

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . The Word of God is applicable for each congregation in every time, and in every time for each person. And the secret of the preaching is hidden exactly in this that the meaning of the Holy Spirit is given to the Word of God by conscientious explanation and carefully defined application. All topical preaching must therefore be condemned as sin in the Holy Place. One must not feed the flock with one's own ideas which he hangs on a text. No, but the Word must be preached as it stands through exegesis and application to the heart.

Dr. A. Kuyper

See "Translated Treasures" — Page 320

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MEDITATION

Peter's Restoration

Rev. M. Schipper

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord: thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."

John 21:15-17.

This now is the third time the Lord met with His disciples after His resurrection.

The first meeting was in the upper room in Jerusalem on the evening of resurrection day. On this

occasion Thomas was not with them when the Lord showed Himself alive, revealing to them the signs of the crucifixion in His body, and disproving that He was a spirit by eating in their presence.

The second meeting was a week later, but in the same place. This time Thomas was present, and evidently the meeting was especially for his benefit; for not only did the Lord show to him that He was alive, but Thomas must learn not to be unbelieving but believing.

The third meeting took place a considerable time later and now at the Sea of Galilee. On this occasion the disciples had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. In the morning the Lord, first appearing as a stranger, called to them inquiring whether they had caught anything. To this question they replied, No! He then instructed them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. Now the net was full of great fishes, and it seemed the net would break. John then said to Peter, It is the Lord! And Peter, who was naked, girt on his fisher's coat, jumped into water, and headed for shore. There the Lord had prepared for the disciples a hearty breakfast. After they had eaten, Jesus began His conversation with Peter in the hearing of all the disciples, as it is recorded in the text cited above.

This is also the second time the Lord addresses Himself to Peter after His resurrection.

The first time was on the day of the resurrection, when the Lord confronted him privately. We are not told concerning their conversation. Evidently the Lord saw fit to keep it a secret. If conjectures may be allowed, there were most likely especially two matters that entered into their conversation. Peter, the disciple who had fallen so deeply when he had denied his Lord, wept once more as he confessed his sin before Him. And the Lord, Who had prayed for him even before he fell, informing him that He had covered also Peter's sin in His blood shed on the cross. Thus Peter as the child of God is restored, having been forgiven.

Now, on this second occasion, it is the Lord's purpose to restore Peter also to the apostleship. That is why the meeting this time is not in secret, but in the presence of all the disciples gathered there. All were aware of what Peter had done, how boastfully he had declared that if all would forsake the Lord he would not, yea, that he would even lay down his life for the Lord. But when he had denied his Lord three times, he not only had committed a personal, dastardly deed, but he had wilfully abdicated his apostolic office. It is therefore with a view to his restoration to that office that the Lord in our text confronts him. We are therefore concerned now with Peter's restoration to the office of the apostleship.

Notice, first of all, the interrogation which the Lord conducts.

A probing question!

Directed to Peter three times, it is most likely to be understood on the background of his threefold denial. An interrogation it was, too, in the presence of all the disciples, because in their audience he had boasted that if they all would forsake the Lord, as the Lord had forewarned, he would not — thereby intimating that his love for the Lord was greater than that of all the other disciples.

O, how he had boasted before them all how he, in distinction from them, was devoted to the Lord! Thus he had become an offense not only to the Lord, but also to all the brethren; and by reason of this he had virtually separated himself from the disciple group. Naturally they could not easily forget what Peter had said when he had intimated that only he in distinction from them loved the Lord. And then to turn around and deny his Lord three times! Rash Simon, having been intimidated by simple questions and allegations, cursing up and down that he had no part with Jesus of Nazareth! Thus, he not only utterly forsook his Lord, but also separated himself from the office to which he had been appointed by the Lord. Such is the dark background from which the interrogation proceeds.

Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?

We must notice here, first of all, how the Lord addresses him by his natural name, that is, the name he acquired at his birth — but also the name which revealed Peter according to his old nature. He was indeed Simon, son of Jonas, before the Lord on a memorable occasion had called him Peter, the rock. You remember the happy incident at Caesarea Philippi when the Lord inquired of His disciples as to His true identity, and Peter, speaking for the disciple group, had attested: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. A confession it was which was prompted by the Father, and which would serve as the rock upon which Christ would build His Church, against which the gates of hell would never prevail. But now the Lord with intent omits to call him Peter, but reminds him that what he had done was nothing more than to reveal that old Simon, self-reliant, self-seeking, boastful Simon. Surely there must have been a sting in this address to that old Simon.

We might be inclined at this point to ask: Why didn't the Lord let the matter rest, especially after this disciple had already confessed his sin privately, and that with bitter tears? Why did the Lord continue to probe into an old sore, and that, too, publicly, in the presence of all the disciples? If the Lord loved him (which He surely did), why must He undress him

before all, and that, too, down to the revelation of the old man of sin? The answer to all these questions is simply this: this is precisely the nature of true love. It never seeks to hide sin, but to bring it out into the open, where all, including the sinner, may see how horrible sin is. And positively, it is the purpose of true love to correct and restore the sinner who is the object of that love. It was not the Lord's purpose needlessly to humble Peter before the rest, but out of the pure motivation of love to restore him again — not only to his office, but also to a right relation to the other disciples.

Lovest thou Me more than these?

That is, more than do these my other disciples? The Lord means to say: Isn't that precisely what you intimated Simon, son of Jonas, when you said, in spite of fair warning, that if all would forsake Me, you would not? Would you still say, Simon, son of Jonas, that you love Me more than these, in the light of the fact that you, in distinction from them, have denied Me three times?

Disconcerting, probing question, indeed!

But we must notice also here that the translation does not really do justice to the questions the Lord places before Peter, nor to the answers which Peter gives to these questions. The translation has the Lord asking three times: Lovest thou Me? And each time Peter replies: Thou knowest that I love Thee. However, according to the original text, we discover that the Lord uses the more profound term for love in the first two questions, and in the third instance changes the term to conform to Peter's answers to all three questions, where he replies using a more superficial term, signifying emotional affection. It is difficult to express in the translation the difference, since both words are generally translated "love."

It is apparent however from the original text that Peter senses the difference, while it also appears that at this moment he does not dare to reply to the Lord's first two questions by using the profound, deep-seated, spiritual term for love. Though we cannot do justice in explaining the difference in the two terms used and translated "love," it may be helpful to remind you that in our vernacular we also use two different words when we reflect on our relation to one another. When, for example, my wife or child asks me the question: Do you really love me? I do not reply: Yes, I like you very much; but I answer: Yes, from the bottom of my heart I love you. But when my wife asks me: What do you think of the neighbor lady? I do not reply that I love her from the bottom of my heart; but I say: I like her very much, because she is kind and understanding. So we use the terms "love" and "like," to reflect, on the one hand, a deep-seated affection arising out of the love of God,

and on the other, a lesser affection that arises out of a more superficial relation.

If we may apply this distinction to the conversation between the Lord and Peter, we would have something like this: Jesus asks, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? Peter replies, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I like Thee. Jesus asks, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me? Peter replies, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I like Thee. Jesus asks, Simon, son of Jonas, likest thou Me? Peter replies, Lord, Thou knowest perfectly all things, Thou knowest that I like Thee.

As was said, this attempt to show the difference in the terms used cannot be interpreted as an explanation of the terms, but must be understood only as an attempt to show that different terms were used. What must become apparent, however, is the fact that Peter does not dare anymore to use the stronger term for love. He has been humbled to see that in his own strength he can no longer boast, but he must confess that the Lord must help his infirmity. If he is truly to love the Lord, that grace must be given unto him.

Also to be observed is the fact that Peter here makes no attempt to exonerate himself by pointing to extenuating circumstances. Sinners are liable to do that you know. Adam did it when he was confronted with his transgression. He pointed to the wife God had given him. And Peter, too, might have tried to excuse himself by pointing to the fact that under duress the thought entered his soul that the Lord's cause was hopeless, and therefore it really didn't make any difference to him what he said or did. Or, he might have said that when the enemy overwhelmed him he lost his head, and didn't really know what he was doing. But nothing of this appears in his conversation now. He has nothing to say in reply to the Lord's serious question, except what he implied when he answered, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee — that is, I cannot say now that I love Thee with that profound, spiritual love, and that I love Thee more than these, but thou knowest nevertheless that I am drawn to Thee with cords of affection. I will no longer boast that my love for Thee is greater than that of my brethren. And I humbly confess with my answer that I have sinned not only against Thee, but also against my brethren when I boasted. May they forgive me as Thou hast forgiven.

Indeed, a humble confession!

In his confession he casts himself on the mercy of his Saviour. Thou Lord art omnipotent and omniscient. Thou art my mighty Lord, and Thou knowest all things. Therefore Thou must know that in my deepest heart I am drawn to Thee with cords of sincerest affection.

Wonderful restoration!

Upon this humble confession Peter is restored to his apostolic office.

Not to be bishop over the entire church, as the heresy of Rome would have it, for there is no indication in the text of such exaltation of Peter. But Peter is restored to his apostolic office, which, with the other apostles, consisted in feeding the church of Christ. This he, with them, will do by preaching the gospel, and by infallibly writing the Word of God. So he will feed the flock of God, purchased by the blood of Christ.

Adorable mercy!

The great Shepherd of the sheep places this His under shepherd once more, and that, too, in the presence of all the apostles, in his holy office. And He mandates him to fulfill the requirement of that office by feeding His precious sheep.

