

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

It is useless to talk of salvation being for "whosoever will" in a world of universal "won't." Here is the real point of difficulty: how, where, can we obtain *the will*? Let others rejoice in a "whosoever will" gospel: for the sinner who knows himself to be a sinner, and knows what it is to be a sinner, only a "God will" gospel will suffice.

B.B. Warfield

See "Evangelism and the Reformed Faith"

—page 306

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MEDITATION

Born of the Virgin Mary

Rev. C. Hanko

Ques. 35. What is the meaning of these words—He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary?

Ans. That God's eternal Son, who is, and continueth true and eternal God, took upon him the very nature of man, of the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Ghost; that he might also be the true seed of David, like unto his brethren in all things, sin excepted.

Ques. 36. What profit dost thou receive by Christ's holy conception and nativity?

Ans. That he is our Mediator; and with His innocence and perfect holiness, covers in the sight of God, my sins, wherein I was conceived and brought forth. Heid. Catechism, Lord's Day 14.

I believe in Jesus, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary.

This belongs to the historical events of this present time. On a certain day, almost two thousand

years ago, the angel Gabriel came to the lowly home of Mary, who was a virgin, in the city of Nazareth. He spoke to her of the birth of the Savior, Who had been promised throughout the entire old dispensation, and was the one hope of all the sincere believers. Gabriel explained to Mary who this Child would be, and how His marvelous birth would take place. Upon the suggestion of the angel, Mary went to her cousin Elisabeth and stayed with her for three months. Likely it was the inspired greeting of Elisabeth that made Mary aware that the holy conception had already taken place. Upon her return to Nazareth, Joseph, her husband to be, was instructed by the angel in a dream that the prophecy of Isaiah, in chapter seven, the fourteenth verse, was fulfilled in his fiancée, and that he should take her under his care and protection. Under the providence of God the command of Caesar Augustus brought this engaged couple to Bethlehem, the city of David, where Jesus was born in a cattle stall. This is all a part of history, an important part, the unfolding of the counsel of God, a happening that our eyes could see, our ears could hear, and actually so ordinary, that a small child delights to hear the story over and over again.

And yet how marvelous, how wonderful, how defying of all human comprehension is that fact of which our Catechism speaks, and which we confess every Sunday in the words, "I believe in Jesus, ...conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary." Already in the fourth century after Christ the church, after a bitter struggle against the forces of darkness that introduced all kinds of heresy in regard to the virgin birth, was guided by the Holy Spirit to declare, "We, then, following the holy fathers, all with one consent teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man ... in all things like us, without sin; ... begotten for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; ... to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation...."

How wondrous are the ways of God, unfathomed and unknown!

"God's eternal Son took upon Him the very nature of man." That is the language of our Book of Instruction. It immediately reminds us of the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary, which is a wonderful commentary on the holy conception and birth of our Savior.

Ordinarily a believing young man and a believing young woman enter into the state of marriage with the very desire and purpose to raise children, even the covenant seed that God may give them. They look forward to that and pray for it. Especially

the wife, because of her motherly instincts, desires this very strongly. The husband knows very well that he cannot produce a son without his wife. The wife knows that it is her unique privilege as a woman to bring forth children, yet never without her husband. When the child is born, relatives and friends try to decide whom the child takes after. Actually the newborn child bears resemblances to both parents. The child himself had nothing to say about all this. It did not choose its parents, nor the time and place of its birth. It had nothing to say about its sex, the color of its hair or eyes, or anything else. God determines all that, without so much as consulting anyone.

How different is the birth of Christ! The Triune God is His Father. No wonder that the virgin Mary asked in wonder, "How shall these things be?" That makes the divine answer through the mouth of Gabriel the more significant. The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, bringing about thy pregnancy. The power of the Most High God will overshadow thee during the nine months of thy pregnancy. God in the Son and through the power of the Holy Spirit brought about His own conception. Not a part of God, say, a third, came into the flesh. GOD in all His fulness formed His own body and His own soul. He made Himself a human nature that looked like Mary. He protected that human nature from the depravity of His mother. He brought Himself to birth as Mary's Child. He is fully God and at the same time fully man, Immanuel, God dwelling among us in our flesh! We see it, we shall fathom it never. We believe!

The more we think about this holy conception and birth with the Holy Scriptures before us, the more we marvel at the mystery of Bethlehem. Scripture says, "Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Our Catechism responds to that by saying, "God's eternal Son, Who is and continueth true and eternal God, took upon Him the very nature of man, of the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary." God came down to us in the person of the Son and became Man. He is the Son of God with a divine and a human nature. He remains the Son of God, as is evident from His preaching, for He spoke with a knowledge and authority that the scribes did not have. This is evident also from His many mighty works, for no man could perform such great works as He did. Peter cried out in amazement, "Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man." As spokesman for the other disciples he learned to confess, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Christ did not lay off any part of His divine nature. Yet at the same time, He is—I say, is, because He still is—fully and completely man, both as to body and soul. Particularly in the Gospel according to

John there is a repeated reference to the fact that Jesus addresses God, the Triune God, as His Father. He was born, cried, nestled in His mother's arms, needed care and protection, needed to be fed and clothed, grew up and developed as any other child. He hungered, thirsted, grew weary, felt pain, also the pain of being reproached of men and not being understood by His disciples. He was like us in all things. There was only one important exception to that; He had no sin. Sin was foreign to Him.

Christ was so much one of us that He could properly call Himself "The Son of Man." He had a special preference for that name, so that He often referred to Himself by it. This name, Son of Man, so perfectly expressed the fact that He was son of Adam, of our bone and of our flesh. Our blood flowed through His veins. Yet this name bore a special significance for Him, since the prophets had foretold that THE Son of Man would be crowned with glory and honor in the heavens (Psalm 8:4,5; Dan. 7:13,14). He was the Seed of the woman, Who was promised to Abraham as his spiritual Seed, according to the promise of Genesis 17:7, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy **Seed** after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." He is also of the royal line of David, as Gabriel told Mary and as the genealogy of Matthew 1 points out. He was, therefore, fully qualified to be our Mediator, for He is one of us, like us in all things, only sin excepted.

At the very thought we hide our faces in shame. Jesus Christ is the Holy One that is brought forth, by the wonder of God, from a depraved, corrupt human stock. That is intimated in the first chapter of Matthew, when it mentions the names of only four women: Tamar, Rahab, the wife of Uriah, and Ruth of Moab. The wonder becomes even more amazing when we consider that Christ was born as the Living One out of dead generations. Death had come upon us already at the fall. Both Abraham and Sarah were too old to have children when Isaac was born. The throne of David lay buried in the dust, and the generations of David were like a dead stump in a dry soil. The Son of God entered into our world as Life from the dead. Consider now also how the devil worked to prevent the birth of our Savior. He killed Abel; he worked havoc in the family of Jacob; he instigated the death of Israel's male children in Egypt. We could mention the crime of bloody Athaliah and the bitter revenge sought by Haman as but a few more examples of Satan's determination to wipe out the generations that brought forth the Christ. Finally, there was the desperate attempt of king Herod to kill the Babe at His birth by killing all the infants of Bethlehem. But God always proves Himself to be sovereign Lord

over all, using the wicked devices of evil men to carry out His purpose. Our Savior was born according to the promise.

What is the advantage of all this for us?

Our fathers speak of Christ as our Mediator. As Mediator He stands before God in our stead. For our sakes He surrendered Himself to the consuming wrath of hell until the fires had completely burned out. God exalted Him to the highest heavens, where He now serves as our eternal Prophet, our merciful Highpriest, and our glorious King.

He covers with His innocence and perfect obedience in the sight of God all my sins, wherein I was conceived and brought forth. My sins! Surely you take that same confession on your lips with me. Our sins! The guilt of Adam's sin is our guilt which was passed along to us through the generations from father to son. Adam's depravity, as the result of his fall, is my depravity. I must acknowledge, even as David did, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." For, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, *for that* (because) *all have sinned* (Rom. 5:12). Added to that, I increase the measure of my guilt every day, so that my sin-debt with God is become such a huge sum, that I cannot even reckon how large it is.

He brought the perfect sacrifice for our sins in His own body on the cross, so completely as if you and I had personally atoned for every one of our sins, large and small. He merited for us eternal life, as if we ourselves had proved ourselves worthy of all the riches of salvation. Now in heaven Christ intercedes for us as our Highpriest in the sanctuary. As our King He rules over all the affairs of men to carry out the counsel of God for our sakes, and rules over our lives in love to turn everything to our salvation. As our Prophet He sends forth His Spirit into our hearts, Who applies to us the riches of grace revealed in the holy Scriptures. He assures us that, though our sins are as scarlet, He cleanses us and makes us as white as snow. As God sees us, we stand without condemnation, clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ, worthy to be the heirs of life with Him in His glory.

Christ can do just that, for He is God.

He has the right to do that for us, since He is eternally our representative Head and Mediator before the Father.

He does just that, for He made Himself like unto us, in order to make us like unto Himself in His glory.

I believe in Jesus Christ, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary!

EDITORIALS

Prof. H.C. Hoeksema

The GKN on the Nature of the Authority of Scripture (3)

Before we continue our discussion of Chapter I of the Report/Decision, a bit of news about further developments in the Dutch churches in connection with this Report. You will recall that *Waarheid en Eenheid* was accused of violating the law when it published the entire report, even though the report was public and had been dealt with in open session by the General Synod of the GKN and had, in fact, been distributed to the press. The official Information Service of the GKN even demanded an immediate promise from *Waarheid en Eenheid* to cease and desist in its distribution of the report. The suspicion was expressed—and I entertained this suspicion myself—that perhaps the intention was to edit and revise the report in order to make it more palatable to the general membership of the churches. A recent issue of *Waarheid en Eenheid* carried the news that the Report/Decision has now been officially published and distributed in the GKN. The Report as such was apparently not changed; it was only preceded by an introduction of several pages. Whether the original intent was to publish a revised version or not, we shall never know, I suppose. It is possible, of course, that *Waarheid en Eenheid's* publishing of the Report foiled the plan of Information Service to publish a revised edition. If so, so much the better!

