizations, national family planning and other population organizations, welfare agencies, trade unions, co-operative and religious bodies constitute important resources for development and vehicles for change. Their increased effectiveness depends on the policies of Governments and the increasing involvement of trained educated younger women and men."

We must not be hoodwinked by the high sounding goals of the IYC. This is not an isolated effort to help needy children, but it is part of Satan's concert to destroy the Christian home and family. The goal is to strip parents of their God-given rights and responsibilities to rear their children in His fear, and to transfer them to governmental organizations.

We can expect to be bombarded unceasingly by these "good concerns" of the so-called child rights advocates. Public education from the day care center to the university level is geared for the implementation of these goals. TV is an effective tool in Satan's hand to hammer home his evil philosophy. The general consensus of the society in which we live is already swayed towards Satan's goal.

What must we think of all this? Is this some new inexplicable effort of the devil? No, we do not think it strange concerning this fiery trial which is to try us as though some strange thing happened to us. God tells us that all these things must come to pass. Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Our Sovereign God reigns supreme working all things for the good of His people. The victory over Satan is ours in Christ Jesus.

Now with that confidence look at your home and family. Examine the training of your children. Are you fighting faithfully against Satan's assault on the home and family? Let us renew our efforts by God's grace as we live in His fear.

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Of God's Eternal Decree

Rev. Ron Van Overloop

Chapter III — Of God's Eternal Decree

1. God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass:^a yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin,^b nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.^c

a. Ephesians 1:11; Romans 11:33; Hebrews 6:17; Romans 9:15,18.

b. James 1:13,17; I John 1:5

c. Acts 2:23; Matthew 17:12; Acts 4:27,28; John 19:11; Proverbs 16:33.

2. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions;^a yet hath he not decreed any thing because He foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.^b

a. Acts 15:18; I Samuel 23:11,12; Matthew 11:21,23.

b. Romans 9:11,13,16,18.

3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels^a are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.^b

a. I Timothy 5:21; Matthew 25:41.

b. Romans 9:22,23; Ephesians 1:5,6; Proverbs 16:4.

4. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.^a

a. II Timothy 2:19; John 13:18.

5. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose,

and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory,^a out of His mere grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto;^b and all to the praise of His glorious grace.^c

a. Ephesians 1:4,9,11; Romans 8:30; II Timothy 1:9; I Thessalonians 5:9.

b. Romans 9:11,13,16; Ephesians 1:4,9.

c. Ephesians 1:6,12.

6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath He, by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto.^a Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ;^b are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified,^c and kept by His power through faith unto salvation.^d Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.^e

a. I Peter 1:2; Ephesians 1:4,5; Ephesians 2:10; II Thessalonians 2:13.

b. I Thessalonians 5:9,10; Titus 2:14.

c. Romans 8:30; Ephesians 1:5; II Thessalonians 2:13.

d. I Peter 1:5.

e. John 17:9; Romans 8:28,ff.; John 6:64,65; John 10:26; John 8:47; I John 2:19.

7. The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice.^a

a. Matthew 11:25,26; Romans 9:17,18,21,22; II Timothy 2:19,20; Jude 4; I Peter 2:18.

8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care,^a that men attending the will of God revealed in His word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election.^b So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God,^c and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation, to all that sincerely obey the Gospel.^d

a. Romans 9:20; Romans 11:33; Deuteronomy 29:29.

b. II Peter 1:10.

c. Ephesians 1:6; Romans 11:33.

d. Romans 11:5,6,20; II Peter 1:10; Romans 8:33; Luke 10:20.

This chapter of the Westminster Confession deals with the truth of the eternal counsel of God, including predestination. A close examination of and comparison of this chapter with the First Head of the Canons of Dordrecht reveals many similarities, both as to their positive statements and as to their rejection of the errors of humanistic Arminianism. I would urge the readers to make this comparison. This comparison shows that there are only two matters contained in the Canons which are not found in this chapter of the Westminster. This first matter is the contents of the first four articles of the Canons, which subject material does not deal specifically with the doctrine of God's eternal decrees, but is included to give the setting for the treatment of this truth. The Confession also treats this material, but elsewhere. The second item found in the Canons, but not in the Confession, is the material of Canons I - 17, which deals with the eternal estate of the children of godly parents who die in their infancy. We must wait until the tenth chapter, article, 3, before we find the Confession's treatment of this matter.

That which is sounded forth as the theme of the treatment of this Biblical truth, both in the Westminster Confession and in the Canons of Dordrecht, is the glory of the sovereign God. The praise of His glorious grace is sounded loudly. We pray that we may hear that tone and join in that praise as we consider this blessed truth.