All the sheep, and especially the lambs!

Notice how carefully the Lord expresses Himself here. First, My lambs. How tenderly the great Shepherd is mindful of them. Peter, He means to say,

those little lambs of Mine will need your special care. Then, My sheep! That is, the whole flock must not be neglected, but you must see to it that all are grazed and fed. Always, Peter, you must be motivated in your apostolic calling by your love of me.

From this point on the old Simon is subdued. Now Peter, the rock, must tend Christ's flock. The great Shepherd will not have His flock tended and fed by carnal, self-seeking under shepherds, but by those only who are principled by the love of God, so wonderfully exemplified by the love of the great Shepherd, Who laid down His life for His sheep. That Peter learned this lesson is plain from his First Epistle where he concludes: "Feed the flock of God which is among you taking oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Such advice that apostle could not have given to Christ's under shepherds if he had not first learned, be it the hard way, to apply it to himself.

Editor's Notes

Report from Singapore. Elsewhere in this issue you will find the first report to our readers from our missionary in Singapore, Rev. Arie den Hartog, and his wife. In a note to me Rev. den Hartog worried that his article was too long, and he invited me to edit it. However, the report is so interesting and packed with information that I left it unedited. How about flooding the den Hartogs with mail from all our churches? Let's make an agreement, though, that they may answer by means of periodic reports in the *Standard Bearer*. I'm sure they are far too busy to answer many letters individually. You can get an aerogram from the post office for 22¢, and write a good-sized letter which will reach them promptly. Here is the address:

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Publications News. We have several items in this department to report.

- 1) A new RFPA Catalogue came from the press last week, and is now available from our Business Office.
- 2) A new supply of *Reformed Dogmatics* is now available, and a new supply of *Behold, He Cometh!* should soon be available. Both are now priced at \$12.95.
- 3) With the help of several generous gifts and some increased sales, our treasury is now in a position to proceed with our next projects. So it's full speed ahead on our next two books, *The Voice Of Our Fathers* and *Hyper-Calvinism And The Call Of The Gospel*. Both are scheduled for fall publication.
- 4) With the price of books going up, it will pay you to join the RFPA Book Club. Remember, if we get enough members, that discount will still jump from 10% to 20%! How about it?

EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Election and Reprobation Inseparable in Calvin

In the current discussion about reprobation in connection with the Boer Gravamen there has been the attempt on the part of some to maintain a certain doctrine of election without the doctrine of reprobation. Dr. Boer himself claims to maintain the doctrine of election as taught by the Canons, while he denies the doctrine of reprobation as taught by the Canons. Others, such as Dr. James Daane, teach a different brand of election as well as denying the Reformed doctrine of reprobation. Along with this denial of reprobation, Reformed theologians have been criticized for maintaining that there is an inseparable connection between election and reprobation and that the doctrine of election logically implies the doctrine of reprobation. This criticism has taken various forms and approaches. James Daane, for example, tried to make a big point of the argument that the logic of election is not the logic of numbers, although he has to this day never made plain how there could be election in any real sense as a "choosing out," without a reprobation at least in the *infra*-sense of a passing by. Now I don't happen to believe that the doctrine of reprobation is merely a logical implication of the doctrine of election and that it cannot be proved from Scripture. Nevertheless, those who are so quick to criticize this idea of a logical implication are morally obligated to demonstrate the flaw in this logic — something which they have never done and, I make bold to say, *cannot* do.

But the point I wish to make in this editorial is that John Calvin strongly maintains that election and reprobation are inseparable. He insists that we cannot hold to election unless we confess that God separated from all others certain persons whom it pleased Him thus to separate.

The reason I make this point is not that I consider Calvin to be the end of all argument. I definitely do not believe this. Only Scripture is the end of all

argument, and only before it must we bow. But my reason is threefold: 1) There have been those who suggest that there is a difference on this score between what they call the Reformed scholastics, on the one hand, and Calvin, on the other hand. Not infrequently, in fact, it is claimed that there is a difference even between Beza (Calvin's immediate successor in Geneva's school) and Calvin. This is not true. 2) In close connection with this, I want to point out that the Reformed tradition which maintains the inseparability of election and reprobation may literally be traced all the way back to Calvin. And remember: this is a tradition of Reformed *exegesis*. While in the abstract, perhaps, it is possible that this tradition has been mistaken for, lo, these many years, it is certainly no light thing to throw it overboard. 3) Those who deny this inseparability of election and reprobation ought openly and honestly to admit that they are not disciples of Calvin and that they are abandoning the Reformed tradition which can be traced back to him.

I wish to quote two passages from Calvin. Both are from that gem among his writings, his treatise on "The Eternal Predestination of God," which constitutes the first part of the volume *Calvin's Calvinism*, translated by Henry Cole. By the way, no one's theological education is complete unless he has made acquaintance with the treatises of Calvin found in this volume.

The first quotation is from page 45, in the context of Calvin's discussion of Ephesians 1:3, 4. There Calvin writes:

In the first place, there is, most certainly and evidently, an inseparable connection between the elect and the reprobate. So that the election, of which the apostle speaks, cannot consist unless we confess that God separated from all others certain persons whom it pleased Him thus to separate. Now,

this act of God is expressed by the term *pre-destinating*, which the apostle afterwards twice repeats.

The second quotation is from page 75, in the context of a lengthy discussion of that classic passage on election and reprobation, Romans 9. Calvin writes:

The mind and intent of the apostle, therefore, in his use of this similitude, are to be carefully observed and held fast — that God, the Maker of men, forms out of the same lump in His hands one vessel, or man, to honour, and another to dishonour, according to His sovereign and absolute will. For He freely chooses

some to life who are not yet born, leaving others to their own destruction, which destruction all men by nature equally deserve. And when Pighius holds that God's election of grace has no reference to, or connection with, His hatred of the reprobate, I maintain that reference and connection to be a truth. Inasmuch as the just severity of God answers, in equal and common cause, to that free love with which He embraces His elect.

Thus wrote Calvin, the prince of exegetes.

No true spiritual descendant of Calvin would use different language.

Ecumenism With a Vengeance

The church news columns of *The Grand Rapids Press* carried the following item on Saturday, March 29:

Basilica of St. Adalbert — The Rev. John Kromminga, president of Calvin Seminary, will preach at 7:30 p.m. Good Friday at St. Adalbert's in a service sponsored by West Side Fellowship of Churches. Clergy and choir members from the following churches will participate: Evangelical Covenant, Faith United Methodist, Holy Trinity, Alpine, Trinity Reformed, Remembrance Reformed, Saint James, Saint John's United Church of Christ, Wallin Congregational and St. Adalbert's.

It has become increasingly common, especially in urban areas, to hold some kind of ecumenical Good Friday service. This year again more than one such service was announced in the same issue of *The Grand Rapids Press* mentioned above. Not infrequently such services are conducted during the noon hour or during the traditional hours from noon to three o'clock.

Whatever the reasons for holding such services may be, I must confess that I have always been somewhat mystified by this practice, even when it is followed by so-called conservative and Bible-believing churches, and even in some instances when ministers of various churches of Reformed persuasion are involved. Mystified I am, because I always wonder within my soul what is especially ecumenical about Good Friday services. Is Good Friday a more ecumenical occasion than, say, Ascension Day, or Pentecost Sunday, or even Christmas? Yet such ecumenical services are not nearly so common — if they occur at all — on any of the latter occasions. Or, to put it bluntly, is Good Friday a more ecumenical occasion than the Lord's Day, the sabbath? Is the preaching of the cross on Good Friday different from the preaching of the cross on Sunday? Do the differences with respect to the preaching of the cross

on Sunday which prevail among different churches somehow tend to disappear or to become less important on Good Friday?

Or — God forbid — is the occasion of Good Friday used by some in a deliberate effort to ignore or to blur significant differences with respect to the preaching of the cross in the interest of promoting an ecumenical spirit? Is it the desire and aim of some that the apparently ecumenical feeling on Good Friday may also spill over into other areas and other occasions of ecclesiastical life?

I do not know what the motivation and what the justification for such ecumenical services may be. I have never heard a carefully expounded basis and motivation. And until I do hear one which satisfies my Reformed sensibilities, I could never justify such services nor cooperate in them.

But of this I am convinced, that the kind of service described in the news clipping above should be an offense to any Reformed Christian. And it is an abomination in the sight of the Holy One!

Why?

Because it involves cooperation in a Good Friday service between one who is supposed to be a Reformed seminary professor, bound by the creeds, the Roman Catholics (not to mention others), who are characterized in the Heidelberg Catechism as guilty of "a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry." (Question and Answer 80)

How is such cooperation possible on the very day when we remember in a special way that one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ?

The only explanation I can think of is that this is ecumenism with a vengeance.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Churches

Dr. A. Kuyper

(In the last article which appeared in the Standard Bearer of Kuyper's "Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Churches" Kuyper discussed his views on the relation between church and state. In this and successive paragraphs, Kuyper discusses the duties of the individual office bearers and the function of the office of believers.)