And now we return to our discussion.

Last time we called attention especially to the philosophical method and approach of Chapter I.

This time we call your attention to the contents and argumentation of Chapter I.

This chapter begins by calling attention to the fact that there are certain basic words, root terms, which form the undertone of our thinking and of the manner in which we experience things. These basic terms are not unchangeable, but especially in a time of development and change they also frequently receive another content. Their meaning does not become totally different, but there is development. One such word is "truth." And it is the intention of this section of the Report to point to the positive insights involved in the present day changes in the conception of truth.

First of all, there is the most common conception

of "truth" which may be called the *objective* conception. According to it, truth is the agreement between the human presentation of things and the things themselves. "True" is to state things as they actually, objectively, are. This conception proceeds, on the one hand, from the objective situation of things, and, on the other hand, from the human consciousness which is able to reflect these things. According to this view, man is passively receptive. This objective view, it is said, has been found in widely varying circles: with the Greek philosophers, with Thomas Aquinas, with the classical Reformed theologians, with the logical thinker Bertrand Russell, with the Marxist Lenin. The advantage of this conception is said to be that one realizes that in order to speak truth one must acknowledge an external norm. The disadvantage is said to be that it makes man so passive and fails to recognize that speaking and knowing truth involves exertion, investigation, wrestling. It negates the activity of man.

On the other hand, there is the *subjective* conception of the truth. According to it, man must himself bring forth and produce truth. Truth comes into existence through difficult labor. Animals may perhaps reflect the world round about them, but with animals there is no question of truth or untruth, truth or lie. Man is higher than the animals and is called to subdue and investigate the world. Only man knows such things as reasoning, speech, symbols, culture; and all this has to do with truth. And so there is this subjective conception of truth, according to which the root of truth does not lie in the state of affairs, objects, but in the activity of the subject (man). This involves an active rather than a passive knowledge of the truth. This view is found in the circle of philosophical idealism, of existentialism, and of much of modern theology. The advantage of this conception is said to be that the truth is not an object which simply lies there for the taking, but is something which must be brought to light with difficulty. It involves the devotion of a man, the total devotion of his being—not merely his sensuous perception and his understanding, but the whole man. The disadvantage is said to be that one soon thinks that the truth is produced by man.

Truth threatens to become subjectivistic: man determines and projects the truth, and anything normative outside of man is lacking.

Parenthetically we may remark that according to the second view truth does not merely *threaten* to become subjectivistic; it *is* subjectivistic. The trouble is that the third view which the author is about to propound, the view adopted by the Report, is also ultimately pure subjectivism: man becomes the standard of the truth. This probably accounts for the mildness which appears already at this point with respect to subjectivism.

According to the Report, there is change coming about with respect to the basic concept "truth" in all of modern existence. Neither the objective conception nor the subjective conception is satisfactory.

What is that current conception of "truth" that is supposed to be a positive development in the understanding of what is truth?

The Report states that it would be easiest to say that this newer conception is a combination of the objective and the subjective conceptions. Then the truth would consist of two parts: the objective outside of man plus the subjective in man. But it goes on to say that this is too simplistic and does not escape the old dilemma—truth either objective or subjective. Truth is not simply something outside of man, nor only an exertion of man, nor the sum of the two. It concerns not merely the finish-line in the contest, but also the contesting on the way to that finish-line. It is the hid treasure in the field and the digging and the finding of that treasure *together* (ineen). Stated complexly: precisely in and with the subjective aspect, the objective comes to clearer light. At the same time, precisely in and with the objective aspect the subjective better attains its rightful place. What is involved is not a truth (objective) which must subsequently be appropriated (subjective), but both *together* (ineen). [Note: This word "together" I have twice italicized because it seems to be a key term in this concept.]

The Report then goes on to state that this newer conception sheds light but also presents some difficulties, and it seeks to explain further. This newer conception is called "relational." This means simply, according to the Report, that the truth is delineated always within a relation, within the involvedness of man in something else. Truth is not

merely to be found outside the human subject, like a stone which one can pick up. Nor is it to be found purely within that man, like a suddenly arising feeling. Truth is more: it is the relation between subject and object, better yet an interaction of both.

At this point an example is given. A traffic sign (for example, a symbol indicating one-way traffic) is really of no meaning whatsoever conceived of apart from the people who can comprehend it and who have conceived of it (an animal will not obey it). In that sense it is human, "subjective." And that holds for all human symbols, in religion, art, and daily life. But it is much more than only human-subjective. It indeed indicates something objective: a traffic rule, a norm, a measure which must protect the life of the fellow man. That normative comes to manifestation, becomes visible, exactly in that traffic sign. And again that holds for the entire human culture with its many symbols (numerals, letters, traffic signs, scientific formulas, religious symbols such as the tree of life).

The preceding paragraphs set forth briefly the so-called "relational" conception of the truth. This forms the background of the view of Scripture and of how Scripture came into being and of how the truth is present in Scripture which is maintained by the Report. Our explanation of these latter aspects will have to wait until the next issue. But it is not difficult to see that this so-called "relational" conception will radically affect one's view of Scripture, and that, too, in the direction of contradicting the truth that the ground of the authority of the Word of God lies in that Word itself. There is no longer any such thing as the objective truth of the objective Word of God. But further explanation will have to wait until next time.

But, in conclusion, notice how the Report not only proceeds philosophically but also *assumes* that which, even from its own point of view, ought to be proved. It sets forth the various conceptions of "truth," assumes that both the objective view and the subjective view are incorrect, and then proceeds on the *assumption* that this so-called "relational" view is the correct one and that somehow this conception has to be applied to the doctrine of Holy Scripture and its authority. This would never have happened if the Report had proceeded from Scripture and the Confessions instead of from philosophy.

A Worthwhile Project

Elsewhere in this issue you will find an announcement concerning an "informal commit-

tee" that is interested in publishing a complete index to all fifty-six volumes of the *Standard Bearer*.

The purpose of this brief editorial is to add emphasis to that announcement.

As some of our readers will know, up to this time there has been but one usable index published; that is an index to the first ten volumes published many years ago. There was another index to the second ten volumes published, but that one was virtually useless. Starting with Volume 21 there has been an annual index, which is helpful to a degree but does not fill the bill for those who are doing research on a subject. Hence, some of our seminary students conceived the ambitious project of a complete and accurate index to all the volumes.

We realize that such an index will be valuable

only to a limited number of people, i.e., those who have a partial or complete set of bound volumes or those who have saved their loose issues over the years. But while this number is limited, to them such an index will indeed be valuable.

This makes it all the more imperative that, if you are interested, you write to this committee *immediately*. The publication of this index will not be undertaken if there is not sufficient response. So do not leave the task of responding to your neighbor. Do it yourself, and without delay! The committee means what it says: "No response, no index!"

I urge all those who keep the bound volumes in their libraries to respond promptly!

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Missionary Methods (1)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

With the last article we concluded our study of the principles of missions. With this article we purpose to begin a series on the proper method or methods of performing missionary work among the nations of the world. In other words our purpose shall be to examine the question of how the principles of missions must be implemented by the church in the actual practice of mission work. Quite frankly, the undersigned embarks on this venture with a great deal of reticence and even some uneasiness. There was no course in missions offered in the seminary while he was a student. He has never pastored a calling church for a missionary, nor has he ever served on either of the mission committees of our churches. His only involvement has come in the form of serving as a delegate and as a professor-advisor to our synods. In the actual work of missions his experience is very scant. He organized preaching services and worked for the month of May, 1973 among the group in Prospect Park, New Jersey which became the nucleus of our Covenant Protestant Reformed Church, and in the winter of 1980 he preached for the services sponsored by First, Grand Rapids in Bradenton, Florida. He has had no experience in foreign missions. But he shall try. The reader is cordially invited to respond with either questions or comments on this whole subject.

At the outset we wish to acknowledge our indebtedness to the late Roland Allen. Allen was an Anglican missionary in China from 1895 to 1903.

For the next forty years he was busy writing on missionary principles and methods. Insights gleaned from three of his books; *The Ministry of the Spirit*, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours*, *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, (All republished in paperback by Eerdmans) have proved very valuable for the writing of these articles.

It is our firm conviction that just as Scripture teaches the principles of missions so we must discover the proper methods of missions from the Word of God. Scripture tells us not only what missions is but also how the church must go about doing the work. This does not mean, obviously, that the Bible or some parts of it make up some kind of "missionary manual." Not at all. The Bible, as we all know, is not that kind of book. Nevertheless, what the church does through its missionaries must be and can be based on the Bible.

When all the talking is over and the last article and book on missions has been written, the fact will still remain that in its missionary work the New Testament church preached, baptized, and prayed! This work, carried on by the Apostles, Evangelists, and Pastors, was complemented by the witness of the godly living of the believers. This is missionary work according to Scripture. Therefore, if the church is determined to be faithful to Scripture in its missionary work it will follow the pattern of the Apostolic church set forth in the New Testament, especially in the book of Acts.

Before getting into our study it is necessary to face and answer a common objection to our thesis. There are those who say the church cannot follow the pattern or use the methods of the Apostolic church because the social and moral condition of the world of that day was such that it aided the spread of the gospel. The world of our time is much different, so much so that methods used by the Apostles will not work for contemporary mission work. It is true of course that God prepared the world for Christ and for the gathering of the elect out of the nations. That world, however, was not essentially different from the world today. The "success" of the Apostles was not due to the condition of the world of his day but strictly to the sovereign grace of God in Christ. The same is true today.

The converts in the early New Testament Church were part of the Roman Empire with its Graeco-Roman civilization. When we think of this civilization we are inclined to think of the Roman system of law, government, and justice. We think in terms of Greek culture, its philosophy and language, its literature and art, all of which persevered in the Roman world. This, however, is not the whole story. There were at least four evils which characterized the Roman world and made up the environment in which the Apostles preached. They were these: superstition, the immorality of the various heathen religions and life in general, the amphitheater, and slavery.