As the Creator and providential Ruler of all things, God has a definite purpose for the destination of all He created and rules. That end or purpose for all things is the glory of His most holy Name. The plan or determination to attain that end for all things is God's counsel, will, good pleasure, or eternal decrees. Because God is eternal and unchangeable, His determinations also are eternal and unchangeable and living.

This eternal and all-wise will of God comprehends all things. Comprehended in that one perfect plan is not only His chief end, but also all the ends and ways to those ends which in turn serve the chief end: His glory. That chief end is achieved in everything. No event in creation or providence, in heaven or on

earth, is isolated from that end. He "worketh *all things* after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11).

These first two articles of this chapter show plainly that the actions of men are also comprehended within His living will. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD." "A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps." "The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD." "Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?" "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." God "doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?" (Proverbs 16:33,9,1; 20:24; Jeremiah 10:23; Daniel 4:35) When talking to the heathen on Mars' Hill, the apostle Paul establishes as a fact that it is in God that "we live, and (literally) are moved, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

The Westminster Confession is conscious that the immediate reaction of sinful man to the truth of a sovereign, determining God is the twofold charge that God is the author of sin and that man is as but a piece of wood or stone in the hand of God. It denies these charges.

The problem of the all-determinative counsel of the sovereign God and the existence of sin may be insoluble to our frail minds. But we do know that the holy God is not the author of sin, nor does He approve of it. And we know that God does use and overrule evil for His own wise and most holy purposes. "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

Relative to God's sovereign determination making man a stock and a block, the Confession presents the position that God's decree is perfectly consistent with the nature of the creature. God does not violate the will of His creatures, because the same all-comprehensive counsel determined the nature of the creature and each action of that creature. The Counsel of God does not contradict or conflict with itself. The determination of the action does not conflict with the determination of the will of the creature.

The Confession also states that this sovereign determination is not dependent or conditional upon foresight. Rather it depends only on the "wise and holy counsel of His own will." The eternal determination of God does not come out of His foreseeing of events. Against this Arminian position the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession state that God foresees them because He has determined them

(cf. article 9 of Canons I). God will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy" (Romans 9:15,16). Isaiah asks, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and shewed to Him the way of understanding?" (Isaiah 40:13,14).

In articles 3 - 5 of the Confession, this eternal, sovereign, and unconditional counsel of God is applied to the destiny of men, viz., predestination.

So simply does article three state this deep truth.

Notice that in the presentation of this truth the ultimate end and motivation of God is given: "for the manifestation of His glory." The man who questions the truth of predestination is shown to be walking on the holy ground of the glory of God. In fact, not only does article three begin with this theme, but article five ends that way as well. God's praise and glory are at stake any time this truth is preached, discussed, mentioned, or denied. Would that all would be mindful of this and make it their presupposition. Scripture states that God has predestinated "according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:5,6). The same holds for the truth of reprobation. "The LORD hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil." And "what if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Proverbs 16:4; Romans 9:22). Whereas man makes himself bold to deny predestination, Scripture is bold to state it.

It is against the Arminian position of various kinds of election that the Confession states that the number of the elect is certain, definite, and unchangeable. Thus it is implied that there is no other kind of election. Confer Canons I, Rejection of Errors, articles 2,5,6.

As with the Canons 1 - 9, so the Westminster Confession (article 5) denies conditional predestination. The Arminian presentation is that God, foreseeing who would believe and persevere, elected those individuals. The Calvinistic position is that Scripture teaches that the only ground for election is God's sovereign and free grace and love. God chooses us to faith and perseverance, not because of our faith and perseverance. We are chosen not because we are holy, but "that we should be holy and without blame before Him" (Eph. 1:4). We are elected "to salvation" (II Thessalonians 2:13). Faith is the fruit of election and cannot be its condition. "As many as

were ordained to eternal life believed." "But ye believed not, because ye are not of my sheep" (Acts 13:48, John 10:26).

In article 6 the fathers of the Confession apply the truths of articles 1 and 2 to election, and state that God ordains the means as well as the end of salvation. This is presented in Canons 1 - 7 in language which is very similar. When God elects unto eternal salvation, He at the same time determines the means by which He will accomplish this eternal salvation. The means God uses to accomplish the end of salvation are: redemption in Christ, calling unto faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, and preservation. Let us remember that this distinction of end and ways or means to the end is man-made, for his own clarification, and that God is above such a distinction, because for God to determine the end is to determine the way.