22. That Which Must Concern the Ministers of the Word

Among the office bearers of the church the ministers of the Word hold the primary place. They do not acquire this precedence from a certain worthiness of their person, nor from a certain higher status which should be due their office and which places their office above the office of elder or deacon, but exclusively from the work of the Word of God which they serve. Every pretension to honor or worthiness which is based on something other than the work of the Word must be resisted with resolute determination as selfishness and pride, both for their own sake and the sake of their ministry. So far is the worthiness of the minister of the Word dependent on the worth in which he holds the Word of God that his official authority, even though he still bears the title, dims and fades away in the same measure in which the power of the Word diminishes over his person and preaching. The Reformed Church knows no Romish office which works *ex opere operato* through priestly power. A minister of the Word is, in Reformed circles, a common man whose breath is in his nostrils, and, therefore, is to be considered as small as other

men because God alone is great and a creature can never be great. And even in the office with which he is clothed, the work of his person as person is not the least exalted. With or without the office he is and remains the same weak and frail man and erring sinner who can stand only by God's grace. A mayor in his office is clothed with a certain majesty of God. However he administers his office, this majesty remains. But with the preacher all the work of his ministry is exclusively controlled by the truth of the Word which he preaches. In so far as that Word comes through his ministry, he speaks with the King's power and he handles the keys of the kingdom of heaven. But where that Word is abandoned and weakened by him, he weakens his own ministerial work and lets go the glory of his office.

The calling of these ministers of the Word is to feed the flock of the Lord with that Word. They are to feed in two ways, namely, by doctrine and life. They are to feed by doctrine in the gathering of the congregation, in the education of the youth, and in the homes of believers. They are to feed by life, in their own house, among their own fellow citizens, and especially among the saints. The minister must feed the flock of the Lord in the gathering of believers by the Word which he expounds and applies there. The Word of God is applicable for each congregation in every time, and in every time for each person. And the secret of the preaching is hidden exactly in this that the meaning of the Holy Spirit is given to the Word of God by conscientious explana-

tion and carefully defined application. All topical preaching must therefore be condemned as sin in the Holy Place. One must not feed the flock with one's own ideas which he hangs on a text. No, but the Word must be preached as it stands through exegesis and application to the heart. He who does not unconditionally and unfailingly confess the Holy Scripture can for that reason not be allowed into the ministry of the Word. Thus, to oppose this infallibility and yet to appear before the congregation with a "it is written," is to pretend to confess something which one denies. It is thus immoral.

For this ministry, the person who enters into it ought to be educated as much in the exercise of godliness as in the exercise of study. A learned but ungodly man is powerless and offensive in the pulpit. But also, a godly and simple man is a misfit in the ministry. Study paired with godliness is thus the indispensable condition if, in the various studies, the study of and in God's Word, (I say not, "about" God's Word), always stands in the foreground.

If the opportunity for such an education is lacking, then the church must provide for it. When it exists, then it is sufficient for the church, after the studies are completed, to examine the candidates.

The right of this examination of perspective ministers rests with the consistory because the consistory calls. However, because neighboring churches have a like concern in this matter and many village churches are unable to examine in these studies, it is better to let such an exam be conducted by many churches together in Classis. Such an exam ought to cover both the studies and godliness. The exam in godliness is not to judge the state of such a person before God, but to pay very close attention to a man's confession and walk. Attention must be paid to his confession in order to examine whether he is orthodox in every respect, and to his walk by questioning those who know him. Above all, one ought diligently to inquire whether the gift to communicate has been given or withheld by King Jesus, in order that it may be known whether he actually possesses the gift of preaching, prayer, teaching, and consolation.

In this ecclesiastical way the properly examined persons come to their office through the call of the church and through installation into the ministry. The churches have to call their ministers of the Word. They must do this not through voting by roll call, nor choosing in an electoral college by each one who wants to, but in such a way that the believers make known their wishes through the consistory through a formulation of a nomination. Afterwards, the consistory makes its choice from that nomination. It then calls the one chosen; and after his coming, installs him into office, whether through other

ministers or through ruling elders. If things take place as they should in correspondence with other churches, then classis ought to approve such a call since the ministers of the Word preach also in neighboring churches, and the churches have to watch mutually for the soundness and the truthfulness of each other's ecclesiastical life.

Where ministers of the Word devote themselves entirely to the ministry of the church, they must also live from the church. Concerning the manner in which the church obtains these means of support, it need only be recalled here that the oldest Reformed Churches Under the Cross obtained these means both through subscription and through freewill gifts. But however received, the churches as such must pay their ministers. And they must do this certainly not as charity, but as the reverence of love more than as a rite. This care belongs, as is the arrangement with us, to the church treasurer. But it can also be the work of deacons if it is then understood not as charity but as the common service of tables.

All ministers of the Word are completely alike in rank. The minister of the smallest village is entirely the equal in rank to the minister of the Word in the court or in the capital. Bishops are unknown in the Reformed Churches. These churches detest them and condemn them as an unspiritual sneaking in and an unbecoming bringing in of hierarchy.

Finally, because not only the souls of believers, but also the churches as bodies, must be ruled by the Word of God, the ministers of the Word in like manner are rulers of the churches even as the ruling elders, and the presiding leadership belongs to them because of the work of the Word in all gatherings of an ecclesiastical nature.

23. The Proper Idea Of the Office Of Elder in the Church

Elders, in the narrow sense, are in level of office like the ministers of the Word and are designated in Holy Scripture with the name "elders" and "overseers." The distinction between the ministers of the Word as teaching elders and the regular elders as ruling elders is not completely correct. Also the regular elders actually teach. The difference lies only in this that the public exposition and application of the Word in the gathering of the congregation belongs to the minister of the Word, while the elders in the narrower sense only teach privately through admonition in the homes and confession of the Word by their lives. In the absence of the minister of the Word, the elders can edify the congregation. But this is a performance of another's office, not an exercise of their own office. On the other hand, the elders stand in the ecclesiastical ranks and in the exercise of discipline entirely as equals with the ministers of the

Word. In the ministry of the Word they are only a help, a supplement of the ministers, but in matters of rule and discipline they are more than a help. In this they form with the ministers one company. They have like powers, and they must, according to Question 85 of our Catechism, be considered as men set over the congregation. Also, as our Formula of Subscription expresses itself, "by this is prevented all tyranny and lordship." Sometimes they even seemingly come to stand above a minister of the Word in matters of ecclesiastical rule, namely, in so far as the one who has oversight over anyone is above that person concerning whom is the oversight. And it is very particularly charged to the elders, "to take oversight over the teaching and walk of the ministers of the Word."

They must, as Question 85 of our Catechism says, ¹be chosen by the congregation, yet be installed in their office by their fellow office bearers, whether the ministers of the Word or the ruling elders. Concerning the manner of election, what was said in the earlier paragraph concerning the election of ministers of the

Word applies here.

They can serve, if need be, for life; but better for a definite number of years because in this latter way also other gifts of the church come to their best expression and all oligarchy is then prevented in the church of God.

If such service in the congregation is charged to one or more elders so that he must give up his daily work, livelihood for his person and family ought to be provided for in entirety in the same way and under the same conditions as is designated above for the ministers of the Word. The purpose then pursued by the appointment of religious teachers, and so-called evangelists, can in this way more correctly, more properly, and more orderly be attained.

1. By the reference here and in the paragraph above to Question 85 of our Catechism, it is not clear to what Kuyper refers. Question 85 of the Heidelberg Catechism deals with the exercise of the keys through the preaching of the Word. It is possible that Kuyper refers to some expanded version of the Catechism which was at one time used in the Netherlands.

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Missions: God's Work

Prof. Robert D. Decker

In the previous articles we have studied the Scriptures to determine what the Word of God teaches concerning the mission work of the Church in the world. At this point we are prepared to draw some conclusions concerning the principles of missions. Taking into consideration all of the passages we have studied we arrive at the following definition of missions: Missions is that work of God in Christ by which through the official ministry of the Word by the Church He gathers His elect in the New Dispensation out of all nations of the world, both Jew and Gentile, with a view to the realization of the manifestation of His glory in the New Heavens and Earth. There are several elements included in this definition which deserve our attention. First, missions is emphatically and exclusively the work of God in Christ by the Holy Spirit of Christ. Second, missions is accomplished by means of the official preaching of

the gospel by the institute of the Church of Jesus Christ. Third, missions has as its immediate goal the gathering of the Church (elect, Body of Christ) both Jew and Gentile out of the nations. Fourth, missions has as its ultimate goal (*telos*, purposeful end) the full manifestation of God's glory in the redeemed, glorified church in the new creation. However one may speak of missions he must speak in terms of these fundamental principles, for they underlie all mission work in the true sense of the word. These principles are crucially important and indispensable. The church must know them, for they determine the only proper method of doing mission work.

Missions is emphatically and exclusively the work of God in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the universal testimony of the Scriptures. God must open the door for the preaching of the gospel or the gospel will not be preached. (Cf.

I Cor. 16:9; II Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3) The preachers are God's ambassadors, His official representatives who come with God's Word (II Cor. 5:18-21). The preachers are sent by Christ and, therefore, Christ is heard through their preaching (Romans 10:13-15). God must give those preachers "boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:18-20). The Reformed Confessions teach this same beautiful truth. In answer to the question: "What believest thou concerning the 'holy catholic church' of Christ?" the Heidelberg Catechism states: "That the Son of God from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to himself by his Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am and for ever shall remain, a living member thereof" (Lord's Day XXI). Note that the work of the gathering and defending and preserving of the church belongs to the Son of God. That church which is gathered by the Son of God is chosen by God to everlasting life. The work of gathering the church is accomplished by the Spirit and word of Christ. The work of gathering the church, therefore, which is what mission work is all about, is God's work from beginning to end. God in Christ through the Holy Spirit gathers the church. The same truth is delineated most clearly in the Canons of Dordt. In the first head of doctrine the Canons show from the Word of God that God elects sovereignly His church in Christ. God sends Christ to make atonement for the elect (Canons II). God out of His good pleasure brings the elect to conversion (Canons III, IV) and God preserves the elect unto everlasting life (Canons V). Still more, the Canons state: "Moreover the promise of the gospel is, that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel" (Canons II, Article 5). The point here is that it is God Who out of His good pleasure sends the gospel. Implied is this truth in those articles of the Belgic or Netherlands Confession of Faith which deal with the doctrine of the Church. (Cf. Articles XXVII - XXIX)

It is God in Christ, therefore, according to Scripture and the Reformed Confessions, Who accomplishes the work of missions. Even though God gathers His Church by the Spirit and Word of Jesus Christ, and even though that Word through which God gathers His Church must be preached, and even though that preaching must be done by men, it is God Himself Who gathers His Church.