There was widespread belief in demons among people of all classes and stations of life. Not merely idolatry, but every phase of life was thought to be ruled by devils. Devils sat on thrones, hovered over cradles, and lurked in every corner. Along with this was the belief in magic and witchcraft. Human sacrifice was not unknown. Use was made of incantations. The devouring of raw flesh, mangling of bodies, fastings and beatings of the breast, obscene cries at the altars, ragings and ravings were all used to appease and keep away the devils. These superstitions no doubt were the content of the books which many of the new believers in Ephesus who used "curious arts" burned (Acts 19:19). These books were worth fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Everyone of God's children who was brought to faith by the preaching of Paul was born and lived in this atmosphere of superstition. In this kind of environment the Apostles preached and out of this darkness many were saved. While in different forms perhaps, and while more "developed" perhaps, the same situation obtains for the missionary and the church today. The same gospel of sovereign grace in Jesus Christ must be preached. Only Christ crucified and raised and exalted has

power over the devil and "the angels who left their first estate" (the demons, Jude 6).

The second characteristic of Roman life was the immorality which prevailed. This was most apparent in the various religions of that day. Some have argued that the mingling of the intellectual and religious elements of Hellenism and Orientalism helped to prepare the way for the Gospel. Nothing could be farther from the truth. These ancient religions were from every point of view decidedly inimical to the Christian faith. The teachings of these religions were a contradiction of the Gospel. The rites and ritual of the temples were not only indecent, they were just plain wicked. Lewd dancing and prostitution were just two of the concomitants of worship. The temples in Ephesus and Corinth, two of the more prominent cities of the New Testament, no more prepared the way for the Gospel than do the temples in Singapore. Can there be any doubt but that this is what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Ephesians, "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:17-19). From this point of view as well, the Apostles enjoyed no advantage in their mission work.

There is no need to go into detail concerning the brutal, horrifying shows which were presented in the amphitheater. Gladiators fought each other or wild beasts to the death before thousands of screaming, bloodthirsty spectators ("fans"?). The attitude of the "cultured" elite toward these shows is almost shocking. People like Pliny and Cicero, we are told, considered them as "affording splendid training for the eye, though perhaps not for the ear, in the endurance of pain and as inspiring disdain of death and love of honourable wounds." Even Marcus Aurelius was simply bored by them and complained that they were "always the same." (Quotations from Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours*, pp. 30, 31). Symmachus complained bitterly when some of the Saxons committed suicide in their cells rather than kill each other in public at the show he had prepared in honor of his son's praetorship. No one could view these spectacles without being affected. The stage which had to compete with this powerful entertainment was given over to rough jokes and sensuous byplay. Nothing was too gross, too indecent to be displayed in the theater. Nudity, fornication, blasphemy of virtually everything sacred were common on the Roman stage.

Finally there was the evil of slavery about which the New Testament has something to say. Slaves were completely subject to the will of their masters. They were at the mercy of his every whim and fancy. Slaves had no rights and no protection against their masters. They were often well educated and even served as teachers and tutors of the children of the wealthy. Even at that, most if not all of them bore the scars of the masters' lash. This was the accepted way of life. Even Scripture did not urge the abolishing of slavery. Scripture exhorts masters to clemency and slaves to faithfulness.

Finally, we are told that the moral atmosphere of Asia Minor was even worse than in Greece or Rome. Here people wanted nothing to do with marriage, which they viewed as an outrage on the free, unfettered life of nature.

While this is by no means an exhaustive study of the religious, social, and moral character of the world of Graeco-Roman civilization, it does indicate the condition of the world in which the early New Testament Church was gathered out of the nations of the Mediterranean world. It was

precisely in this context that the Apostles preached Christ crucified. To these kinds of men, women, and children went the Gospel command to repent and believe. The situation is no different today. The world has not changed, not essentially. The gross forms of ignorance, superstition, immorality; the entertainment of the theater, the stadium, movie house, and television are with us today. They existed in less sophisticated form also when the New Testament was written. This means, once more, the Apostles enjoyed no special advantage over the missionary of today. In that world they preached sovereign grace to the glory of God. God gave them abundant fruit: "adding to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). The church today must do precisely the same. The church needs no gimmicks with which to try to "win souls." The church must simply preach wherever God opens the door. This is proper missionary method. Upon this and only this faithful preaching of the Word will God's blessing rest. By this means God's church will be gathered, His Kingdom will come in Christ, and His glory will be revealed.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

The Master of Dreams Sold for Silver

Rev. John A. Heys

There was a short period of peaceful life at home for Joseph. For his brethren, who could not speak peaceably to him, and hated him for his coat of many colours, and for his dreams which predicted that they would all bow down before him some day, had gone to Shechem to feed their father's sheep. Jacob was home with the two sons of his beloved and now deceased wife. There was tranquility, at least among father and sons, a tranquility that was such a blessed change.

It appears that when Jacob left Shechem to come to Hebron as God had commanded him, he left part of his herd of sheep there in Shechem. He was a big operator, a man of great wealth as far as sheep and cattle are concerned, but utterly poor as far as the possession of land is concerned. All the land around Hebron was firmly in the hands of Canaanites, so that neither he nor his father nor his grandfather Abraham owned a piece of land for a farm. They grazed their cattle on other men's land with the protection of Covenant God Who promised

some day to give it all to their seed. But we read that Joseph's brothers went to feed their father's sheep in Shechem (Genesis 37:12). Now Shechem was over fifty miles from Hebron to the northwest as the crow flies. And in between these two places were some very rough pieces of land, terrain that made transporting sheep very difficult and certain to result in the loss of some sheep. It may be for that reason that Jacob left a goodly part of his flock there in Shechem. At any rate, Joseph is spared the sneers and jibes of his brothers for a brief period of time.

Jacob did not fully realize the bitterness of his other sons of Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah, toward Joseph. He did not realize that they had murder in their hearts. He refused to consider that envy is the cause of murder in so many instances, and that it is actually murder in the heart. Therefore he sends Joseph to see whether it is well with them and with the flock. They had been gone now for quite some time, and being Jacob's sons as surely as Joseph and

Benjamin were, Jacob missed them and was concerned with their well-being. The journey, however, was farther than either Jacob or Joseph had anticipated. The brothers had gone to Dothan, which was another ten to twenty miles further north, to find suitable land for grazing for their sheep.

Now so fierce was the hatred of these brothers that in the most literal sense of the word they could not stand the sight of him. We read that "when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him." They recognized him by that coat that their father had given him to distinguish him from them. And they talked the matter over. "They conspired" means that they discussed his murder and came to the conclusion that it should take place. Joseph had not yet spoken one word to them that day. It was all that happened in the past that moved them to agree on murder.

When Joseph arrived they maltreated him, bruised him greatly before hurling him into a pit. The brothers themselves, much later, when in Egypt they stood right before the exalted Joseph, and did not know that he could understand their language, said, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear him" (Genesis 42:21). And Psalm 105 is very graphic in describing the cruel treatment they heaped upon their own brother. We read in verses 17 and 18, "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant; whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron." Now this certainly refers also, and in the first place, to what happened in Egypt. Yet bear in mind that these brothers sold him to such a cruelty, and in fact had worse things in their hearts. They wanted to kill him with violence; and only because Reuben interceded did they settle for death by starvation in the pit. And with him in the pit to starve to death they can sit down "to eat bread"!

Reuben, the firstborn son, with a sense of responsibility as that firstborn, sought to deliver him back to his father. It was not that Reuben did not hate Joseph, did not envy him, or did want to see those dreams fulfilled. We do not read that he sought to deliver Joseph and save his life. He sought to deliver him back to his father. It was love for his father that prevented him from letting his anger and hatred against Joseph join in with the other nine brothers plan, of bloody murder. And Judah somewhat later suggests that they seek profit out of Joseph by selling him as a slave, voicing the awareness that, after all, this is their brother. This likewise was no love for Joseph. Love would have lifted him out of the pit, confessed sin before him,

asked for forgiveness, and spoken words of peace to him. Love would never sell a brother, not even for a million pieces of silver.

And although Satan was behind the plot to kill and to sell, God is behind Satan, and the text we quoted a moment ago must be brought back in sharp focus with emphasis upon the first word thus, "HE sent a man before them, even Joseph." The context demands that. The Psalm begins with, "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon His name: make known His deeds among the people." He is that He Who sent Joseph before them. God is at work in all things. And remember Psalm 76:10. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain." Men in their hatred against God's people can go just so far. As far as God decreed that they shall go in unconscious, unwilling service of His sovereign and eternal counsel. Their purposes are not God's purposes. And their guilt is very real. But God always does His own good pleasure (Isaiah 46:10). And, "Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Psalm 115:3). And therefore it is that all things work together for good to those that love God. God works them all together. All occurs according to a Master Plan that has the good of God's people in mind, and realizes their salvation and joy.

All this explains that Reuben, who had persuaded the brothers to put Joseph in the pit in order that he might deliver him to his father, upon returning to the group—we are not told where he went, but most likely to tend some more remote section of the herd—finds that Joseph is not there. Reuben must be away from the scene momentarily. God's counsel arranged that and demanded that, because God was going to send Joseph ahead to save much people of Israel alive during the severe famine. It was the hand of God that brought the Ishmaelites there that day and at that moment. Satan may have moved these envious, hating brothers to see profit in selling their brother's body and soul into Egypt as a slave, with the incorrect assumption that then he would never be over them, and so that they would not need to bow down before him. But the fact remains that God uses Satan as well as He uses men. Satan never uses God, but God uses Satan. Never forget that. Satan has never done anything that God had not eternally decreed that he would do. He is no little god under God with his own time and power and resources. He is ALWAYS God's tool. And nothing reveals this more clearly than the cross which Satan engineered, but which was from eternity designed by God. In the very beginning, four thousand years before it took place, God told Satan of the enmity that would produce that cross. Satan would bruise

the heel of the Seed of the woman, Christ. And God saw to it that Satan got into Judas Iscariot to realize this bruising which established our salvation. And because all the havoc and all the suffering the Church shall experience in the day when the Seed of the Serpent, the Antichrist, torments and persecutes the Church, comes out of God's counsel, and Satan is His tool, we have nothing to fear. "His saints shall not fail; but over the earth their strength shall prevail" (Psalter versification of Psalm 149).