This article implies limited atonement and particular grace. The purpose to save some is the purpose to give to them only the means to salvation. A decree to save all is inconsistent with a decree that only some be saved. And, on the other hand, a purpose to give grace to all cannot coexist with a purpose to save only some.

Therefore, "by grace are ye saved *through faith*; and that not of yourselves: it is the *gift* of God," and God has "from the beginning chosen you to salvation *through sanctification* of the Spirit and *belief* of the truth" and "to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 2:8; II Thess. 2:13; Ephesians 1:12).

Article seven deals with the Scriptural truth of reprobation. It is from these that God has sovereignly determined to withhold His grace. As do the Canons, so does the Confession treat this from an infralapsarian viewpoint.

Why has God determined to withhold His grace from (or to pass by) some? The answer of the Westminster Confession is, because it was His good pleasure to do so. He has "mercy on whom He will have mercy and whom He will He hardeneth" (Romans 9:18). That which moves God to take one and pass by the other is wholly within Himself, unsearchable to human understanding. God did not determine to harden one because of the existence of sin in him. God does not reprobate because of sin, but He does punish because of sin. "Because of these things (the sins of verses 3-5) cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6). And this is "to the praise of His glorious grace."

This doctrine is irritating and a rock of offense "to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (I Peter 2:8). Let us not be surprised that man becomes angry at such a doctrine, for it denies the desire of every sinful

man to be "as God," determining for themselves "good and evil" and their eternal destiny (Genesis 3:5). To any and all charges against this Biblical doctrine we can only reply, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

Because this doctrine is the the Word of God, it is to be taught, and the teaching thereof is to be with prudence and care.

Notice first of all that it is to be handled. Today many do not want to handle this doctrine. And many who do handle it, so emphasize the "special prudence and care" that they eliminate its mention from the preaching, and hide it away in the ivory towers of seminaries and ministers' studies. The Confession says, handle it. And, I submit, what better way to handle this Biblical doctrine than in the preaching? It is the gospel.

Notice, secondly, that the Confession makes no distinction in predestination when it speaks of its being handled. It is not that just election is to be handled, as if the truth of reprobation is too hot to handle. God forbid that we should divide the indivisible mystery of predestination.

The prudence and care mentioned requires of those who deal with the truths of God's eternal decrees, that they handle them only in a Biblical manner and from a Biblical perspective. The perspective is always the glory of God's good pleasure. The manner is continually showing its Biblicalness and that this truth of election is the fountain of all grace. At the same time, this manner does not consist of the revelation of the election or reprobation of particular persons.

This doctrine of predestination is to be used to show men the greatness and independence of God. It also shows the certainty of God's promises and the efficacy of His grace. It brings men to see their absolute dependence.

The comfort believers derive from this doctrine is that they are brought to see that their salvation is wholly of God and that they owe Him all praise and honor for dealing so mercifully with them out of His mere good pleasure.

When taught without care and prudence, false presumption arises. The Canons speak of carnal security which is the effect of rash presumption or of idle trifling with the grace of adoption. But when the doctrine of predestination is taught with care, the desired diligence and humility and abundant consolation results. May God give us this prudence and care to handle this high mystery of predestination.

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Book Reviews

STORIES CHILDREN LOVE, by W. G. Vandehulst; Paideia Press, 1249 Plessis Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R2C3L9, 1978; each \$1.45 (paper). (Reviewed by Gertrude Hoeksema)

This is a series of eight short story books for children, each 48 pages long, originally written in the Dutch language, and with settings in the Netherlands. The titles and cover designs are attractive, and the inside illustrations are excellent black and white sketches which give the young story-reader an authentic portrayal of Dutch scenes and Dutch children.

The eight separate books are titled:

1. *The Little Wooden Shoe*
2. *Through the Thunderstorm*
3. *Bruno the Bear*
4. *The Basket*
5. *Lost in the Snow*
6. *Annie and the Goat*
7. *The Black Kitten*
8. *The Woods beyond the Wall*

Appealingly written, each story is about a small incident in the life of a Dutch child — a lost animal, a broken toy, or a Dutch baker who plays tricks. Vandehulst understands and loves children and knows how to make the feelings of his characters come alive with poignancy or gentle humor. Themes such as being lost or having disaster follow a child's disobedience keep the listener's intense interest until the last page. For American children, the books have the added benefit of giving word pictures of life in the Netherlands.

Written from a Christian perspective, the stories are neither "preachy" nor moralistic, but embrace a quiet faith; and the characters of the story ask a simple prayer for help or a humble prayer for forgiveness with a sincerity that fits the author's style.

As with all translations, something is lost in the re-telling; and at times the language is stilted and the diction not idiomatic. Also, because Dutch stories are written in the present tense, the translations are also in the present tense — a novelty for the young American listener — but a novelty to which he easily adjusts.

These stories will have appeal for children from four years old and up, and they still have appeal for children who can read them by themselves. As an early primary teacher, I found that young children were charmed not only by the characters and suspense of the stories, but also by the interesting illustrations. I would recommend them as wholesome stories.

PERSPECTIVES ON PENTECOST, New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, by Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.; Baker Book House, 1979; 127 pp., \$3.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

Although the controversy which swirled around the subject of Neo-Pentecostalism has settled down somewhat, the question remains an issue in many churches. Another book on the subject is, therefore, not out of place. Especially is this true if the book is a carefully written, exegetical study of the whole issue. This book, by the professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary, admirably fills the need. Although, since the controversy began, I have read a large number of books written in the debate, this is, in my judgment, one of the best. Its excellence lies especially in its careful exegesis of all the pertinent passages. The author begins with a discussion of Pentecost and its significance for the relation between the exalted Christ and the work Christ does for and in His Church and proceeds to a discussion of prophecy and tongues-speaking in the apostolic era. He argues convincingly that these gifts were part of the foundational life of the New Testament Church, organically connected with the work of the apostles; that, therefore, these special gifts ceased with the close of the apostolic period.

Although there are some minor points at which I would disagree with the author (it seems to me, e.g., that he gives too much prominence to the gift of prophecy), there are few books around which are so persuasively written. We recommend it in the strongest way as an important contribution to the literature on the subject and as a real help in the Church's apologetic against Neo-Pentecostalism.

NOTICE!!!**TEACHER NEEDED**

Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA, is in need of an additional teacher for the 1980-81 school year for Grades 3 thru 5. Teachers interested in filling this position should contact Mr. Frank De Boer, 9088 Northwood Road, Lynden, WA 98264.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 11, 1980, our parents, MR. AND MRS. GORDON WASSINK plan, the Lord willing, to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We, their children, thank God that through them we have been provided with a Christian home and Christian instruction. And we pray that God will continue to be near and bless them in the future.

Psalm 100:5 - "For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

Mr. & Mrs. Deane Wassink
Katie
Mr. & Mrs. Darle Wassink
Ross
Mr. & Mrs. Timothy Mowery
Ryan & Eric
Douglas
Karla

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On January 18, 1980, our parents, MR. AND MRS. BEN VAN DER MOLEN celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. We thank our Heavenly Father for keeping them for each other and for us, and pray that He will continue to bless them in the years to come.

Martin and Betty Van Der Molen
Larry and Viola Engbers
Arvin and Judy Kelderman
Donald and Rita Van Maanen
Byron and Joyce Van Der Molen
Christy Van Der Molen
and 17 grandchildren.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Martha Ladies Aid Society of the Hull Protestant Reformed Church expresses sincere and heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Peter R. Westra, Mrs. Tim Kooima, Mrs. William Kooiker and Mrs. Alvin Kooiker in the death of their father and father-in-law, MR. NICK KOOIKER.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." (Psalm 103:17).

Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Pres.
Mrs. Harold Van Maanen, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!

The newly appointed Clerk of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, MI is Mr. Gerald Feenstra, 7643 Cardinal Dr., Jenison, MI, 49428, Phone number (616) 669-1484. This congregation's new Bulletin Editor is: Mrs. R. Kreuzer, 3574 W. Hillcrest Road, Hudsonville, MI 49426. Phone number (616) 669-1792.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 3, 1980, the Lord willing our parents, DAVID AND EDITH VANDER KOOI will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We their children thank the Lord for the patience, love, and guidance shown to us through the years. It is our prayer that our Heavenly Father will keep them in His care and that His abiding love will be with them always.

"Blessed is everyone that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways." (Psalm 128:1)

Daryl & Maris Vander Kooi
Michelle, Dalaine, David Shane
Robert & Mickey Vander Kooi
Timothy, Michael, Joel
Jay & Joan Scholten
David, Daniel, Jami, Diane
Garry & Sharon Smeyers
Todd, Tricia, Marc
Don & Debra Vander Velde
Johnathan, Matthew

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On February 3, 1980, the Lord willing our parents, DAVID AND EDITH VANDER KOOI will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We their children thank the Lord for the patience, love, and guidance shown to us through the years. It is our prayer that our Heavenly Father will keep them in His care and that His abiding love will be with them always.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Ladies Society of the Hope Protestant Reformed Church (Walker, MI) expresses their sincere sympathy to a fellow member, Mrs. Dick Kooienga, in the loss of her sister, ALICE RAYMAKER.

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

Mr. Jon Huiskens, Pres.
Mrs. John Buiter, Sec'y.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Class of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, MI, expresses their sincere sympathy to Mrs. Jan Miersma in the loss of her mother, MRS. JOHANNA PERSENAIRE. May the God of all mercy comfort her according to His Word found in Romans 14:8 - "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

News From Our Churches

Our Hope Church in Walker, Michigan has scheduled a special congregational meeting on January 14, to call a minister from a trio consisting of Rev. David Engelsma, Rev. Gise Van Baren, and Rev. Bernard Woudenberg.

Two of the three professors in our seminary are currently considering calls: Professor Hoeksema to serve as 'minister-on-loan' to Christchurch, New Zealand, and Professor Hanko to serve as pastor of our church in Redlands, California.

Redlands has received pulpit supply from varying sources during this period without a minister. Pulpit supply can be quite a problem for those of our churches which are located many miles from the nearest sister church (about 1,100 miles in Redlands' case.) Rev. George Lanting filled the pulpit in Redlands from mid-December through the holidays. Rev. Arie den Hartog preached in Redlands the first two weeks in January, since he has been unable to leave for Singapore to take up his labors as missionary there. The necessary permits have yet to arrive. Following Rev. den Hartog, Redlands expects to have Rev. Dale Kuiper preach for them on a classical appointment. The consistory has also announced to the congregation that they have made arrangements with Rev. Marinus Schipper to labor in their midst for the latter part of January and the month of February.

Rev. and Mrs. Ronald Hanko received a rather special Christmas present — right on the day. They were blessed with the birth of a baby girl, Jessica Noelle. Mother and baby are both well.

Effective on Sunday, December 16, our Faith Church in Jenison, Michigan has changed the order of their worship service so that the reading of Scripture takes place just prior to the sermon. A reason given for this change is that this order is more consistent with the order used by most of our other churches. It also permits the Scripture reading to be recorded on the tape given to the shut-ins, in addition to the sermon. It could also be added to the reasons given in the Faith bulletin that it does seem appropriate to have the sermon follow the reading of the Scripture upon which the sermon is based.

A discussion group of Protestant Reformed people sponsored by the Reformed Witness Committee of Hope Church has been meeting every other Tuesday

at the Lamont Christian School at 8:00 PM. The discussion topic is the 37 articles of the Belgic Confession. All interested are welcome to attend.

Rev. C. Hanko and his daughter Alice left Michigan for Bradenton, Florida on January 2. Rev. Hanko and his son Professor H. Hanko both stayed in the same city in Kentucky one night — but neither knew the other was so close. Professor Hanko was returning from Bradenton after preaching there December 23, 25, 30, 31 and January 1. Services in this Florida city are being sponsored by the Church Extension Committee of First Church in Grand Rapids. Attendance at these worship services has increased to 60. Many contacts for our churches have been made and continue to be made as a result of this work in Bradenton.

Mr. and Mrs. Clare Prince of First Church were scheduled to leave Grand Rapids for Houston, Texas on January 16. They plan to give a public program for our congregation in Houston, Texas that evening, on the work our churches have been doing on the island of Jamaica. On the next morning, the Princes plan to leave Houston with Rev. and Mrs. Wayne Bekkering for Jamaica. The Jamaican emissaries plan to spend two weeks or more visiting and laboring with the people in 'our' Jamaican churches.

Our Southwest Church in Wyoming, Michigan 'celebrated' an event of note at the end of 1979. Their church directory finally arrived after a long wait (2 years?) and the bankruptcy of the company which was supposed to produce their "picture directory."

Southwest has also set a record, unless someone from one of our other churches can surpass it. Mr. Phil Lotterman has 'hung up his old typewriter' after 20 years as church bulletin editor. The new bulletin editor for Southwest is Mrs. R. Kreuzer, 3574 W. Hillcrest Rd., Hudsonville, Michigan 49426 (616-669-1792). The new clerk of the Southwest consistory is Mr. Gerald Feenstra, 7643 Cardinal Dr., Jenison, Michigan 49428 (616-669-1484).

And, speaking of clerks, the new clerk at First Church in Grand Rapids is the undersigned (address inside the front cover).

K. G. V.