That missions is the work of God is obvious also from the fact that it is God Who saves His Church, not man. God sovereignly loved Jacob and hated

Esau. Before those children were even born God said to their mother: "The elder shall serve the younger." This was so that the "purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth." God elected Israel to be His peculiar people and raised up Pharaoh according to His decree of reprobation to show His power and declare His name throughout the earth. The fact is, God "... has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Romans 9:11-33). That beautiful epistle which has as its theme the glory of the elect Church in Christ begins with a doxology of praise to the predestinating God: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:3-6). God elects His Church in Jesus Christ.

It is God Who in the fulness of time sends His only begotten Son into the world to make atonement for the sins of the elect. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

God regenerates His elect so that they become receptive spiritually to the gospel. Those who receive Christ and are given power to become the sons of God are those who are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12,13). God implants the seed of the new life in the hearts of His elect. God gives them the hearing ear, the seeing eye, and the heart that understands and believes. This work of regeneration is absolutely indispensable to salvation, for apart from being born again a man cannot even *see* the Kingdom of God. This is precisely what Jesus told Nicodemus when he came to Jesus at night to discuss the things of the Kingdom of God: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). God calls His saints out of darkness into His marvelous light (I Peter 2:9); God converts and gives them faith (Ephesians 2:8); God justifies His elect in Christ (Romans 5:1); and God sanctifies, preserves, and glorifies the saints (I Peter 5:10). God is absolutely sovereign in the work of salvation. God accomplishes that whole work of salvation according to His eternal counsel: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom

he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Romans 8:29, 30). This is why all things work together for good to them that love God who are the called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). This is why all things are for the Church and why nothing can be against it. This is why nothing can separate the elect from the love of God which is in Christ. (Cf. Romans 8:31ff.) This is the great comfort for God's Church in the world.

That the work of missions is God's in Christ is also clearly evident from the fact that God directs the course of missions throughout the world. The Word of God is not sent everywhere. Neither is it sent at random, here and there without purpose. The preaching of the gospel takes the course which God determines. Acts 16 speaks of Paul's second missionary journey and tells us in verses 6-10: "Now when they were gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him saying, Come over unto Macedonia and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them." Obviously God di-

rected them every step of the way. The preaching of the gospel went where God wanted it to go and nowhere else! The Canons of Dordt sum this truth nicely when they say that the promise of the gospel together with the command to repent and believe must be published promiscuously, "... wheresoever God out of his good pleasure sends the gospel" (Canons II, 5).

The conclusion from all this is evident. Not man in any sense of the word, except as a God ordained human instrument, is the author of mission work. The work does not depend upon man for its success, nor can man frustrate the work of missions. Can man frustrate God?! Mission work is God's work in Christ exclusively. This is the *first* principle of missions and certainly determinative of mission methods. This fundamental principle undergirds all proper mission work. From a practical point of view this principle is the encouragement and incentive for the Church and its missionaries. The work is always extremely difficult, sometimes frustrating. It is often done with tears. And it is always carried on overagainst the unrelenting hatred and opposition of the world of unbelief. Merely because the work is God's the Church may rest assured that it shall be accomplished. The Church will be gathered out of the nations, and the Kingdom will come. Not even the gates of hell can prevail against God's Church.

GUEST ARTICLE

The Minister: Specialist or Shepherd

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Today's society is one in which the specialist plays an important role. In almost every sphere of labor one must have received a great amount of special training in order to be known as a professional in his field. As a result, much of the simple way of life as we once knew it has vanished. For example, instead of the one-room school house of long ago wherein could be found only one teacher who instructed all the grades, many schools today embrace a large

faculty of teachers, each specializing in his own field. The same has become true in the area of doctoring. There are available today specialists of every sort: skin specialists, bone specialists, brain, heart, foot specialists, and so the list can go on without a seeming end. So specialized has this profession become that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a general practitioner who can be one's family doctor.

A specialist, therefore, is one who devotes himself entirely to a special occupation and who is, because of intensified study in that field, considered by most to be the "tops" in his profession. He is a professional. Take him outside of that field and he is unproductive and sterile; he is at a loss for what to do. But within that field he is the best there is. He has amassed to himself a tremendous amount of knowledge, attained through specialized training, and he therefore knows all the ins and outs of his profession.

Now, the purpose of this article is not to criticize this development which exists within this compartmentalized society in which we find ourselves. In fact, in many cases this development is for the better and is used for the benefit of God's Church. The purpose of this article is, however, to answer the question whether the minister of the gospel must be placed within this sphere of specialists. Must we say that ministers are specialists?

Such has become the attitude of many today, not only among the laity but also among the clergy itself. The minister is indeed a professional in a certain field of labor. And although those who possess this attitude have a hard time pinpointing exactly what that field of labor is, the general consensus emerges that the minister is a professional or a specialist in the field of preaching. He has received extensive training in the areas of doctrine, exegesis, homiletics, and languages, all of which equip him in his field of labor. He is therefore, as a result of this intensified training, a specialist in the sphere of preaching, teaching catechism, leading societies, and government of the congregation.

Those who take such an attitude, however, also will be, and usually are, the ones who feel that the minister is incapable of handling anything outside of his special field of labor. He is a specialist in the field of preaching and that is all. That is to say, any major problems which take place in the congregation outside of doctrine and government of the church must not be placed in the lap of the minister but must be taken to another professional who specializes in dealing with these problems. Therefore their reasoning is as follows. If I am having problems within my marriage I must not go to the minister but I must go to a marriage counselor who specializes in that field. If I have a problem child I must not seek the guidance of a minister but I must take him to a child psychologist. If I suffer under mental and emotional anxiety I must go to a professional who specializes in psychiatric help and not to a minister who is ignorant of these matters. There is no way a minister is able to specialize in all these fields. Perhaps he receives a little training in Seminary so that he is able to deal with the little problems which occur in the everyday life of a congregation, but he must leave the major problems well enough alone. Let him stick

to preaching and let the rest be placed into the hands of other capable specialists.

Because of this clamor of many about us the child of God becomes somewhat reluctant to go to his minister with his problem. He becomes confused. Which way should he turn? Where should he go? It is such a hassle to go to a specialist and pay big money for only a few moments of his time. But on the other hand I am told not to bother the minister with these problems because he cannot help anyway. Where is the answer?

The answer lies in a re-evaluation of the calling and work of the minister.

In a certain sense of the word it can be said that the minister is a specialist — not, however, according to the definition cited above. A minister is not a specialist because of the amount of intensified study he has done. He is not a specialist because of the courses of study he has followed in Seminary. Do not misunderstand this either. A minister must be trained in order rightly to divide the Word of truth. He must receive special training in order that he might be capable of handling the work of the ministry. Not just anyone can be a minister. God uses means to prepare one for the work of the ministry, and therefore training is necessary. But that is *not* what makes the minister a specialist. It is the fact that the minister is called by Christ and qualified by the Holy Spirit. He is a specialist because God himself calls and equips him to bring His Word. The minister is the special ambassador of Christ who comes in the name of Christ and speaks the Word of Christ Who has sent him.

That the minister is equipped by the Holy Spirit applies first of all and primarily to the preaching. Such is the emphasis of Romans 10:13-15. But the minister is called and qualified not only publicly to proclaim God's Word, but also privately to apply that Word to the lives of the individual saints. That is an integral part of the minister's calling. As the *Form of Ordination of the Ministers of God's Word*, found in the liturgical section of the *Psalter*, when enumerating the duties of the minister, states, "First, that they faithfully explain to their flock, the Word of the Lord, revealed by the writings of the prophets and the apostles; and apply the same as well in general as in particular (emphasis mine, W.B.), to the edification of the hearers; instructing, admonishing, comforting, and reproving according to everyone's need." It is part of the minister's calling then to apply God's Word in particular to the saints in need. He must lead, comfort, admonish, and guide those believers who are in need, whatever that need may be.

That is why it is preferable to say concerning the minister that he is a pastor or a shepherd. A minister is one who shepherds his congregation. He applies

God's Word to every one of their needs, whether they be physical, psychological, or spiritual. To deny that would be to cut man into segments and to deny the unity of man's being. To deny that would be to claim that there is some part of man's existence which dwells outside the sphere of Christ's care for his people.