With a sigh of relief the brothers—with the exception of Reuben—see Joseph carted off to Egypt. They are now, they think, rid of him and his dreams, failing to realize that these dreams were the Word of God, and that they are not rid of God. They will meet Him in this very servant, Joseph, again, because of that sovereign, eternal, and unchangeable counsel, or plan, of Him Who does not simply claim to be God, but IS God in all that this means. The Master Dreamer, as they called Joseph, or Master of Dreams—which could mean one who dreams that he will be master—they think they have put where his word will not and cannot be realized. They fail to realize that his word was God's Word, and, as we read in Isaiah 46:10, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Not their pleasure—which was a wicked pleasure—but God's is being done. Not their plans will determine the future of Joseph or of themselves, but God's counsel determined it. And that counsel determines all of our future, the glorious future we shall have in the new Jerusalem.

The sigh of relief of the brothers was premature and ill-founded. It seemed to be to their advantage to have him out of the way, and now even with profit to them financially. Each of the ten brothers could go home with two pieces of silver in his pocket. There was inflation in later years, and the price of a slave reached thirty pieces of silver when Judas bargained with the chief priests and elders. But both were sold for the price of a servant. And both Christ and Joseph were sold out of envy. For we read in Mark 15:10 that, "For He knew that the

chief priests had delivered Him for envy." And His deliverance and sale for thirty pieces of silver give His people a sigh of relief, relief from the load of sin; relief from the awful wrath of God; relief in the truth of the gospel that we may have the *blessing* of bowing down before Him as our Lord and King, Who rules us in righteousness.

But Jacob! Here is another severe blow. He is led to believe that his beloved son of his beloved wife is dead! His grief is immeasurable, and he could not be comforted. Rather he told his sons, "For I will go down into the grave unto my son in mourning." And there is added, "Thus his father wept for him" (Genesis 37:35).

He who deceived his own father, now as father is deceived by his children. And we must not say, "History repeats itself." That is true. The names and places change, but the same sins are committed over and over through the history of this world. Children learn from parents. In fact in the sins wherein the fathers walk the children will run; and their children will find even swifter ways of pursuing evil. But that must not be all that which we say. Here, too, God is speaking, and speaking to His Church, to Jacob whom He loved, to Jacob with whom His covenant is established. And it is then, as painful and heart-rending as it may be, a word of grace. Jacob who deceived his father must, for the enjoyment of his own forgiveness and rich understanding of God's love and grace know what an awful sin he committed. Jacob, who said he was Esau, must know the wrath of God that falls on all the Esaus, and understand how rich God's love is upon the Jacobs not only, but that salvation is by grace and not by works. Jacob, and we, cannot enter the pearly gates with the notion that we have done *one* work that deserves the smallest part of its glory. We must and will enter in with the consciousness that we forfeited *every* right, and that we sold His Son to the cross; and that this Son performed all the work that gives us a place, and a right to a place in the kingdom of glory.

FROM HOLY WRIT

The So-called Postmillennial Proof-texts

Rev. G. Lubbers

Chapter 4 THE KINGDOM DELIVERED UP TO GOD, THE FATHER

As we have pointed out, the proponents of the Postmillennial view hold that the Bible teaches a

twofold kingdom of heaven. We are told that the Bible and the prophecies are not really speaking of the eschatological-consummated kingdom when it speaks of Christ's kingship, but rather of a kingdom which is limited to time, which begins in this

present history and ends in its close. Christ's reign is not really eternal. The Bible is interested in and teaches that the kingdom of heaven will be manifested here on earth as a glorious kingdom; all nations shall be "christianized" by the power of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel, and, therefore, the world is getting better and better. The end of the ages here is then characterized as the "golden age" of the church. To be sure, this does not mean that such who are "christianized" are then reborn children of God, who can see the kingdom of heaven; nevertheless they are a much better world of unbelievers because they are thus come under the influence of the gospel.

In Chapter VII, page 38 of his *The Millenium*, Dr. Boettner writes under the caption "The World Is Growing Better." I will quote the first paragraph:

The redemption of the world is a long, slow process, extending through the centuries, yet surely approaching an appointed goal. We live in a day of advancing victory, although there are many apparent set-backs. As seen from the human viewpoint it often looks as though the forces of evil are about to gain the upper hand. Periods of spiritual advance and prosperity alternate with periods of spiritual decline and depression. But as one age succeeds another there is progress. Looking back across nearly two thousand years that have passed since the coming of Christ we can see that there has indeed been marvelous progress. This process ultimately will be completed, and before Christ comes again we shall see a Christianized world. This does not mean that all sin will be eradicated. There will always be some tares in the wheat until the time of harvest—and the harvest, the Lord tells us, is the end of the world. Even the righteous fall, sometimes grievously, into temptation and sin. But it does mean that Christian principles of life and conduct are to become the accepted standards in public and private life.

Rather boastfully some Postmillennialists speak of this view as being an "Eschatology Of Victory," that is, of the victory of the Gospel, so that literally *nations* are saved, and not merely the "elect out of every nation, tongue, tribe and people" (Rev. 7:9) who "have come out of the great tribulation," of the battle of the ages, and who have washed their clothes "in the blood of the Lamb." It is alleged by some Postmillennialists that the Amillennialists are guilty of neglecting many passages of Scripture.

The Postmillennialists make a plausible case out of I Corinthians 15:24, where we read, "Then (shall be) the end when He (Christ) shall have delivered the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have abolished all principalities, all authorities and power."

Now what the Postmillennialist must do is not merely quote this passage without proper and careful exegesis, and simply "conclude" that Paul is

here teaching that Christ's "kingship" ends here, because the work in the perfecting of the kingdom is here completed by Him, as the Mediator, Jesus, God in the flesh. It ill behooves us to make this demand of these advocates, and not give careful exegesis ourselves. Scripture must be interpreted in the light of Scripture.

Let us now look at the text and context carefully.

I do have a confessional and doctrinal bias. I hold that the Scriptures teach that Christ is an eternal King, that is, His kingship continues in the "age" to come! We believe that I Corinthians 15:24-29 does not teach that Christ will not be King in glory in the ages to come; that "God will be all in all" does not become manifest in this glory apart from the glorified Christ. We could quote many passages here to substantiate this position, but we will come to these in subsequent Chapters of this study.

Let us then notice the following facets in the text:

1. That what Christ will do in delivering up the Kingdom to the Father will be in the time of the end of the world, called the harvest (Matt. 13:39). That this will be the consummation of the ages; that this is simply called the "end," that is, it is the intended end, the *telos*. History here on earth ends when Christ as the firstfruits of them that sleep in Jesus shall then bring in the full harvest in the resurrection of all who are saved in the "one man" Jesus Christ. Each is manifested in his own rank and order: first the Savior, then they who are of Him, and then the end (I Cor. 15:23). It is noteworthy that through this chapter Paul speaks of Jesus as being "Christ," that is, the Anointed One of God, Who is appointed and qualified to be the chief prophet, the only high priest, and the *eternal* king. For the name "Christ" as *official title* see verse, 3, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24. Now, will the eternal Son in the flesh lose His "office" in the ages to come, where "God shall be all in all," so that He will not be the King of glory? Does He abdicate His throne in "the ages to come"? (For these "ages" see Ephesians 2:7 and Hebrews 2:5-8.) Will He cease there to be crowned with glory and honor for the sake of His sufferings, by which He brings many sons to glory? These are, indeed, pressing questions. They call for an answer.

2. We should now try to establish from the text what is the meaning and the implication of the verb "to deliver up." The text says that Christ shall in His—parousia "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father." To begin we should notice that the term denotes, in Scripture, an official, legal transaction. See Romans 3:32 where the verb refers to God's official and judicial "delivering up" of His Son to the death of the Cross, making Him a curse. He made Him sin for us (Gal. 3:13, 14; II Cor. 5:20,

21). It is also used of the judicial procedure of the wicked Jews and of Pilate in delivering up the apostles to the counsels to have them executed and persecuted (Matt. 10:17, 19, 21). Keeping this in mind we see in this verb here the official act of the risen and glorified Christ, where He presents the finished work in history, the triumph of the seed of the Woman over the seed of the Serpent, even over death and hell. This is the great moment of the triumph of Christ in delivering the perfect, completed kingdom in which the perfected and resurrected saints shall be eternally citizens, to the Father. He has here *finished* the work which He was to do in the dispensation of the fulness of times. All things are here indeed gathered under one Head, Christ, both in heaven and on earth, even in Him (Eph. 1:10). What a triumphant moment of the LORD of lords and the KING of kings (Phil. 2:10, 11; Rev. 19:11-16). To "deliver up" is a far cry from an abdication of the throne. In later chapters we shall take a closer look at the Kingdom of which Daniel and the Gospels say it shall "have no end." All other priests were but priests for a time, and the priesthood of Aaron too was put away for the better priesthood in Christ, Who by God's word of oath is a King-Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, whereas He is the Son of God (Hebrews 7:3).

3. In close connection with the foregoing "delivering up of the kingdom to the Father," we should notice the implication of the next clause, "when He shall have abolished all principalities, all authority and power." The KJV translates the verb "*katar-geesei*" by the verb "put down." There is exegetical bias in that translation. It presupposes that Paul is speaking here *exclusively* of the "enemies" of Christ and His church, as these have been successfully and entirely conquered, and as these lay prostrate at Jesus' feet, under His majestic sceptre. It may seriously be doubted, however, that this translation is the proper one. We prefer the translation which reads "abolished." The verb here in question is translated in other parts of Scripture by the KJV as "abolish" (II Cor. 3:13; Eph. 2:15; II Tim. 1:10). When God abolished the glory of the Old Testament as this was reflected on the face of Moses this was a *legal act* at Calvary. He brought in the greater glory of Christ, wherein we are transformed by the Spirit from glory unto glory (II Cor. 3:18). This was setting aside certain Old Testament *ordinances*. These God abrogated, that is, He annulled them by His legal authority, by the later enactment in Christ Jesus. We have the same legal act of God's abrogation taught us in Ephesians 2:15 which speaks of the "law in ordinances" which were abolished at the Cross. These Old Testament ordinances are no more binding in the church. The Old Testament Passover is no longer to be kept in

the Church since our Passover has been slain at Calvary, and now that Christ has become our peace, binding the saints in the Old Testament dispensation, with the saints "out of all nations."