That this also is a part of the calling of a minister is evident from certain passages of Scripture. Jesus Himself Who is the Great Shepherd of His people gave direct command to His disciple Peter with the words, "Feed my sheep" and "Feed my lambs." Peter, and through him all office bearers, are called therefore not only to nourish God's people through the preaching but also to take the spiritual oversight of God's people. That this is the calling of all ministers and not just of the disciples is clear when Peter himself, in his first epistle chapter 5, exhorts the elders to "feed the flock of God which is among you." Paul too makes it abundantly clear in Ephesians 4:11 and 12 that Christ has given "pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Therefore to deny or even to belittle this official work of the minister — the undershepherd of Christ — is to deny or belittle the work of Jesus Christ Himself. Christ is pleased to care for His sheep through the officebearers He has ordained in the midst of a congregation.

Despite the clear testimony of Scripture to us we are still somewhat in doubt as to the *ability* of a minister to deal with any major problem. What about the arguments of those who contend that a minister is a specialist only in the field of preaching and that he has no learning or valuable experience outside of that sphere? Is it not true that the minister's knowledge is far too limited to treat such matters as marital problems or mental depression? Besides, it seems as if the minister is one who is not really all that much in touch with the nitty-gritty of life. He sits in his study with his nose stuck in books all day, leading a

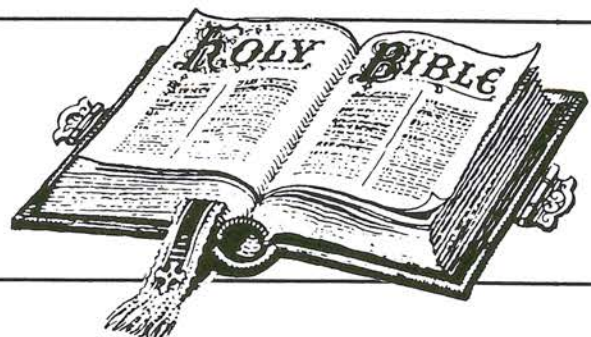
somewhat sheltered life. Dare I trust my problems to him?

In answer to these doubts let it be established in the first place that the minister is called and qualified to *bring God's Word*. If he came with his own advice then indeed he would be unqualified and a poor judge in these problems. But the minister comes with the Word of God. Through the minister *Christ* speaks to His people in need. Who will dare to say that the advice of Christ is poor advice? Christ knows the needs of every one of His sheep, whatever the problem may be, and He must guide and direct them. That He does through His undershepherd who is equipped by the Holy Spirit to bring that Word. Secondly, let it be established too that we may not make a separation between preaching and pastoral care. When a minister works with the sheep of his congregation he is applying specifically what he has proclaimed publicly. In fact, the more the minister is involved with the needs of his congregation the richer and more meaningful his preaching becomes.

Finally, let one more fact be established. The minister understands the needs of the child of God first of all because he himself is a sinner and has many needs too. But secondly, he understands because Christ understands. Christ loves His people and will care for them out of that love. The world may need all of these different specialists because they have nowhere else to go. The child of God on the other hand has his faithful Saviour to whom he can turn. We experience what the Psalmist experiences, "The Lord my Shepherd holds me within his tender care, and with his flock he folds me, no want shall find me there." The minister experiences that with his congregation. And when he deals with problems he does not do so with a cold, professional air, but with the love and concern of another believer and with the love Christ places within his heart.

The minister is not a specialist. He is a shepherd who is called to know the needs of God's people and who is qualified to bring God's Word to those saints in need. Christ Himself, therefore, will see to it that we suffer no want.

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ALL AROUND US

Verhey Case Appealed (Again)

Rev. G. Van Baren

Some people, it seems, are gluttons for punishment. These continue to battle even long after it becomes clearly evident that the battle is lost. One admires their courage and determination — yet feels a certain sympathy that these can not recognize the “handwriting on the wall.” Such is the situation with Dutton Christian Reformed Consistory in its new appeal to the C.R.C. Synod of 1980. That consistory has repeatedly objected to the position of Dr. A. Verhey who was approved for the ministry and ordained in the Christian Reformed Church. Their objections were directed against Verhey’s method of interpretation of the Bible as revealed especially in two claims of his: that the serpent of Gen. 3 did not actually speak, and a questioning of the literal character of the earthquake which accompanied Christ’s resurrection. Now again Dutton approaches Synod to appeal its decision of last year. The appeal is summarized in the *Outlook* of March 14, 1980:

The consistory, having considered the synod’s decisions on the appeal is convinced that that appeal has been illegally, incompletely and inadequately dealt with and, considering that the matter is of sufficient importance to the welfare of our churches, appeals to the Synod of 1980 to rectify and complete the unfinished resolution of this matter (Art. 84, pp. 91-97).

Grounds:

1. Article 30 of the Church Order states that “Assemblies and church members may appeal to the assembly next in order if they believe that injustice has been done or that a decision conflicts with the Word of God or the Church Order.” Since the matter was acknowledged as properly before Synod of 1979, we believe that “the assembly next in order” to which appeal must be made to rectify deficiencies in the 1979 decisions is the Synod of 1980.

2. The first decision which the Synod took on the matter was irrelevant to our appeal and was taken in violation of the Synod’s own rule:

“2. A main motion is not acceptable under the following conditions:

“If it is verbally or substantially the same as a motion already rejected by the Synod. . . .”

Notice that Recommendation D,2 (p. 95 *Acts*) which carried was “substantially” and for the most part also “verbally” “the same as” D,1, which had “already been rejected by the Synod.”

3. The Synod in its Recommendation 3 (p.96) acknowledged that Dr. Verhey’s method as he applies it is objectionable, but limited its criticism to merely “some aspects” of his method. But Dr. Verhey’s own defense of his views states clearly that what is at issue is not merely “some aspects of his method,” or, as the committee said, some “detail which is questioned.” He wrote (*Acts* 1979, p. 656)

“Incidentally, I do not “except” the resurrection from this kind of investigation. Indeed, if this kind of investigation demonstrated that Jesus had not been raised, I would become a Jew. The gospels stake their case on history, after all. But such an investigation, while it cannot ‘prove’ God took Jesus from the dead, clearly demonstrates it is not historically unreasonable to accept such a claim.”

Notice that in the application of this method even the resurrection is made historically debatable.

4. The 1979 Synod’s treatment of the matter ignored the material which we cited from Dr. Verhey’s thesis (pp. 742, 743) presumably because, as Dr. Verhey suggested, it was irrelevant. That material from the thesis clearly demonstrates that Dr. Verhey in applying his method contradicts Article VII of the Belgic Confession on THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE TO BE THE ONLY RULE OF FAITH, the “sola scriptura” teaching which he in the thesis repeatedly criticizes. His thesis also abundantly demonstrates that the application of Dr. Verhey’s view to moral matters makes every application of the Bible to man’s moral decisions subject to the veto of man’s own experience.

5. The 1979 Synod later in its sessions reaffirmed decisions taken by previous synods regarding the inerrancy of the Bible. In so doing it stated again "that it is inconsonant with the creeds to declare that there is an area of Scripture in which it is allowable to posit the possibilities of actual historical inaccuracies (cf. Belgic Confession, 'believing without any doubt all things contained therein')". . . .

It also again "warns against the use of any method of biblical interpretation which excludes or calls into question either the event character or revelational meaning of biblical history". . . . Yet this same synod in the case we appealed to it took no effective action to maintain these decisions.

6. The Synod's treatment of our appeal fails to take the requested action, to prevent the objectionable method of interpreting and using the Bible from being preached and taught in our churches. Furthermore, the Synod's decision provided for no follow-up on its advice. In merely urging Dr. Verhey to reexamine his method under the guidance of the Neland Consistory and in consultation with Reformed theologians, and advising him to speak cautiously in presenting diverging interpretations and demonstrate their harmony with our creeds . . . it was

taking no effective action. In fact, its decision is being interpreted as tolerating his views. As the Press reported "Synod Allows Minister His Debatable Views" (Headline, G.R. Press June 21, 1979).

In view of the increasing prevalence of views such as these among us, we appeal to the Synod of 1980 "to declare that this method of interpreting and using the Bible is not to be tolerated in the Christian Reformed Churches and to take whatever measures may be needed to prevent its being preached and taught by Dr. Verhey as a minister in our churches."

It appears that Dutton has some strong grounds for its case. One would hope and pray too that they could convince the C.R.C. Synod of the seriousness of this whole situation. Yet one can not but wonder how far a consistory can go before it faces the question: submit or depart. I had rather thought that Dutton had reached that point after the Synod of 1979. But what will happen now after the Synod of 1980? One would think that, before God, that consistory can not submit to any kind of decision which allows Verhey to remain, with his present convictions, within the C.R.C. Is that consistory ready to face the consequences of faithfulness?

The Joy of Singing

In the *Biblical Educator*, January 1980, there appears a brief article on "Singing" by James B. Jordan. There are a few very thought-provoking paragraphs. What do you think?

Singing is one of the most important things the Christian School teaches. Singing is an emotional enhancement of speech, and it was given to humanity by God to enable us to praise Him. The humanistic schools have replaced music and singing, which are God-centered, with competitive sports, which are man-centered: the goal being to glorify the individual or to glorify the school. . . .

The result of a self-conscious music programme will be churches filled with people who have been trained to glorify God with their voices. The prospect is exciting. Also, years of singing good hymns and

psalms will do much to instill a sense of good taste, and prevent the children from being caught up in whatever the current humanistic musical fad is. The reason Christian kids so often go for "rock" music is that their musical taste is completely unformed. The violence in today's music is but the reverse side of the sentimental, goopy, syrupy, popular music of a previous generation. "Champagne music" leads to "marijuana music." Too many gospel songs are nothing but sentimental goop, and children brought up on these are starved for music with some real meat in it. They find such "strong" music in "rock." It would be better if they had been brought up on strong Christian music, such as the psalms.

Do you think, perhaps, that our emphasis is somewhat misplaced sometimes?

Ecumenism to the "nth" degree

An article quoted in the *Christian News*, February 4, 1980, suggests the lengths to which some go to unite mankind — and all religions. One might be shocked by the suggestions — but they are hardly unexpected, given the religious climate of our day.

And the suggestions point once more to the end of the age.

All world religions achieve at least a glimpse of transcendent reality, declares British religious philosopher John Hick, who says that calling any faith the

one true religion is a form of bigotry.

Historical and cultural differences have shaped such images of deity as the God of Israel, Allah or the non-personal Void of the Eastern traditions, Mr. Hick says.

"God as experienced by this or that individual or group is real, not illusory," he maintains, "and yet the experience of God is partial and is adapted to our human spiritual capacities."

If this thesis is accepted, Mr. Hick adds, "then the very plurality and variety of the human experience of God provides a wider basis for theology than can the experience of any one religious tradition taken by itself."

Mr. Hick's propositions "toward a philosophy or religious pluralism" came during a two-day conference on "New Directions in Philosophy of Religion." It also marks an inaugural of sorts for Mr. Hick, who is joining the host school's faculty as Danforth professor of religion. He teaches the rest of the year at the University of Birmingham in England. . . .

The evil and wrongness of the proposition are obvious. Yet we shall be hearing more and more of this sort of thing. It will increasingly become part of the cry for removal of all "religious discrimination." Be not deceived by such cries.

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLE

Report From Singapore

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Our Lord Jesus Christ:

Greetings to you in the name of our covenant God and Savior Jesus Christ, from the island of Singapore. We have been in Singapore for almost two months at the writing of this letter to you and there is just so much for us to tell you we hardly know where to begin and how to keep this report short enough that it does not fill up the whole Standard Bearer. We are very much enjoying the labors here. Our work is being well received and greatly appreciated. Many prayers of thanksgiving are being raised to God on your behalf for sending us here as your missionary.

Upon arrival in Singapore we received a blessed welcome from a group of the members of the G.L.T.S. They took us immediately to our new home. Already on the day of our arrival we had fellowship with the saints here. The next evening there was a special evening to welcome us. We met many of the members of the G.L.T.S. for the first time. We tried very hard to remember some of the difficult Chinese names and we experienced our first taste of many very different oriental foods.

It would be hard for me to describe all the impressions that flood in upon one after first entering

a strange land. Though there are many things here like the West, there is also no end of sights and experiences which are very different. Every day seems to bring new experiences and new sights.

Singapore is from many respects a very beautiful land. There is so much lush green tropical foliage. There are many beautiful flowering trees. The name garden city is a very appropriate one. The island is covered with modern highrise apartment buildings. For the most part Singapore is a very neat and clean city. While there are many modern buildings in Singapore, there are also many older, quaint, oriental-style shops and markets. There are still many places where people live in what are called Kampongs. These are a combination of rather crudely built huts, all built one against the other, which serve as the dwellings of several families living very close together. Often the people living together in these Kampongs are related to each other. The streets are jammed with cars but there are also motor bikes. In many places one can see the trishaws still in use, not only for the tourist trade but also for the transport of the Singaporeans. It is simply unbelievable what these trishaws are sometimes made to carry. There are

many open air food shops where one can purchase a great variety of different foods from many different countries. There are millions of people living in Singapore and the city is busy 24 hours a day. The abundance of trees help to camouflage the fact that there are so many people living here but it seems that, wherever you go, you are surrounded by huge apartment buildings.

The weather in Singapore is hot and humid. The amazing thing about the weather is that it is so consistently the same. It is always from 85-90 degrees in the daytime and cools off in the evening only to the low 80s. We have not however found the weather to be oppressive and we have already adapted to it quite well.

After two months here we are starting to feel pretty much at home. We are growing accustomed to the oriental way of life. During the first month that we were here we lived in a semi-detached home. This is comparable to the U.S. duplex. The home was spacious, comfortable, and quite nice. The only problem was that it was much too far away from the meeting place of the church. By the providence of God we managed to find other accommodations in a place where such is very difficult to find and also normally very expensive. We now live in one of the high-rise apartment buildings on the fifth floor. Although this is not quite as nice for our family since there is no outside play area, this apartment is nevertheless very nice, spacious, and comfortable. There are many advantages to this place. It is within walking distance to the church and also to shopping districts. Because the apartment is so spacious we are able to hold some of the meetings of the G.L.T.S. in our home. We are now much closer to the homes of some of the members. Because we are high up there is a nice cool breeze blowing through our home.

Transportation presents some problem in Singapore. Traffic is very heavy and also very slow. The government of Singapore is trying very hard to discourage the private ownership of cars by taxing them heavily. Thus even a small used car that is quite old will cost in the neighborhood of \$10,000 Singapore. In addition to this, one must pay an annual registration fee of \$1,000 plus high road taxes and very high petro costs. If one sees the traffic conditions here he can appreciate these efforts by the government. For all of these reasons we have decided not to buy a car. Public transportation, though also slow, is nevertheless very good. One can get a bus to virtually any place in Singapore. There are many taxies, and one can walk to many places he desires to go. It is possible to do much of the work of the church from our home. To understand this, one must remember that most of the members of the G.L.T.S. come from pagan homes where a Christian minister is

not welcome. Therefore most of the pastoral work will have to be done by people coming to our home. This the members of the G.L.T.S. are doing very much, for which we are glad.

Our oldest daughter Sara is attending Kindergarten at a Presbyterian Church. There was some difficulty at first for her to adjust. She is the only western child in the class. When we lived far away it was necessary for me to take her to school every day, a trip of more than an hour each way. Now the school bus picks her up right at the apartment. Sara has learned to like school so much that she now goes eagerly every day. We thank the Lord for this. The school is academically quite good but there are not very many signs that it is Christian.

For the rest of the space let me tell you just a little about the work of the church here. The G.L.T.S. is very busy in the work of the Lord. It would not be possible for me to tell you all of the activities in which they are engaged. We are much encouraged by the many members who take an active part in the work of the church. Their zeal and tireless labors for the Lord are a most wonderful testimony of their faith. Let me just briefly outline some of the activities in which we are directly involved.

The Lord's Day is a very busy day for us. Most of the meetings are on the Lord's Day because it is often very difficult for the young people to get out of their homes for meetings during the week. The Lord's Day begins with four Sunday School classes. These start at 8:45 a.m. I teach one of these classes. I took this class over from one of the brothers who is now teaching another class. In this class I teach from the Westminster Confession. I picked up from where the brother before me left off. This happened to be at the point where the confession deals with the doctrine of the sacraments. Because of various developments with regard to the sacraments in the G.L.T.S., and also because of the controversy in our own Protestant Reformed Churches about baptism on the mission field, we have spent a long time talking about the sacraments. Attendance at this class is from 25 to 30 and the discussions are lively and interesting. The worship service begins at 10:15 a.m. and usually lasts until 12:00 noon. They are used to listening to hour-long sermons. The service is led by a chairman who is one of the leaders of the G.L.T.S. He leads in opening words from Scripture, singing, responsive reading, the offering, and Scripture reading. My part in the service is then the pastoral prayer, the sermon, and the closing prayer. Attention to the preaching is very good. The service is conducted in a very reverential and god-glorifying spirit. There are always more than 100 young people present at the service. This means that the meeting place is filled to capacity. Work is being done on re-arranging the

seating to accommodate more people. After the worship service there is a time of Christian fellowship.

At 1:00 p.m. there is a pre-baptism class that meets at our apartment. This class has 14 members, most of whom are recent converts who have requested baptism. I am instructing them in the fundamentals of the Christian faith. We started with the subject of the true knowledge of God.

In the afternoon there is a meeting of the executive committee of the G.L.T.S. This executive committee acts somewhat like the consistory, while there is no instituted church here. These meetings always last all afternoon. They are also held at our apartment. The reason for the length and frequency of these meetings is chiefly all the matters that must be discussed in relation to the institution of the church here. We are working very hard in making all the necessary preparations for the organization of the church here. It is our conviction that this should take place as soon as possible. Every Tuesday evening we meet with a committee to formulate a constitution for the newly-organized church. It will probably take several months yet before the church can be organized because of the many things that must be done. Be sure to keep this matter before you in prayer. Many decisions have to be made. It is very urgent that the foundations of the church be laid in the truth of the Word of God. I am preaching a series of sermons on the Lord's Day on the subject of the doctrine of the church with a view to the organization of the church.

At 7:30 p.m. every Lord's Day evening some of the members of the G.L.T.S. gather together to listen to taped sermons. This is a group of those young people who are able to get out of their homes for a second time on the Lord's Day. We meet at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ong, the only married couple of the G.L.T.S.

On Wednesday evening there is a prayer meeting. At this meeting one of the leaders of the G.L.T.S. will give a short exhortation from Scripture and the rest of the time will be spent in prayer. We find these meetings very encouraging and meaningful. It is an opportunity for all who can come, to pray for the church and also to pray for one another. Though this is somewhat of a new thing for us, we find it very good. We hear of many of the hardships and trials that these youthful saints experience as well as their new found joy of salvation. Most of the prayers are God-centered and very beautiful. I would like to tell you about some of the experiences of the saints which have been reported at these prayer meetings but space does not allow me.