Without quoting more instances we believe that we have established that the verb here in I Corinthians 15:24b can very well be translated "abolished" and not "put down." Should we have suggested the proper translation, then, we are in a position to understand also what Paul is referring to, when he speaks of "all authority and power" and "all principalities." Is he here referring to "all" Christ's enemies and nothing more? We believe not. We must bear in mind that in this present dispensation Christ has instituted offices, means of grace, sacraments, discipline for the perfecting of the saints till we all arrive, come to, attain to the "unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the perfect (adult) man, unto the measure of the stature of the *fulness of Christ*" (Eph. 4:13). When the end comes, that objective has been attained in the church by Christ. Indeed then we shall be the "fulness of Him (Christ) that filleth all in all." When that point in history is attained and *all* the elect shall have been brought to repentance, then the preaching, the offices will no longer be needed. They shall have served God's purpose. They were the means of grace to the end that the entire church would be saved; they were the key power of the Kingdom of heaven which excluded the wicked and unbelievers, and which opened the Kingdom of God to the faithful and the penitent.

The term "all principalities" should not be overlooked. Nor should we fail to observe the adjective "all" with "authority and dominion." All that was necessary both in civil authority (Rom. 13:1-7) and the authority and dominion of men in the church on earth shall be forever abrogated in Christ's Parousia. These were all means to subject all things under Christ's feet. Thus God put all things under Christ's feet, as David speaks of the "LORD" saying to "my Lord" sit on my right hand till I shall have subdued all thy enemies under thy feet. But when this objective has been reached then *all* the principalities, *all* the authority and dominion can be abrogated by Christ. Once by His death the Old Testament ordinances were abolished, and now by His second return with the clouds of heaven to make all things new, the New Testament ordinances are abolished, so that God in Christ may reign over all things in a more direct and glorious way. It will be the perfection of the Theocracy of God in His Kingdom. Such is the "Eschatology Of Victory." Then we will have a new situation. John says, "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple (naos) of it" (Rev. 21:22).

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

Women in office—Despite Scriptural teachings

The *Outlook*, March 1981, presented an interesting quotation of an editorial and later response which appeared in *KERUX*, the paper published by the students of Calvin Seminary. The editorial does not necessarily reflect the thoughts of anyone but the writer—but does show an honesty in the “women in office” debate that is seldom otherwise seen. The writer, a student in Calvin Seminary, attempted to clarify an earlier editorial by writing:

I took the slavery issue as analogous (to women in office—GVB) for the following reason: The Bible says, “women should keep silence in the churches.” I see no exegetical way to get around that. I just don’t see how we can have women in office and not be contradicting the above Bible statement. (In fact, I think we still have to justify having female Sunday School teachers.) This does not mean, however, that the Church would be entirely anti-Biblical in ordaining women. The Church can appeal to texts like that in Joel: “Your sons and daughters shall prophesy.” Nevertheless, even if it does appeal to texts like that, it would still seem to be that the Bible is, in some sense, being contradicted. The plain language of Scripture, so far as I can see, simply does not allow for women in office.

Having elaborated on my analogy, I would now like to clarify the question why I wrote the things I did. My one, sole purpose was to engender honesty. I made it clear, first of all, that I was in favor of women in office. (As an aside, I would like to say here that the unity of the church is, however, for me, much more important than whether someone with a dress on ever makes it to the pulpit and that I fully submit to Synod. We should always move as unanimously as possible.) Secondly, still for the sake of honesty, I admitted that I feel hypocritical when I start basing my pro-“women in office” ideas on the Bible. When I do that I feel like I am “pretending” to be exegetical. Thirdly, I indicated that I appreciate the honesty of Paul Ingeneri.

I can elaborate on this third point. I respect people who are against women in office and who base their position on the Bible. I also respect people who are in favor of women in office who do *not* base their position on the Bible. But I am beginning (and only *beginning*) to lose my respect for people who, while favoring women in office, only *seem* to be basing their position on the Bible, people who actually have ulterior motives and who foist a whole lot of complicated exegesis on to the simple believer till eventually

the simple believer starts wondering what is going on, because, after all, the plain text still says that women should not speak up in church. What exegesis can possibly get around that? If we are basing our position on the Bible, why is the question of women in office even an issue among us?

My concern, to put it in other words, is the communicative process. It seems to me that tempers flare in this issue primarily because we are not being honest in the communicative process.

I can give an example of what I mean by “honesty in the communicative process” as follows: Suppose a person A says he is against women in office and quotes I Cor. 14:34—“The women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says.” Person B then responds (usually, in my experience, without admitting that he is in favor of women in office) by saying something like this: “Many scholars agree that this verse was quite likely not written by Paul. The language of ‘as even the law says’ is very non-Pauline...etc.” Now Person B, in my opinion, is being very, very unfair in the communicative process (regardless of whether he is right or wrong, which I frankly don’t know). Person B is coming at Person A with a whole set of assumptions and indeed, with a different view of Scripture concerning which he is not being honest, up-front, clear. Therefore tempers flare. Person A rightly suspects that something fishy is going on, and if he is anything like me he resents it.

With this example I do not mean to imply that everyone who uses Biblical arguments in favor of women in office is therefore being deceitful. Perhaps everybody is quite sincere in this (some would point to the Appendix of Olthuis’ book on Troth as an example of a sincere attempt to find a Biblical basis for women in office). I am only saying that I, myself, I feel hypocritical when doing so; I think the Bible is against women in office.

Let me conclude by saying that I believe that the Bible is totally authoritative and completely reliable for the salvation of humanity. I am sorry for leaving my editorial so open-ended and I apologize for my dogmatic manner. I am not sure how authoritative the Bible is on various cultural issues, but I wish always to submit to the Church’s judgment on such matters, also in its interpretation of the Biblical data.

Nick Overduin

It might be pointed out, first, that Rev. John Piersma, who commented on the article in the *Out-*

look, emphasized that the young man spake honestly—but was dead wrong. He appreciated the fact that this writer, while in favor of "women in office," admitted that such a position could not be supported by Scripture. In fact, the writer admitted that Scripture clearly supports the position against "women in office."

It has been this point which is repeatedly emphasized. Those who support "women in office" distort Scripture when they attempt to quote it to maintain their viewpoint. It is less confusing and more honest to admit that one does not believe Scripture to be authoritative when it speaks on such questions. But, of course, then the infallibility of Scripture is denied. A Bible which speaks authoritatively and completely reliably only

on salvation, as the article implies, is not authoritative and reliable on salvation either. What confidence could any have in a Bible which is not correct on many points?

But the seminarian is not truly honest in stating that "I fully submit to Synod" in this regard. The Synod of the Christian Reformed Church is on record as opposing women in the office of elder and minister. Where is the submission of this young man, and others, who constantly write against and agitate against that decision?

Finally, though one can sympathize with those who seem to be fighting a losing battle "for the Bible," one might ask, "How much of this sort of undermining of Scripture can go on, before something drastic is done?"

Christ's Virgin Birth

Clarion, Feb. 13, 1981, reports briefly:

According to the Leiden professor Dr. H. Berkhof, there is nothing in the Bible from which we can conclude that the birth of Christ was a virgin birth. Prof. Berkhof is of the opinion that Joseph could have been the father of Christ. Why is a woman involved and why not a man? "Does then, the man alone bring sinfulness and not the woman?"

The argument takes matters just a step beyond the "women in office" debate. It appears as though the Bible is not only not reliable about that "women in office" issue, but also is not always reliable on matters pertaining to salvation—as the

virgin birth of Christ is. The Bible plainly teaches Christ's virgin birth. If one can now deny that, what's next?

One hardly wonders when this same Dr. H. Berkhof, as quoted in the *R.E.S. News Exchange*, says, "Seldom have I read an ecclesiastical document with as much excitement as I have this one." He was expressing his feelings toward the new report on the nature of Biblical authority that was adopted last year by the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN), which report our own editor recently has been criticizing.

And: Attacks on Christ's Deity

What's next is revealed in *Christian News*, January 26, 1981. It quotes from *Christian Century* in an article written by Dr. John Hick, professor of theology at Birmingham (England) University and Danforth professor of religion at Claremont (California):

The older theological tradition of Christianity does not readily permit religious pluralism. For at its center is the conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was God—the Second Person of a Divine Trinity living a human life. It follows from this that Christianity, and Christianity alone, was founded by God in person on the only occasion on which He has ever become incarnate in this world, so that Christianity has a unique status as

the way of salvation provided and appointed by God Himself.

If this claim is to have real substance and effect, it follows that the salvation thus made possible within Christianity cannot also be possible outside it. This conclusion was drawn with impeccable logic in the Roman dogma *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* ("Outside the church, no salvation"), and in its 19th century Protestant missionary equivalent, "Outside Christianity, no salvation." But in the light of our accumulated knowledge of the other great world faiths, this conclusion with our concept of God, which we have received from Jesus, as the loving heavenly Father of all humankind; could such a Being have restricted the

possibility of salvation to those who happen to have been born in certain countries in certain periods of history?

...I believe it is necessary to look again at the traditional interpretation of Jesus as God incarnate. Such a reconsideration is in any case required today by the realization that the historical Jesus almost certainly did not in fact teach that He was in any sense God; and also by the fact that Christian thought has not yet, despite centuries of learned attempts, been able to give any intelligible content to the idea that a finite human being, genuinely a part of our human race, was also the infinite, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient Creator of everything other than Himself.

The proper conclusion to draw, as it seems to me, is that the idea of divine incarnation is a metaphorical

(or in technical language, mythological) idea.

...This kind of reinterpretation of the idea of divine incarnation, is, in different forms, fairly widespread today (more so, I think, in the United States than in Britain) and provides, so it seems to me, a basis for a form of Christianity which can be part of the religiously plural world of today and tomorrow.

Let none dare say that one step does not lead to another. The same sort of reasoning lies behind each of the articles quoted—the difference is a matter only of degree of development. A journey of 1000 miles, it is said, begins with the first step. So denial of the infallibility of the Bible always also begins with the first step—but the destination is inevitable.

IN HIS FEAR

Evangelism and Practical Godliness

Rev. Arie Den Hartog

In our last article on the subject of evangelism we promised to discuss the subject of the relationship between the life of the Christian and the work of evangelism. We emphasized in our last article that we all in the office of all believers have a calling in the glorious and wonderful work of evangelism. We wrote especially about our calling to give a testimony of the truth of the Word of God and of His wonderful works. It is necessary for us to give a testimony with our mouths. Without speaking of the truth of the Word of God it is impossible to do the work of evangelism. Our testimony must be personal, living, and zealous. We must be able to give a testimony of the truth of God as we have come to love and know the Word of God and His wonderful salvation. However, the testimony of our mouth cannot stand alone. It must be supported by our life of godliness. The Bible tells us this very often. We are told in Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they might see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Paul exhorts us in Ephesians 4:1 to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Again in Philippians 1:27 he exhorts, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ." There must always be harmony between our confession of faith and our life of godliness. If this is not so, then our lives will make a lie out of the confession of our mouth and we will bring blasphemy to the name of our God. No man will believe what we confess with our mouth if our

actions are evil and corrupt. Our lives must be a very demonstration of the truth that we believe and confess. All this is of utmost importance for the work of evangelism. Evil and corrupt lives will ruin all possibility of doing evangelism. Holy and godly lives support and further the work of evangelism. Our Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 23 lists among the reasons why the Christian must do good works this reason: "that by our godly conversation others may be gained to Christ."

We have entitled this article, "Evangelism and Practical Godliness." By godliness we mean centrally and first of all a zealous and fervent love for God and an earnest desire and striving to live according to the Word of God for His glory. We mean by godliness a walking in all the good works which God has before ordained for us. Godliness involves the showing forth of the fruits of the Spirit of God such as goodness, righteousness, truth, hope, joy, and love. By practical godliness we refer to that godliness that comes to manifestation in the practice of our daily lives. It is such godliness as causes our lives to differ from the world, to differ radically and evidently. We distinguish practical godliness from that form of godliness which is nothing more than an abstract defending of doctrines. It is of course of utmost importance that we defend the doctrines and truths of the Word of God. Without knowledge and doctrines the people of God will perish. There can be no evangelism

without truth and doctrines. But this doctrine must also be lived, it must come to manifestation in our daily practice. Otherwise it is of no significance and value whatsoever. It is nothing more than sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

Our godliness must be such that it causes people around us to marvel at the greatness of our God and our Savior Jesus Christ Whom we confess and serve. Our godliness must be the one outstanding thing in our life. Our godliness must be such that it causes men to ask the reason for it. Our godliness must be such that it causes men to covet our faith, our joy, our hope, and our peace. Though men may hate the righteousness of God and despise His truth they must always be put to silence by the godliness of our life. We must be blameless and without reproach in the midst of the wicked world in which we live. Above all we as Christians who would do the work of evangelism must be known as men who love and fear God. The result of practical godliness will be that, as our catechism says, others will be gained to Christ. The ungodly who hate God and persecute His saints will be condemned.

We could not possibly of course go into all that belongs to practical godliness, neither is this necessary to establish the point. Let us consider just a few examples. Surely godliness is a fervent love for God and therefore also for His Word. This fervent love must be heard in our conversation and seen in all our actions. It must be our heart's desire to know more and more about our wonderful God and Savior Jesus Christ. It must be the greatest desire of all our life to live in a way that is truly pleasing and glorifying unto our God. Men must be able to say from our words and our actions, "Oh how they fear and love God." The reason why we do certain things and do not do others, the manner in which we do all things, must evidently be our love for God.

The truly godly man is one who frequents the house of the Lord, not only on the Lord's Day but also for many other Christian meetings. We love to go to the house of the Lord because we love God, and in the house of the Lord we find the fellowship and blessing of the Lord. Practical godliness must then be such that it is evident that we love to go to the house of the Lord because of the blessing that we find there. We do not go to the house of the Lord out of mere custom or tradition but out of a fervent love for God. We surely could not, for example, expect to be able in the work of evangelism to encourage others to come with us to the house of the Lord if we do not ourselves love to be there. So great and so evident must our love be for the house of the Lord that men begin to ask what it is that we are finding there that we so intensely seek after and love so dearly. It is impossible for a

church to do evangelism if many of her own members do not care to come to the worship services and meetings during the week. Where the members of the church themselves do not care to come, no outsider can be encouraged to come. That is obvious.

We as Reformed Christians love the truth of the Sovereignty of God. For us this is the central truth of the whole of the Word of God. We often stress the great truth of "to God alone be the glory." But what does this mean in terms of our practical godliness? What does this mean concerning our regard for the law of God? Surely it must mean that we with godly fear strictly adhere to the commandments of the Lord. We do this not out of a cold legalism but as those who are constrained by the love of God. It is for the godly man an urgent matter to keep the law of God all the days of his life and in all and every sphere of his life. Though the godly man carries about with him his old man of sin, he does not use this as an occasion and excuse for his transgression of the law of God. Practically in his daily life it can be seen that he strives to keep the commandments of his God.

What does the truth of the sovereignty of God mean for our trust in God and for the attitude that we take toward our life and the hardships of our life? Surely the man who constantly goes around complaining because of the hardships and difficulties of his life does not reveal a faith in the sovereign goodness of God. Though we may confess with our mouth the sovereignty of God in our work of evangelism, no man will believe this if we are in our practical life an unbelieving and murmuring people. On the other hand, our testimony of the sovereignty of God is beautifully and powerfully supported if we are known as a people who manifest the grace of contentment, always giving God the honor and glory and thanking Him for His wonderful goodness. Surely some of the greatest testimony comes from those who know how to rejoice and give thanks in the midst of adversity. Such a testimony will cause men to marvel at our God and covet our peace and assurance.

For the Christian who lives in practical godliness sin is a grievous thing. When he does fall into sin then there is with such a man a very evident and deep sorrow for that sin. His greatest desire is, in the way of repentance and confession, to return to the favor and love of His God. He does not continue in sin. He says before God and man, "I have sinned grievously; oh, that I might be forgiven and reconciled to God and man." The godly man does not seek by all kinds of ways to justify his own actions and excuse his own sin; he simply in deep humility acknowledges and confesses his sin. When that sin

is against his fellow man, practical godliness means that he is such a man that seeks immediately to confess his sin unto his neighbor and seeks his forgiveness. The man who walks in practical godliness will not allow the sun to go down on his wrath. How terrible it is when a man who goes by the name Christian and is known to belong to our church forever holds a grudge against his neighbor. He does evil and does not repent of that evil. He is known as a hard and merciless man who will never forgive. What a poor testimony that is to the forgiving mercy of our God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Can we expect our neighbors to have any desire at all to come into the fellowship of the church where men never repent of evil against their neighbors and, when evil is done to them, they never forgive? How wonderful it is and what a strong support for the work of evangelism if we confess our sin to our neighbor, seek quickly to be reconciled, and, when sinned against, we in mercy and love immediately forgive. Such practical godliness will make men desire our faith and our goodness.

Practical godliness certainly must be revealed in the love that we have for our neighbor. This love must first of all be revealed in the church. According to the words of our Lord the disciples of Christ must be known by the love that they have for one another. Sometimes our churches are filled with petty bickering and fighting. How strong are the warnings of Scripture against those who war and fight in the church, those who bite and devour one another with their tongues. There is little that does as great damage to the cause of Christ Jesus as evil spirits and evil actions among the members. Surely no one would want to belong to a church where there is constant bickering and fighting. The cause of evangelism is virtually destroyed by such things in the church. On the other hand the cause of evangelism is greatly aided when men around us

are jealous of the love that we have for one another. It happens that the jealousy for this love may cause someone from the outside of the church to come to church under the preaching of the Word. Such love is a most powerful factor in the work of evangelism. In a world where there is nothing but wrath and hatred, the church in the work of evangelism must afford a sphere where the true love of Christ Jesus reigns, and is experienced and felt.

The Bible tells us that we must do good unto all men. That surely belongs to practical godliness. That means that if we see our neighbors in great distress and need we are the first as godly men to come to their aid. Living in practical godliness means that we can be counted on when there is great need and distress to help to the best of our abilities. We are filled with what the Bible calls bowels of compassion and tender mercy for the distressed and the needy. How necessary this is for the work of evangelism. How our Lord is our example in this.

We could yet go into the whole area of our business dealings with our neighbors. Are we known as a people who are always honest and just in our dealings with our neighbors? Is there truly a difference in the way we conduct our business or are we apt to lie and cheat as much as or more than our ungodly neighbor? Are we ever only seeking our own advantage? Are we manifest as a materialistic and money-loving people? What a terrible testimony to the gospel of Christ Jesus such things bring.

We could go on and on, of course, in this discussion. Let us all relate this matter of evangelism and practical godliness to our own lives. We as Protestant Reformed Churches have a reputation of being strong in the doctrines of the Reformed Faith. We can thank the Lord for this. But are we also outstanding because of the practical godly walk of our members?

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

Evangelism and the Reformed Faith (3)

David Engelsma

Yet another crucial element of the message of evangelism is repentance: heartfelt, godly sorrow over one's sins. In Luke 24:47, Jesus charges that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached." In obedience to the Lord's mandate to

him, Paul showed all men "that they should repent." Then he called them to "do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20). Repentance is the way, the only way, in which sinners receive and enjoy forgiveness. This is exactly Jesus' meaning in Luke

24:47: the apostles are to preach repentance as the way to have forgiveness.

Here, someone will say, the Reformed Faith is unable to do what is necessary for evangelism. Obviously Jesus intends that the disciples call men to repent and that they proclaim the promise that everyone who does repent will have remission and, thus, salvation. But the Reformed Faith cannot give the call of the gospel; nor can it promiscuously proclaim the promise. So says the critic of the Reformed Faith. At the critical point, the Reformed Faith proves to be impotent.

The charge, or fear as the case may be, is groundless. There is not a shred of truth to it. It is true that the Reformed Faith cannot and will not extend a well-meant offer to all hearers, i.e., an offer of salvation supposedly made by God to all hearers in love for them, with a sincere desire to save them, and on the acceptance of which by the sinner salvation depends. For the well-meant offer is nothing but a variation of the Pelagian-Arminian "whosoever will gospel." Long ago, the stalwart Presbyterian theologian, B.B. Warfield, devastated this pretender-gospel:

It is useless to talk of salvation being for "whosoever will" in a world of universal "won't." Here is the real point of difficulty: how, where, can we obtain *the will*? Let others rejoice in a "whosoever will" gospel: for the sinner who knows himself to be a sinner, and knows what it is to be a sinner, only a "God will" gospel will suffice. If the gospel is to be committed to the dead wills of sinful men, and there is nothing above and beyond, who then can be saved? (*The Plan of Salvation*, Eerdmans, 1966, p. 49)

But the Reformed Faith can and does call, with authority and urgency, in the Name of Jesus the Christ, all who hear, to repent and believe; and it can and does proclaim that everyone who does repent and believe shall be forgiven and saved eternally. It preaches repentance.

The repentance which it preaches includes a life of godliness. Repentance, in the Reformed view, is a radical change of mind about sin and, therefore, a radical change of life—a spiritual turning, a conversion. Reformed preaching outside the congregation does not hide from the hearers that the gospel-call is a call to discipleship, to cross-bearing, to self-denial, to Jesus as Lord as well as Savior. It is sometimes overlooked that in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus told the apostles to *disciple* the nations and that conversion and baptism are followed by instruction "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Evangelism does not end with "getting someone saved," but continues in their being taught to confess the truth in the true church; to love one another; to honor marriage; to submit to civil government; to

live in separation from the world and its works; and to keep all the commandments of King Jesus. Reformed evangelism will do this. Much of non-Reformed evangelism leaves this completely out of sight. For this reason, it is also essential in the work of evangelism that those brought to the saving knowledge of the truth be directed to join a true church, a soundly Reformed church. No Reformed missionary could say to a convert, "Now join the church of your choice."

These are essentials of Biblical evangelism. The Reformed Faith, so far from being embarrassed by any of them, proclaims all of them as no other faith can.

But what of the distinctive truths of the Reformed Faith, the "doctrines of Calvinism," on account of which men charge that the Reformed Faith is unable to evangelize? Granted that the Reformed Faith can preach repentance unto remission, does it leave the great doctrines of grace in the pulpit of the established church?

God forbid!

The Reformed Faith preaches the misery of men to be sin; and it preaches the extent of that misery to be total depravity. It passes upon every sinner the judgment of the gospel, that he is dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1), incapable of any good (Romans 3:9-18), and guilty before God (Romans 3:19). Specifically, it judges the sinner to be unable to repent, believe, and come to Christ, as the gospel commands him to do. The Reformed Faith preaches this *in evangelism*. To the man who objects to this as poor evangelism, it responds by pointing out to him that this was the evangelistic message of the Chief Evangelist Himself. In John 6:44, Jesus cries out to His audience, "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*" Thus, the sinner is made to know his great need and utter helplessness.

The Reformed Faith preaches that the coming to Christ required in the gospel-call, as the only way of salvation, is God's drawing of a man. We come, but our coming is the work of God in us to draw us efficaciously. Repentance and faith are Divine gifts, not human works. The grace of God is irresistible by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Reformed Faith proclaims this *in evangelism*. To the man who objects to this as poor evangelism, it responds by pointing out to him that this was the evangelistic message of the Chief Evangelist Himself. In John 6:44, Jesus declared, "*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*"

In addition, the Reformed Faith preaches, in evangelism, that all such coming is grounded in the eternal, gracious election of God. That one comes to Christ is due to God's gracious election of him in

eternity. Election is preached on the mission field, election involving and accompanied by reprobation—the only election that Scripture knows. Sinners being drawn to Christ are not left in doubt whence all this springs. Penitent and believing hearts must be assured of the eternal purpose of God's love for them and must glorify God with the confession that salvation, *their* salvation, is of the Lord. This was the evangelistic preaching of Jesus. As He preached Himself to the Jewish multitudes and called them to come to Him, He exclaimed, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

The Reformed Faith can do evangelism, because it has the gospel to preach. A message of possibility of salvation is no gospel. A message of a Jesus Who likes to save, but cannot save, is no gospel. A message of salvation dependent on man's running or willing is no gospel. As Warfield wrote, in *The Plan of Salvation*, this is merely another form of "autosermonism"—the gloomy news that man must save himself.

It is only in almighty grace that a sinner can hope; for it is only almighty grace that can raise the dead. What boots it to send the trumpeter crying amid the serried ranks of the dead: "The gates of heaven stand open: whosoever will may enter in"? The real question which presses is, Who will make these dry bones

live? As over against all teaching that would tempt man to trust in himself for any, even the smallest part, of his salvation, Christianity casts him utterly on God. It is God and God alone who saves, and that in every element of the saving process.

Our objection to the free-will preachers is not so much that they offer salvation, as it is that they have no salvation to offer. All who believe their message are themselves proper objects of genuine evangelism. We call them to turn from the dead idols of their own works and will, and to trust in the living God.

We have a message, the like of which there is not in all the world: not a new requirement for man to do something for his salvation, but the announcement of God's gift of salvation. True, we call men to repent and believe; but this repentance and faith are not works of man that accomplish salvation, but the way of receiving salvation. They are not human effort, but the renunciation of all human effort. They are not man's contribution to salvation, but the gift of God to men. True, we call repentant sinners to a life of good works, a life on a "narrow way"; but this life, the life of holiness, is itself part of God's deliverance of us from sin, His work of sanctification. Besides, our holy life is not meritorious, but thankfulness.

The message of the Reformed Faith is the message of grace. It is good news, the "evangel."

GUEST ARTICLE

Of Singing and Playing

Rev. R. Cammenga

On Sunday evening, November 2, 1980, our congregation in Hull held a dedication program for our new organ. For those who might be familiar with organs, the congregation has purchased an AOB (Associated Organ Builders) 523 organ. The program consisted of several special numbers on the organ, two numbers by our grade school choir, audience singing, and a demonstration of the organ. In addition, I gave the following address.

It is coincidentally significant that this week we commemorated the great Reformation of the 16th century, and tonight also dedicate the new organ which the Lord has given us. The Reformation was a complete renewal of the church of Jesus Christ. It was a reformation of the doctrine and teaching of the church. It was a reformation and renewal of the sanctified life that God's people in the world are

called to live. But it was also a reformation and renewal of the worship and liturgy of the church. Not least of all was the influence for good of the Reformation on the worship of song in the church services.

What was this good influence that the Reformation exercised upon this aspect of the life of the church? It is not an exaggeration to say that the Reformers redeemed the church's worship of song. They did that, first of all, by purging the liturgy, and especially the songs, of the leaven of Romanism. By the time of the Reformation the church's worship of song reflected all the grievous errors that characterized the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. The songs which were sung in the worship services intoned the doctrine of

the meritorious value of good works, reflected the idolatrous veneration of saints, and also served to proclaim the worship of the Virgin Mary. As part of their reformatory work, the Reformers expunged these bad doctrines from the church's worship of song. But, secondly, the influence of the Reformation upon this aspect of the worship of the church was not only negative. There was also a very definitely positive influence exerted by the Reformers. Especially was that true of Luther and Calvin.

Luther, of course, was a great lover of music, himself being an accomplished musician, and even a composer of sorts. On one occasion Luther declared:

Next to the Word of God, only music deserves being exalted as the mistress and governess of human feelings ... Through the medium of music the Holy Spirit placed His gifts in the hands of the Prophets; again through music the devil was driven away, as was the case with Saul, the king of Israel.... The Fathers and Prophets desired ... that nothing be more intimately linked up with the Word of God than music. (Quoted in *Patterns of Protestant Church Music*, by Robert M. Stevenson.)

In his zeal for maintaining and developing good music in the church's worship, Luther made music study a mandatory part of the curriculum in all the schools which he organized. Besides, he made an understanding of music a prerequisite to ordination into the ministry. And, finally, Luther himself contributed directly to the music of the church. Under his auspices several good hymn books were compiled and published for use in the worship services. He himself wrote some thirty-seven hymns, the best known and probably the most Luther-like being, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." This song, which has been sung in Protestant churches ever since the Reformation, is based upon Psalm 46. It is an enduring testimony to the strong and unconquerable faith of the Reformer.

Also Calvin gave his attention to the church's worship of song. His high estimation of the benefit of singing by the church is seen in the following quotation from his *Institutes*.

And certainly if singing is tempered to a gravity befitting the presence of God and angels, it both gives dignity and grace to sacred actions, and has a very powerful tendency to stir up the mind to true zeal and ardour in prayer. (Vol. 2, p. 181.)

Calvin emphasized a threefold function of singing in the worship services. Singing was, above all, according to Calvin, a means to glorify and praise God. But, secondly, it was also a means of teaching and instruction for the people of God. And, singing served the purpose of comforting and encouraging God's people. Because he was concerned that the church sing God-glorifying as well as edifying

songs, Calvin made provision for the publication of a Psalter for use in the Reformed churches.

In many ways, therefore, the Reformers renewed and reformed the church's worship of song. I believe, however, that the greatest contribution which the Reformers made toward the restoration of that worship of song, was the re-establishment in the worship services of congregational singing. Exactly because the Reformation was a return to the Scriptures, it was a return to the practice of congregational singing. The Reformers saw that the Scriptures teach that a part of the worship of the church on the Lord's Day ought to be congregational singing. That had all but disappeared in the Romish Church. In the Roman Church the choir or the soloist sang, or the priest chanted, and the people only listened. The Reformers changed all this. They saw singing as the calling of the entire congregation, the obligation of every member of the congregation, as part of their worship of God. Luther brought about this important reformation in the worship services by reinstating congregational singing in addition to the singing of choirs and soloists. Calvin went further and exalted congregational singing to the position of the exclusive form of singing to be used in the worship services.

It is right here that the precise place of the organ in the worship service is delineated. The organ is to be the instrument by which the congregation is better enabled to carry out its calling. The organ is to aid the congregational singing. That implies a couple of things. That implies, first of all, that the organ and the beautiful sound of the organ are not ends in themselves. The end is the congregation singing songs of praise to her God. If the congregation ceases to sing those praises, ceases to sing them sincerely and from the heart, the organ is prevented from carrying out its proper function. If the congregation sings songs, beautiful though they may sound, which do not glorify God by ascribing all of our salvation to Him, then we abuse the good gift that God has given to us. Let us determine tonight to have our organ aid us in singing songs that glorify our Maker and our Redeemer. And then, too, let us determine to sing in such a way that the words which we sing are the expression of what lives in our hearts. And let us determine to sing God-centered and God-glorifying songs, such as are in the Psalters from which we sing. Then we dedicate the organ to God. Then by our use of the organ we worship God. We do well to take to heart the warning of Calvin:

We must, however, carefully beware, lest our ears be more intent upon the music than our minds on the spiritual meaning of the words. (*Institutes*, vol. 2, p. 182.)

Finally, this implies that the organ is a servant. It

serves the congregational singing. The congregation does not serve the organ, but the organ serves the congregation. It is not the organ that tonight is dedicating the congregation. But the congregation is dedicating the organ. That means that the organ must not begin to occupy a place in the worship service which is not its rightful place. The organ must not in some way or other take charge of the worship services. It must not exchange its role of servant for a more honorable position. It must not draw attention to itself by its exceeding volume or by its fast pace. The organists must conform their playing to this one principle: the organ is to be the servant to the congregational singing. So fearful were some of the Reformers, especially Calvin and Zwingli, that the organ would become the focus of attention in the worship services, that they opposed

the use of the organ in the worship services altogether.

But there is a good and right, and therefore, too, important, function of the organ in our worship services. That function is assisting in our congregational singing, assisting in our worship of the God of our salvation. Let us heed the exhortation of the Apostle Paul in Col. 3;16, 17: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." To that purpose, the giving of thanks to God and the Father through Christ Jesus, do we dedicate the organ which God has given to us.

Book Review

I & II CORINTHIANS (The New Century Bible Commentary), by F. F. Bruce; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981; 262 pp., \$6.95. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

This is another volume in the New Century Bible Commentary series of which Ronald E. Clements and Matthew Black are General Editors.

Because F. F. Bruce is a noted and gifted Biblical scholar, this commentary is also one of the better ones in the series. It is written, generally speaking, from a theologically conservative viewpoint and is sound in its exposition. It has some good introductory material in it through which Bruce introduces the two epistles treated to the readers. With all this introductory material we cannot agree. Bruce, e.g.,

claims that there were probably four separate letters which Paul wrote to the Corinthians and two or three separate visits after the stay in Corinth during which the congregation was organized. Perhaps the greatest weakness of this commentary (as well as most of the commentaries in this series) is its brevity. One can easily imagine that a treatment of two rather lengthy epistles in 250 pages (including fairly lengthy introductions to each epistle) must, in the nature of the case, be almost too brief to be helpful. Its greatest use will be in preparation for society study if one wants a quick and brief, over-all view of a section or chapter. But it would be well to study the text with another commentary besides this one.

STANDARD BEARER INDEX!

This notice is from an informal committee interested in publishing an index to all the *Standard Bearer* volumes. Our intent is to make a complete textual, title, and subject index which would probably be published in syllabus form (like our Seminary notes). It is our belief that an index of this kind would make the *S.B.* far more valuable for study and reference. Some qualified individuals have already agreed to do the necessary work.

Are you interested?

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All young men desiring to begin studies this fall in the Pre-Seminary or Seminary Departments of the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches are requested to make application as follows:

PRE-SEMINARY DEPARTMENT

Permission to enroll in the Pre-Seminary program must be granted by the Theological School Committee. Applications may be made thru the Secretary of the Theological School Committee and must include an official high school transcript, an official transcript of all college level work completed at other educational institutions, a letter of testimony from the applicants consistory or pastor, and a Certificate of Health from a reputable physician. Applications must be received before April 15, 1981 to insure consideration. Please direct your application and materials to the Secretary of the Theological School Committee, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Mich. 49418.

SEMINARY DEPARTMENT

Permission to enroll in the Seminary program must be granted by the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches upon recommendation of the Theological School Committee. Applicants are requested to appear before the Theological School Committee at its meeting to be held on Thursday, April 16, 1981 at 7:30 PM at the Theological School Building, 4949 Ivanrest Ave. S.W., Grandville, Mich. 49418. Applicants must submit a testimonial from their consistory that they are members in full communion, sound in faith, and upright in walk, and also a Certificate of Health from a reputable physician. Academic records shall be submitted showing satisfactory completion of 125 semester hours of college level work and 87 semester hours of prescribed pre-seminary course work while maintaining a cumulative grade point average of 2.7 (B-) in the pre-seminary work. A student entering seminary on probation shall remain on probation one year while maintaining a C average and having no failing grade in any course.

Theological School Committee
Gerald Feenstra, Secretary

NOTICE!!!

The Spring meeting of the Eastern League of Mens and Ladies Societies will be held on April 7, 1981 at 8 PM in the Holland Protestant Reformed Church. Rev. Rodney Miersma will speak on the subject - "The Moral Majority Movement - Should we Support It?".

Elsie Kuiper, Sec'y.

NOTICE!

This notice is to serve as a reminder that material for the 1981 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, convening at Holland, Michigan on June 3rd, is to be forwarded to the Stated Clerk of Synod at the following address before April 15, 1981.

Rev. M. Joostens
2016 Tekonsha S.E.
Grand Rapids, Mich. 49506

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 11, 1981, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. ARTHUR ZANDSTRA, SR. will celebrate their 35th Wedding Anniversary. We, their children, thank our heavenly Father for the many years they have sacrificed to give us a Christian education and for their instruction in our home and Church. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless and keep them in His care.

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

Art and Judy Zandstra
Jodi, Lisa, and Jennifer

Howie and Karen Hoekstra
Heather

Garry and Joan Eriks
Garry, Melissa, Beth and Nicole

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 5, 1980, our parents, MR. AND MRS. VERNON KLAMER, will celebrate, the Lord willing, their 25th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, are thankful to our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents who have brought us up in the fear of the Lord. We pray that God will bless them and keep them in the years to come.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children." Psalm 103:17

Tom and Vicky VanOverloop
Brandon and Heidi
Chuck and Verna Terpstra
Corey

John and Valerie Van Baren
Bruce Klamer
Vonda Klamer
Brenda Klamer
Brent Klamer

News From Our Churches

$2,000 \div 52 = 38.461538$. At least that's what my calculator reads. Which means that when May 10 arrives, a total of 2,000 Reformed Witness Hour broadcasts—38.461538 year's worth—will have passed over the airwaves. A milestone worth celebrating, don't you think? Well, the Radio Committee thinks so too, so they are planning an evening of commemoration on April 23 at First Church in Grand Rapids. The program will include two choirs and a live Reformed Witness Hour broadcast (at least recorded live, to be played on Sunday, May 10) with Prof. R. Decker as speaker. Following the program other activities are planned, including a tour of the Radio Room and refreshments. It looks to be a once in 38.461538 years occasion. You might want to circle the date on your calendar and look for more information in your church bulletin.

From a Wyckoff, New Jersey bulletin we learn: "The latest news from Singapore is that the den Hartogs have moved to another apartment. The chief reason for the move was increased rent, even though the apartment they are now in is in the same building as the first. Rev. den Hartog writes that the new apartment is nicer than the old, though higher up. Their new address is: 22N Block D, Pacific Mansion, River Valley Close, Singapore 0923."

While on a Church Visitation Tour of Houston, Randolph, and Loveland, Rev. Engelsma lectured in Houston on the topic: "Church and State in the Coming Antichrist."

Our Birmingham mission field recently featured Rev. Woudenberg at their "March Conference" on the 15th, 16th, and 17th of March. In two worship services and two lectures Rev. Woudenberg discussed the general theme, "The Call of the Gospel."

At the risk of displaying a bias toward education I would like to dispose of—or maybe we should say *expose*—a number of school-related items that are building up in my file.

The following announcements of interest were taken from Randolph and Edmonton bulletins, re-

spectively: 1. "In harmony with the mandate of Article 21 of the Church Order, the Consistory has set this Wednesday, February 18 as an evening aside for all concerned individuals to come together and discuss the feasibility and desirability of establishing a school society so that Reformed education may be furthered for our covenant youth." 2. "There will be a meeting on Friday evening at the church, for the purpose of establishing a Protestant Reformed School Society. Let us come together in faith that our God will provide us what we need, also with a view to the instruction of the covenant seed."

But people in the Protestant Reformed churches are not the only ones interested in Christian Education. This is clearly evident from some of the correspondence which Miss Agatha Lubbers, editor of *Perspectives in Covenant Education*, receives. Though the circulation of the periodical is relatively small, correspondence reveals that there are interested readers in Mississippi, Massachusetts, England, South Africa, and Northern Ireland, to name just a few. One correspondent from Northern Ireland even sent a copy of the constitution of "The Association for Christian Education in Ireland." It would be interesting to know a little about the history and development of this organization. (If someone in that organization takes this hint seriously, maybe some of the information can be passed on to our S.B. readers.) By the way, *Standard Bearer* readers who would like to know more about this educational journal should send their inquiries to: *Perspectives*, Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute, c/o Covenant Christian High School, 1401 Ferndale Avenue, S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504.

News anyone? Please check to see if you are remembering to send it; then check to see if you're sending it to the right place: 1313 Wilson Ave., S.W. Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504. I'm convinced a news editor has little use for the saying: "No news is good news."

C.K.