During the week there are many pastoral visits in

our home. We thank the Lord that the young people are getting more free and open to come to discuss various questions and we are all the time encouraging this. Few days go by that we do not have someone in our home. Many of the young people will come with long lists of questions for which they are seeking answers.

Saturdays are also very busy days for us. In the morning there is a class for a young couple that will soon be married. Because these young people are from pagan homes they need and desire instruction on establishing a Christian home. We are using the book of Rev. Engelsma. How thankful we as Protestant Reformed people ought to be for our Christian homes. Saturday afternoon there are two more Bible classes. I teach one of these classes. I am giving doctrinal instruction in the Heidelberg Catechism for the older members. Another brother is doing the same for younger members. This class is very well attended and also meets in our apartment. Regular attendance is from 30 to 40. We are much encouraged by the evident sincere desire to learn more of the Reformed faith and the desire to be grounded in the doctrines of the faith.

There are many more activities that go on through the week. There are meetings of cell groups in various locals, there is work to distribute tracts and tapes, there are groups who do follow-up work with those who have attended worship services and with those who have special problems. I could not possibly detail all of this for you.

We rejoice at the evidences of the blessing of the Lord. The past labors of our churches have borne much fruit. The G.L.T.S. is growing in the knowledge of and love for the Reformed faith. It is hard to imagine what the Lord may have in store for the G.L.T.S. They could become the center of the Reformed faith in Singapore. There is no other church that even comes close to the Reformed faith. Two young men and probably a third has aspirations for the gospel ministry. Two of these brothers are presently studying at the Bible college of the Presbyterian church. They are greatly desirous of further training that will establish them more firmly in the Reformed faith and equip them to become better ministers.

We can be thankful that the Lord has given our churches an open door to work here in Singapore and to share the glorious heritage of the Reformed faith which He has delivered to us. Please continue to pray for us and also for the youthful saints here.

Your Missionary and his wife,
Rev. & Mrs. Arie den Hartog

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

April 15, 1980

Dear Timothy,

In our last few letters we were discussing the idea of the conscience as that term is often described in Scripture. Especially in our last letter we were talking about the statement in Paul's first letter to Timothy (4:2) where Paul speaks of a conscience which is seared as with a hot iron. And we talked about the fact that a man who continually commits the same sin can succeed in stilling the voice of his conscience so that it no longer condemns him. We have to talk about this a bit more because of the seriousness of this — also for the child of God. How does it happen that a man can still the voice of his conscience?

It might be well, first of all, to remind ourselves that, in an ultimate sense, this is really impossible. It is possible that a man so quiets the voice of his conscience that he no longer hears the condemning voice of God when he commits a particular sin. He can, so to speak, commit that sin without having any immediate consciousness of the wrongness of it. He is so hardened to the idea of that sin that he does not even consider it a sin at all any more. He reaches a point when he is able to go blithely on his way continuing in the same sin and having no pangs of conscience about it whatsoever. But there is still, deep down and beneath the consciousness, that sense of wrongness. If, for example, a man has become so hardened to blaspheming that he curses and takes God's name in vain without any thought of wrong, that sense of wrong can still be aroused in him by someone calling his attention to the sin and reprimanding him for it. Once again he is reminded of the sin and of the terrible judgment of God upon him for it, and, momentarily, his conscience once again speaks. Although he may drive the thought from his mind as quickly as possible, nevertheless, for the moment, it is there. In a very general sense of the word, this is the reason why the wicked world cannot tolerate the presence of the Church of Christ in her

midst. The question often arises, you know, why the world should really pay any attention to the Church of Christ. After all, the Church is very small and insignificant. It has no power. In no sense of the word does it stand in the way of the world in the pursuit of the wicked goals upon which the world sets its collective heart. Would it not be the part of wisdom for the world just simply to forget about the Church and let it go? But the world can never do this. No matter how small the Church actually is, the Church is the constant and living testimony of the truth of God in the midst of the world. And the Church serves, therefore, to remind the world constantly of her evil and sin and of the just judgment of God upon her. But it is precisely this which the world cannot stand, because that testimony of the Church is confirmed in the conscience of wicked men and arouses that conscience once again. So the Church must be silenced in order for the world to go her own evil way undisturbed. That is why, according to the first verses of Revelation 11, the testimony of the two witnesses must be silenced. And that is why, when the dead bodies of these witnesses lie in the streets of Jerusalem which has become Sodom and Egypt, the wicked rejoice and send presents to one another.

Nevertheless, it is possible for a man to silence the voice of his conscience. And the question remains: how is this done?

To answer this question, I want to tell you about a lecture which, years ago, Rev. Ophoff gave to us when I was still in Seminary. I do not recall the exact circumstances of the lecture any more, but I think Rev. Ophoff was lecturing on the hardening of Pharaoh's heart. And he was explaining to us what it means that the heart is hardened. You must remember that Rev. Ophoff, for all his forgetfulness and seeming abstract air, had a profound understanding of human nature. He could make observations about human nature which had a way of sticking with a

man and which, as the years went by, proved to be more filled with profound insights than one first suspected. I cannot, of course, reproduce his lecture word for word, but I remember vividly the gist of it; and it went something like this.

If one looks at the matter of hardening from the human side, then this is what happens to a man when he hardens his heart. He is a man who does something wrong, something evil and displeasing in the sight of God, something contrary to God's will. Whatever may be the immediate motives for doing this wrong, he knows, at the time he did it, that what he did was wrong in the sight of God. He knows that beyond contradiction, for God impresses the wrong upon his conscience. But, said Rev. Ophoff, he does not want to confess that what he did was wrong. Again, he may have a thousand different reasons for refusing to confess the wrong, among which is surely his own sinful pride; but whatever the reasons may be, that is not important. The important thing is that he refuses, for one reason or another, to make confession.

Now, in the light of this refusal to make confession, what must he do? Well, the thing to do, of course — really, the only thing to do — is to justify what he has done. He must explain why he refuses to confess. And the only way he can explain his refusal to confess is to justify what he has done. And so he begins to do this — first of all, in his own consciousness. He has to convince himself first of all. If he has not convinced himself he can never succeed in convincing others. In order to convince himself he begins to marshal all kinds of evidence of one sort or another to prove to himself that what he did was not, in fact, wrong. If this evidence he summons to his assistance is to work, he must also, quite clearly, commit some form of intellectual dishonesty. I recall distinctly that Rev. Ophoff himself used this very term: "intellectual dishonesty." He meant by that that, when one commits a sin of any sort, there is no real sound evidence which can excuse that sin. A sin is always a sin. It is a transgression of the will of God. So there is no evidence which is valid which can justify the sin. In the summoning of such evidence, then, he must be intellectually dishonest. But this does not disturb him too much. His goal is to prove to himself that what he did was perfectly all right. Now, man is very adept at collecting this type of evidence and he comes with mountains of it. He has all his reasons carefully laid out why it was right, in this instance, to do what he did.

The trouble is, said Rev. Ophoff, that, once having collected all this evidence, he can actually succeed in persuading himself that the evidence is valid and that what he did was therefore, in his case, no sin. And when he has convinced himself, then also he is hardened. He has convinced himself that sin is not sin, that wrong is right, that a violation of God's law

is perfectly justified, that there are extenuating circumstances which make it entirely proper for him to do what he did. And, having persuaded himself, he becomes convinced of his own arguments, marvels at the skill with which he assembled the evidence, and uses this evidence in his defense of the proposition that he need not confess to any wrong.

Now there are, of course, degrees of hardening. It is a certain process which the sinner carries on. It does not happen overnight. It takes, sometimes, a long time. But the fact remains that, once having set himself upon this path, it becomes increasingly difficult to turn back. Scripture speaks of the fact that there is a kind of ultimate hardening which makes repentance impossible: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6). And just because this is a certain process, the voice of the conscience must be increasingly stilled and will be stilled as a man continues to justify his conduct. He can at last reach the point where he becomes completely cold and indifferent to the truth of the Word of God and hateful of it.

If one, on the other hand, looks at this matter from God's point of view — and one must do this because *God* hardens the heart — then one must remember especially two things. One is that this increasing hardness of heart is the judgment of God Himself upon the sinner who sets himself against God's law. God punishes sin with sin. God judges so inexorably that the sinner increases in sin and hatred against God. God punishes the sin which a man does by hardening him in his sin as the expression of His own righteous wrath until the sinner is literally "beyond" repentance — until it is "impossible . . . to renew them again unto repentance." This is also the teaching of Romans 1. God reveals His wrath from heaven. Idolatry becomes homosexuality because God, in His wrath, "gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts. . . ." and because God "gave them over to a reprobate mind." God sovereignly carries out His own eternal purpose in this way. Secondly, God always does this through His own Word. It is His Word which pricks the conscience of the sinner and arouses in him that voice of condemnation. At last he cannot stand that Word any more because it reminds him of the folly of his own attempts to justify himself and speaks its condemnation of his wickedness. And so he becomes more and more hateful of that Word until he, in fury, refuses to hear anything of it any more. This is why the preaching (whether from the pulpit or in pastoral

work or in Christian discipline) is always a two-edged sword. It is a savor of death unto death too. And this must never be forgotten. This is why elders who do the work of discipline must continue to bring the Word to those who err until either the sinner is brought to repentance or until the sinner will not listen to them any more. God does His work. And His work hardens or softens — always. And this is why that Word must always be brought in all its truth. If the Word of God is not brought, it will never have any of the proper and ordained effects. If man softens that Word or tones it down or adds his own word, it will never either bring to repentance or harden because it will not reach the conscience of the

man to whom it is spoken.

And so, as God does His work in hardening, the sinner becomes more and more insensitive to sin. He throws that Word from him and will hear it no more. And so his conscience no longer speaks at all. He is hardened and repentance becomes impossible.

But now we must speak of the other side of the picture. That is, we must speak of how that same “vicious cycle” in which the sinner is caught is broken by the wonder of confession of sin. But this shall have to wait.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

Book Review

GOD'S ETERNAL GOOD PLEASURE, by Herman Hoeksema; Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1979; 371 pp., \$9.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

In the early part of the 1940s Rev. H. Hoeksema, pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, preached a series of sermons on Romans 9-11. These sermons were eventually prepared for publication and were widely circulated in a hard cover book. For many years now this old book has been out of print. Because of the general interest shown in the material, there have been, over the years, many requests for the book — requests which could not be filled. Now the Reformed Free Publishing Association has reprinted the book and has made it available again to all those who are interested in the truths of sovereign grace.

Through an oversight, the original book did not contain Rev. Hoeksema's sermon on the important passage, Romans 9:17,18. This left the original book somewhat incomplete. Prof. H. C. Hoeksema has prepared a chapter on this text from the sermon notes of his father and from other writings of Rev. Hoeksema on this subject. The chapter fits well into the book and one would not know that it was prepared by a different author without the reference to this fact in the Preface.

This is an important book and we hope and pray that it will have increasingly wide circulation. It is important for a number of reasons, only a few of which we are able to mention here.

It is important, first of all, because it deals with what has often been called, “The Jewish Problem”; i.e., the question of the place of the Jew in the

sovereign work of God in salvation in the New Testament. This problem continues to occupy the attention of the Church, numerous books are written on the subject, and it is of considerable concern especially to those who work in Jewish missions. Because Paul's main concern in these chapters is with this very question, the author treats the whole problem in a thoroughly exegetical way. The key chapter is, of course, chapter 11. And the book contains thorough exegesis of this chapter.

In the second place, the whole section of Romans 9-11 treats the central truth of sovereign grace — the truth of sovereign predestination, including both election and reprobation. On the one hand, this truth is under severe attack today even within Reformed circles. On the other hand, outside of Reformed circles there is a renewed interest in this truth and there are evidences that many are seeing clearly that this truth is indeed the central truth of Scripture. (There is something ironic about this: those who have historically maintained this truth are turning from it while many who have historically been Arminian are turning to it.) Nevertheless, this book deals with the whole question and does so with thorough and complete exegesis. This is its strength. And it ought to be noted in this connection that the discussion of predestination includes also all the doctrines of sovereign grace as Paul himself treats them in these chapters. The book is a lucid treatment of the fundamental truths of Calvinism as they are taught in these three chapters of Romans.

In the third place, the book is important because it deals with these subjects *pastorally*. This is the value of a book which is really a printing of sermons. It is not a verse by verse commentary; it is not an abstract

discussion of the objective truths of the doctrines of grace; it is a pastorally warm and homiletically rich treatment of these truths which demonstrate beyond contradiction that (contrary to the allegations of Daane, Boer, c.s.) these truths of Scripture can and must be preached from the pulpit. It is also because of this characteristic of the book that the book can be read with such enjoyment. It is good to read for instruction; it is good to read for devotional literature.

Finally, the book is clearly written and easily read by all our people. So often it is thought that these doctrines are difficult to understand and that they are

proper subject matter only for those who are old in the faith. This book proves that this is not so. The gift of Rev. Hoeksema was his ability to make the truths of Scripture clear. This book is proof of that. Even our young people can read it and understand it. But all can profit by it.

We hope that this book finds a place in the homes of all our people — even if you have the old edition; and we hope and pray that it may be circulated widely throughout the world to the instruction of God's people and the strengthening of the faith of many.

NOTICE!!!

Here is Rev. Den Hartog's address in Singapore:

Rev. A. Den Hartog
32 D - Block C
Pacific Mansion
River Valley Close
Singapore 0923
Rep. of Singapore

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 19, 1980, our parents, MR. AND MRS. KENNETH LANNING, will celebrate, the Lord willing, their 40th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, thank our Heavenly Father for the years of love and instruction that they have given us. It is our prayer that the Lord may continue to bless them in the years to come.

"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him." (Psalm 34:8)

Judy Lanning
Lester & Mary Barnhill
Lisa & Daniel
Gary & Patricia Lanning
Andrew

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 25, 1980, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. JACOB KUIPER, SR., will commemorate 45 years of married life. We, their children, are thankful to God for His preservation of our loved ones both physically and spiritually. We are thankful too for their many years of sacrifice to give us Christian instruction in home, school and church. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless and guide them.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." (Psalm 103:17 & 18).

their children —

Henry Jay Kuiper
Ike and Jane Kuiper
Jay and Nancy Kuiper
Gerald and Bonnie Kuiper
Bob and Etta Van Dyke
Clair and Jan Kuiper
Al and Sharon Brummel

Art and Mary Bleyenbergh
John and Marie Hoekstra
Rich and Betty Peterson
Bob and Renae Kuiper
Ron and Linda Corson
and 41 grandchildren
3 great-grandchildren.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The members of the Adult Bible Study Society of The Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, MI, extends heartfelt and sincere Christian Sympathy to their fellow member, Mr. John De Vries in the loss of his wife. May God comfort him by His Word and Spirit.

"Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory." (Psalm 73:24).

Rev. M. Schipper, Pres.
Mrs. Eileen Hauck, Sec'y.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 31, 1980, our parents, MR. AND MRS. GERRITT PIPE celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. We, their children, thank God for the 35 years He has given them together and for the Christian home and instruction which was given us through them.

their children,

Ted and Jane Pipe
Tim and Lois Pipe
Bill and Karen Pipe
and 11 grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, MI

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On May 6, 1980, the Lord willing, our beloved parents and grandparents, DONALD AND JESSIE RIETEMA celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary.

With humble gratitude and thanksgiving we join with them in praising our Covenant God for His continued faithfulness and love for them through the past years.

We thank them for their love and concern to each one of us and for the Christian training and example we were privileged to share. May they experience God's blessing and guidance in their remaining years.

their children —

Ben and Grace Rietema
Ken and Joyce Rietema

their grandchildren —

Rodney and Ardith Rietema
Michael and Joyce Engelsma
Brian and Carole Wechsler

Bonnie Rietema

Don Rietema

Bruce and Barbara Bomers

Ann C. Rietema

Kenneth Rietema

Ronda Rietema

and 8 great-grandchildren.

Open house celebration — Saturday, May 3, - 2 to 4 P.M. at the Fulton Manor, 1450 E. Fulton SE, Grand Rapids, MI.

REPORT OF CLASSIS WEST

March 26, 1980

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in South Holland, Illinois on March 4, 1980. In welcome relief from the extended sessions of Classis recently, the meeting lasted one day. Rev. W. Bekkering led Classis in opening devotions. He addressed the delegates briefly from I Thessalonians 1:8: "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing."

Eleven ministers and twelve elders represented the churches of Classis. Missionary R. Van Overloop and Rev. G. Lanting were present and were given the right of the floor. Rev. R. Cammenga, pastor of Hull, attended Classis for the first time as a delegate and was promptly pressed into duty as president of the meeting.

Three elders attended Classis as delegates for the first time and signed the Formula of Subscription: P. Brummel (Edgerton); M. Poortenga (South Holland); and D. Scheele (Lynden).

Classis granted the request of a Consistory that the special committee of Classis appointed to give assistance to the Consistory be continued. It adopted an overture of South Holland that Classis obtain official, annual inventories and reports concerning an estate that has been willed to Classis. It sent on to Synod, without comment, an overture of Mr. T. Feenstra concerning the Constitution of the Committee for Contact with Other Churches and concerning the report of "Minister on Loan."

In executive session, Classis advised a Consistory to proceed with erasure of a baptized member.

Five churches requested subsidy in the amount of \$47,500. Another church asked for special subsidy. These requests, with Classis' approval and pertinent decisions, were sent on to Synod.

A Classical appointment schedule was adopted for Redlands: March 30, April 6, and April 13 – Koole; April 27, May 4, and May 11 – Kuiper; May 18, May 25, and June 1 – Lanting.

Results of the necessary elections were:

- Classical Committee: Rev. R. Cammenga (3 year term).
- Delegates ad examina: Rev. K. Koole – primus (3 year term); Rev. M. Kamps – secundus (3 year term); Rev. R. Flikkema – secundus (1 year term).
- Church Visitors: Rev. D. Engelsma, Rev. J. Kortering.
- Primi minister delegates to Synod: D. Engelsma, M. Kamps, J. Kortering, and D. Kuiper.
- Secundi minister delegates to Synod: W. Bekkering, K. Koole, R. Miersma, and J. Slopsema.
- Primi elder delegates to Synod: G. Buteyn (Randolph), A. De Jong (South Holland), G. Griess (Loveland), and E. Van Voorthuysen (Redlands).
- Secundi elder delegates to Synod: B. Haak (South Holland), H. Nieuwenkamp (Edmonton), M. Smits (South Holland), and J. Sugg (Houston).

Classis accepted Pella's invitation to hold the next meeting of Classis there. The date will be Wednesday, September 3, 1980, the Lord willing.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk