

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

....God says, thou shalt not kill; and man says, I will kill! God says, thou shalt not commit adultery; and man says, I will commit adultery, not just once but over and over again! God says, thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not covet. And man says, I will.... In short, the word of man today is: I love the abounding of iniquity and I will do everything within my power to cause sin and iniquity to abound evermore!

see "Who Shot J.R.?"—page 14

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MEDITATION

The Only Begotten Son of God

Rev. C. Hanko

Ques. 33. Why is Christ called the only begotten Son of God, since we are also the children of God?

Ans. Because Christ alone is the eternal and natural Son of God; but we are children adopted of God, by grace, for his sake.

Heid. Cat. Lord's Day 13.

Amazing confession! Jesus Christ, God's Son!

With the church of all ages we confess in our Apostolic Creed that Jesus is the Son of God. After declaring that we believe in God, our Father, the Almighty Creator, we confess our faith in Jesus, Who is the Christ. Concerning this Jesus we make

the confession that He is God's only begotten Son. We echo the song of the church of the shadows, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called *Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince*

of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). We hear Nathanael say, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49). We delight in Peter's confession as mouthpiece for the disciples, "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:69). With Thomas we bow before Him in worship saying, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

Anyone who denies this fundamental truth undermines the entire Word of God. Take away Christ's divinity and you have no virgin birth, no signs and wonders, no preaching of our Lord. All His testimony would only prove Him to be the biggest deceiver that ever lived. Without this we have no cross, no resurrection, no Lord of Glory in the heavens, no return of Christ with the clouds, no final glory. In fact, we would have no God, for Jesus is God. Our faith would be worse than vain. The matter is as serious as that. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is anti-christ, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). On the contrary, this is the triumph of the faith of the believer. For "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

The Only Begotten Son of God. There are other references to sons of God in Scripture. Adam is called the son of God. Angels are referred to as sons of God. Also believers are called sons of God. Yet, in distinction from any other sons of God, Jesus is the only begotten, the eternal and natural Son.

He is begotten. The Creator has given us an earthly picture to help us understand this eternal reality. An earthly father begets a son through his wife. Without the father a woman could not possibly conceive and give birth to a child. The child that is born bears the resemblance of both the father and the mother. A father rejoices to see his likeness in his child, so that with a sense of joy he says, "my son," or "my daughter." The eternal reality pictured here is the generation of the Son by the Father. This is without the medium of a woman, as is the case with us. This is also not an act of a moment, but is an eternal generation. The Father continuously gives life to the Son, and the Son continuously draws His life from the Father. The Son bears the very image and likeness of the Father, so that the Father turns to the Son in love, saying, "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee."

He is the eternal Son. As hard as it is for us to conceive of eternity, so hard it is to understand this eternal generation of the Son. Many questions arise in our minds that remain shrouded in the mystery of the Godhead. Yet we know that the Father is eternal, and the Son is also eternal. There is no be-

ginning for the Father nor for the Son, nor is there end of days for either one of them. The Father is never without the Son; the Son is never without the Father. In the Holy Spirit, Father and Son meet and live an intimate life of everlasting fellowship as the covenant God.

He is the natural Son. The second person possesses, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, all the divine perfections. The Son is almighty, omnipresent, omniscient, and all-wise. He is holy and righteous. He is love, grace, and truth. He is, in one word, fully and completely God. He lives the divine life in perfect harmony with the Father and the Spirit. With the Father and the Spirit He foreknows and decrees all things. With them He creates, upholds, and directs His creation to its predestined goal. As one of the persons of the triune God He redeems the world for the sake of the elect. The wicked are destroyed like dead branches of a tree, or like the chaff in a field of wheat, but the organism of God's world is redeemed and brought to glory.

Amazing truth! Glorious reality! Blessed confession!

Scripture speaks of Christ as the Firstborn of every creature, even among many brethren. The firstborn in the old dispensation opened the way for other children to follow. When the father died the firstborn became the head of the family and of the tribe. Therefore the firstborn received a double portion of the father's inheritance. This was a type of Christ Who is appointed of God as the Firstborn to bring many sons into glory. He receives the birthright blessing from the Father as a reward on His accomplished work on the cross to share that blessing with His brethren, that they may live and reign with Him eternally.

In the old dispensation God was still at a distance from His people. It is true that He appeared to them either by direct speech or through the Angel of Jehovah. He brought His Word to them through angels, or through visions and dreams, or through prophets. God came to dwell with His people in the tabernacle and in the temple in the Most Holy Place behind the veil. Yet there was a barrier, a wall of separation between the living God and His church simply because the Christ had not yet come. Now God is come very near to us. The Son of God took on our human nature from the virgin Mary. The person of the Son dwelt among us as both God and man. This makes the mystery of our salvation all the more amazing. God formed His own human nature in the womb of the virgin. God lay in a barn. God walked among us in all our weaknesses as one of us. God showed His power in signs and wonders as the man Jesus. God spoke our language in such a plain and simple way that children enjoyed listen-

ing to Him. God was hated, spit upon, reviled, accused and condemned as a malefactor not worthy to live among men. God surrendered Himself into the hands of sinners to be nailed on the cross, suffered torments of hell under His own wrath, shed His blood as an atonement for the sins of His people. God arose in the man Jesus, took our flesh into heaven, and was exalted in Jesus to the position of power and glory at His right hand. As if all that were a small thing, God came in the Spirit on Pentecost to take up His abode in the hearts of His saints, who thereby become temples of the Most High God. God in Christ will appear again, so that every eye will see Him, also those who crucified and rejected Him. He will take His people unto Himself, so that the tabernacle of God will be with man. God will dwell with them and be their God and they will be His people forever. There is no other name under heaven whereby we can be saved.

This deserves all our emphasis. The truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is often denied. It is often ignored. Ignoring this truth may be even more dangerous than an outright denial. Often we hear hymns sung about a kind, loving, gentle Jesus. Children are taught to pray to Jesus. The impression is left that Jesus is readily approachable, but God is a harsh and stern Being Who might frighten a child. Let us maintain with all our might, Jesus Christ is God, for He is God's only begotten Son, in Whom is all our salvation.

Behold and tremble, for we stand on holy ground!

Our Catechism discusses the Sonship of Christ in connection with our sonship. On the one hand, it shows the vast difference between Christ's sonship and ours. Christ is the natural Son, we are sons by adoption. Christ is the eternal Son; although our adoption is from eternity, we are made sons in time. On the other hand, it shows how intimately our sonship is related to Christ's. For it is only because Christ is the eternal Son of God that we can be made sons in His image and likeness. Moreover, we have the right to adoption by the sacrifice of God's dear Son on the cross, Who makes us sons by His Spirit in our hearts.

We are called sons of God. Actually we have no right to this exalted privilege. By our natural birth we bear the guilt of the sin of our first parents,

Adam and Eve. We belong to a human race that is sold under sin, which increases the guilt of sin by its sinful transgression of God's law and willful rebellion from day to day, even until the measure of iniquity is full and God destroys them in righteous judgment. But in sovereign good pleasure God has eternally separated us from this present evil world and adopted us to be His sons with the right to eternal life. Christ sealed that eternal adoption with His own life blood on the cross. He took away our curse and merited for us the right to a place in God's family forever. Christ was delivered over unto death for our transgressions; He was raised for our justification. He is now the exalted Lord in heaven, Who sends His Spirit into our hearts as the Spirit of adoption, assuring us that we are sons of God and heirs of eternal life. We are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, now to suffer with Him for a while, that we may be glorified with Him forever. Soon we shall stand before the great white throne, where Christ Himself will assure us of our eternal adoption, of our right to enter into Father's House, of our appointed place at Father's table, to praise and glorify His boundless grace. Saved! Saved by the blood of God's eternal Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Even that does not fully express the great wonder of our sonship. God does what no human parent can do when he adopts a child. God not only assures us that we are adopted as sons in His House, but He also makes us sons. Eternally God regards us, not as we are in ourselves, but as we are in Christ Jesus. We were one with Christ when He suffered as an atonement for our sins on the cross. We were so completely one with Him, that when He stretched out His arms to be nailed to the cross, we did just that in Him. When He suffered torments of hell, we suffered those torments for our sins in Him. When He died, we died. When He arose, we arose. So that when He went to sit at the right hand of God in the highest heavens, we went to sit with Him there. By His Spirit Christ implants His resurrection life in our hearts, and thus transforms us into His likeness in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, so that we know God, love Him, and serve Him in love. Now we are sons. We know not fully what we shall be. But this we know, we will be like Him in His glory, beholding Him face to face in Christ Jesus to the praise of the glory of His grace, world without end!

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

Editor's Notes

News Editor Change

Beginning with this issue you will no longer see the news column on the back page signed "K.G.V." (Kenneth G. Vink). Brother Vink informed the Staff at the annual meeting that he felt compelled to resign as news editor, due to an overload of tasks. We take this opportunity to thank him sincerely for his faithful labors. We are also happy to introduce his replacement, Mr. Calvin Kalsbeek. Brother Kalsbeek is a member of our Hope, Walker, Church. He is also principal of our Adams St. Prot. Ref. Christian School. You will make his career as news editor a happy one by cooperating in sending him news items from all over our denomination. What, after all, is a news editor to write if you do not send him news? His address — and you will find it hereafter in the masthead — is: 1313 Wilson Ave., S.W., Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504.

Other Plans

As Volume 57 of our *Standard Bearer* appears throughout the coming volume-year—yes, this issue marks the beginning of our fifty-seventh year!—you will be noticing a few changes. Personnel changes include (in addition to our news editor) the addition of the Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma to our Staff; he will be sharing the department *Signs of the Times*. Besides, we hope to present guest articles from time to time by several new writers. But there are other changes. During the course of the new volume-year we plan to present three special issues: one on our Seminary (October 15 issue), one on our Christian schools, and one on our missions. We hope that you, our readers, will also do your share in the coming volume-year. Your share includes three items: 1) Read what we write. 2) Support the *Standard Bearer* financially. 3) Help us get new subscribers and readers.

Book Club bonus

The RFPA's newest publication *The Voice Of Our Fathers (An Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht)* will be coming on the market in another month or so. The price will be \$18.95 for this book of over 900 pages. High priced, you say? Not in comparison with most books of its size, which sell for closer to \$25.00. But here is the big news! RFPA Book Club members are going to receive a special first-copy-only discount of 30%, rather than the usual 20%. The Publications Committee wants to prove to you that it pays to belong to the Book Club!

Can You Still Join?

Yes, and if you join *before* our new book comes from the press, you will also benefit from the bonus mentioned above. In fact, if enough of you join, we will be able to keep that discount at 30% permanently. Do you still think it isn't worthwhile? Listen! At our recent annual Publications Committee meeting I learned that every one of our books, as reprinting becomes necessary, is going to go up in price. Right now we have three books in need of reprinting which will increase in price from one to three dollars! All you need to do to join is signify your intention by writing to: RFPA Publications Committee, P.O. Box 2006, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49501. Membership obligates you to purchase every *new* publication at discount as it comes out, and it privileges you to buy *any* of our books at the club discount.

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Have you written the den Hartogs in Singapore?

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EDITORIAL

No, Size Does Not Matter, But Faithfulness Does!

—or—

Dr. Taylor Misses The Point

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Several months ago I made some editorial comments on a Presbyterian merger proposal and, along with those comments, a few remarks about urgings on the part of Dr. Edmund Clowney that the OPC join in a (conservative) Presbyterian amalgam. At the conclusion of those remarks I called attention to what I called "a lesson in all this."

In *The Presbyterian Journal* (Aug. 6, '80) Editor G. Aiken Taylor takes occasion from my editorial to write on the question, "Does Size Matter?" In so doing, however, he seems to have missed completely the point of my "lesson."

And this is too bad! For I think it is a lesson which all the Presbyterians who are at present discussing the subject of merger might well consider, rather than being seemingly preoccupied with the possibility of getting together to form a *larger* and more influential denomination and even being charmed by the prospect of participating in a "national" Presbyterian church which might have some "standing" and recognition as far as churches go in this land of ours. Thus far I have read a lot about the benefits of merger, but very little about the question of Presbyterian distinctives. No one seems to examine the question whether those involved in the proposed amalgam are truly Presbyterian, whether the churches involved truly stand on the basis of and maintain the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Dr. Taylor begins his editorial by the following reference to what I wrote last March:

In an editorial comment on trends within the Presbyterian and Reformed families of churches, the Rev. H.C. Hoeksema of the *Standard Bearer* had something to say about the *size* of churches.

Wrote Mr. Hoeksema, whose publication speaks for the Protestant Reformed Churches, a tiny denomination of some 21 congregations and some 4,000 members: "It is, of course, not pleasant to be small, not to

enjoy much growth in size....But it is a fact of church history and of experience that smallness and faithfulness to the truth go hand in hand."

Dr. Taylor then goes on to adduce instances when, according to him, smallness did not go hand in hand with faithfulness to the truth and to suggest that it is more accurate to say that churches with rigid standards, "churches whose distinctives in worship or practice demand personal discipline or sacrifice," seldom grow large and are likely to remain small.

At the conclusion of his article he writes:

Back to our original question: Does size matter? Size, pursued for its own sake, surely is a form of heresy. But so is smallness, defended as an excuse for theological, or pastoral, failure.

My own answer to Dr. Taylor's question, however,—and this was true in the editorial last March as well as now—is, first of all, that size does *not* matter, whether big size or little size. The main subject of my discussion in the article referred to was not at all *size*, but an undue concern about size and desire for bigness as over against a concern about the truth and faithfulness. This will be plain from the fact that I was writing in the context of Dr. Clowney's apparent interest in growth and in merger with the PCA. It is evident above all from the fact that I specifically wrote that the church "has but one calling, *regardless of the consequences*," in other words, regardless of whether it is big or small and whether it becomes bigger or smaller. But it is faithfulness to the truth of the Word of God and to the creeds that matters, in the second place. And if Dr. Taylor had quoted my "lesson" in full, instead of quoting part of two sentences from two paragraphs, this would have been plain. For here is the "lesson" to which I called attention:

It is, of course, not pleasant to be small, not to enjoy much growth in size, to be limited in financial power

and in the ability to accomplish things. The OPC knows something of this by experience. We of the Protestant Reformed Churches certainly also know something of this by experience. We know what it means to struggle, to fight for survival, to sacrifice, to be despised, to be ostracized for the sake of the truth. We know what it means "not to count" in the ecclesiastical world.

But it is a fact of church history and of experience that smallness and faithfulness to the truth go hand in hand. And not infrequently has it been demonstrated in church history that outward growth in size and financial power and standing in the world goes hand in hand with a relaxing of the reins as far as doctrinal purity and faithfulness to the creeds are concerned. If you want to grow, you must not be too precise doctrinally, you must not be too insistent upon the truth, you must not enforce the creeds and the Formula of Subscription too strictly. Be content to be "evangelical." Be content to be generally Presbyterian or Reformed. Be not righteous over much!

But remember: the end of that road is the loss of your heritage. All the large denominations which today are modernist and completely liberal have trodden that same path before!

The church has but one calling, regardless of the consequences: maintain the marks of the true church!

The Lord will take care of the rest!

To date, in the current discussions about merger I have not seen much of the kind of concern about maintaining the marks of the true church called for above.

And I strongly urge that before the various Presbyterian groups involved in these merger discussions proceed with the merger, they examine

themselves and one another with respect to the question whether the proposed amalgam-church will be really and truly Presbyterian in the sense of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Perhaps that examination could begin with the PCA. Is it true that the PCA is already an umbrella large enough to cover millennials of all shades? Is it true that the PCA is already an umbrella large enough to include Arminians as well as those who are truly Reformed? Is it true that the PCA can still have communion with the PCUS, the so-called Southern Presbyterian Church, where most PCAs had their origin?

I am reminded of an incident a few years ago when Prof. Hanko and I visited at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi. At an informal faculty luncheon we were asked a good many questions about our Protestant Reformed Churches. One of the questions was whether there was communion between the Protestant Reformed Churches and the Christian Reformed Church. After I replied emphatically in the negative, I thought that turnabout was fair play. So I returned the question and asked whether there was communion between the PCA and the PCUS, from which the former separated. The answer was "Yes." When I asked the further question, "Why then did you ever separate?" the response came rather quickly, "That's a good question." I thought, too, that it was a good question. But I have never received an answer to it. And it makes me wonder sometimes how much genuinely Presbyterian principle is involved in the existence of the PCA.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Delay and Defilement

Rev. John A. Heys

With a sigh of relief Jacob watched Esau and his four hundred men putting distance between themselves and himself. What a great relief! For what fear gripped him when he heard that Esau was coming with four hundred men! And he, with an unarmed band of wives, children, and cattle, was as a sitting duck in a wide open country! He was heeding the command of God, Who ordered him to return to the land of his fathers. And God saw to it that after the meeting of Esau and Jacob not one

drop of blood had been shed, and not one blow had been struck, Yea, not one angry word was spoken! What is more, the cheated brother goes home from the brother who cheated him with the parting gesture of promising to protect him and ensure a safe journey back to their father. And even when this kind offer is turned down, the cheated brother does not respond in an offended way and with misgivings and accusations that his brother was resorting to his old tricks. He considers Jacob's

excuse to be reasonable. The little children and cattle cannot travel as fast as the four hundred would want to ride back to their home.

Truly He that watcheth over Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth. He will keep our going out and our coming in, as Psalm 121 so beautifully declares. On Him we can depend. Great is His faithfulness. It is of His mercy that we are not consumed. Jacob, who experienced that mercy all night in that wrestling match that did not destroy him but taught him, now finds that mercy renewed in the morning, and he is free to return to the land that was promised to him.

We cannot ascribe such faithfulness to Jacob, even though he bears the name of God in his new name Israel. He was, indeed, in the land of Canaan. We read that in Genesis 33:18, "And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-aram; and pitched his tent before the city." God, however, had not simply called him to return to Canaan but to "the land of his fathers" and to his "kindred." He was to go back to the sphere of the covenant. What is more, he had definitely left the impression with Esau that he was going home, that is, going to where his father still lived. He had in fact said to Esau, "I will lead on softly....until I come unto my Lord, unto Seir." Instead he went northward from Jabbok and Penuel to Succoth. Now Jacob could soothe, or try to soothe, his conscience by claiming to be in the promised land of Canaan. But he was dragging his feet rather than hastening to do what God called him to do. And we do well to bear in mind that keeping the letter of the law, when in the heart we break the spirit of the law, means that we are not keeping the law. And this will never bring us a blessing. The mere conforming to the letter of the law carries no blessing from God Who reads and searches the heart. God does not call mere conformity to the letter of the law a good work. He declares that if we seek Him with all our hearts, we will surely find Him. And finding Him is finding a blessing. The Pharisees with their outward conformity to the law were called whited sepulchres and not children of light. In fact such deceit of trying to keep only the letter of the law leads us into temptations and to further departures from God's law. For then the heart is not right, and hearts that are not right are ripe for temptation and lawlessness. Out of the heart are the issues of life; and a heart that cares not about the spirit of the law will move to keeping the letter of the law only for a carnal advantage and not in the love of God. And so that mere outward keeping of the letter of the law is sin and is never called by God a good work. By men it may be lauded, because man does not see the heart. Before God the question is, "Do you love

Me?" One can keep the letter of the law in love of self. That does not count. Keeping the letter of the law in a fleshly love for the neighbor is not enough. The second table of the law demands a love for the neighbor that flows forth from the love of God required in the first table of the law.

We may note here in Genesis 33 that Jacob does two things. He settles down in the land and builds a house near Shalem. And he bought a parcel of land—that which neither Abraham nor Isaac had done before him. They did not buy a piece of land whereupon to spread their tents. Plainly Jacob has no intention of returning immediately to the sphere of the covenant.

What must be added is that he showed no concern for the spiritual well-being of his children. Had this concern burned in him, he would with haste have traveled to that covenant sphere. He would have wanted his growing children to have companions with the children of believers. He would have been concerned with their physical well-being and traveled at a pace that they could take. But he would have been driven by an eagerness to get them where they would be able to say with the psalmist in Psalm 119:63, "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts."

We may recall that although Esau was an unbeliever, and Jacob could rightly have no interest in having his children associate with his children, there were those other children of Abraham through Keturah, as well as believing families like those of Melchizedek, and of the men confederate with Abraham (Genesis 14:13), whom we may believe were children of God, or otherwise Abraham would have had no fellowship with them. He lived as a pilgrim and stranger in the land, walking by faith and looking for the city which hath foundations whose architect and builder is God.

And while it is true that in Isaac Abraham's seed would be called, so that the covenant line would be continued through Isaac's seed, which would bring forth the Christ, there were other covenant children of God living in that day, and were the kindred of which God spoke when He called Jacob to leave Laban's house and return to his kindred and to the land promised him. Bear in mind that Jacob knew where there was a place where believers dwelt, and where his children, and he himself could find companions that feared God. He knew where he could enjoy the fellowship of the communion of the saints. It may be argued that he simply built booths and not a house. The fact remains that Jacob delayed his journey to his father's house and to his spiritual kindred by as much as *ten years*!

We are not told what Jacob's reason was for stopping here for so long a time. Nor are we told what reaction this had on Esau, who expected Jacob to come in the area, certainly within a year. They did not need to travel that slowly. And a little thought to the matter will show that Jacob delayed as much as ten years. Jacob married Leah after working seven years for Laban. After that, he served Laban another thirteen years during which all his children, except Benjamin, were born. Benjamin was the only child of Jacob born in the land of promise. And thus, when Jacob left Laban's house, his oldest child was not yet thirteen years old. Now Dinah, his only daughter, was born about a year after Leah had born Jacob six sons. One child a year—if indeed this was the case—would mean that seven of those thirteen years had come and gone before Dinah was born. She must have been about five and at the most six years old when Jacob and Esau met and parted in peace. And the incident in Genesis 34, wherein we read of the defilement of Dinah, implies that she was a young woman, physically and sexually attractive enough and developed for Shechem to want her for a wife. She was definitely of a marriageable age, so that Shechem did not commit a crime of child molestation but of fornication, and probably with her consent. We read of no opposition which she gave or of a report to her father of being abused. All we read is that "Jacob heard that he (Shechem) had defiled Dinah his daughter." And we read this in connection with the statement that Shechem spoke to his father and asked him to get Dinah for him as a wife because his soul clave unto her. We read that he defiled her, but not, as is often reported in Scripture, that he forced her.

That Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land does not speak well of her. We are not told whether she went with the permission of her father, or whether she went in spite of his protestations. But by settling there for about ten years Jacob gave sanction to fellowship with these unbelieving Canaanites. We would say today that he could certainly see something like this coming, if not with Dinah, then that his sons would defile the Shechemites, or at least take them to wife. Children will do such things in spite of their parents instruction and warning. But often, when parents ask, "What did we do wrong? Where did we make our mistake?" They can rather ask themselves, "Did we select our living quarters as ruled by the dollar, or because here our children will get the pure preaching of the truth and find companions who fear God?"

We stated above that it does not speak well of Dinah that she went to see the daughters of the land. But Jacob created the situation wherein his

only daughter would be tempted to do this. In a family of eleven sons and one daughter, it was but natural that she craved companionship of other young women. As a teenager she craved fellowship with other teenage young women. Let us believe that Jacob and Leah warned her of the dangers of rape by appearing alone among the Shechemites. But when Jacob had the express command from God to go to his kindred and the covenant sphere of that day, let him do more than warn and forbid. One cannot by one's deeds say, "This is a good place to live, and life among these inhabitants is pleasant," and then with one's words warn the children of dangers and the unbelief of the inhabitants. Jacob delayed heeding God's command, and must not be surprised if his children ignore his commands.

Yet that one brief but powerful statement stands that Dinah went out to see the daughters of the land. O, Dinah, do you not realize that the daughters of unbelievers have a lot to teach you? And do you go to learn some of their ways? And do parents today send their daughters to the world and its schools, and its sons and daughters to have a broader education, and to learn wordly things that are not taught in home and church? Dinah was attracted to the world. That is what that statement means. Our sons and daughters are attracted to the world, and they need not go to Shechem. In the living room, or even in their bedrooms, they, with a flip of the wrist, can go and see the daughters of the land, and the sons of the land in their immorality, lawlessness, fashions, ways, and philosophies. Our young people have it spiritually harder than Dinah did, for they need not go as far, need not leave the home and—sad to say—have parents who install in their homes that device that enables their sons and daughters to go and see the sons and daughters of the world in all their evil ways, and to learn to know them and have them for their heroes, yea to take their time away from the study of the Word of God and from knowing better the giants of faith written upon its pages, and the Christ Himself.

Disapprove of Jacob's delay in keeping God's command. Condemn Dinah's action of going to see the daughters of the land. All this you must do. But you may not stop there. You must go and look into the mirror of the law of God to see yourself, and then to make sure that you are not creating situations for the defilement of the *souls* of your sons and daughters; and as young people make sure you are fighting the flesh and seeking with might and main to be a companion of those that fear God.

**The Standard Bearer makes
a thoughtful gift for a shut-in.**

GUEST ARTICLE

Enlarge Thy Tent

Mr. M. A. Straayer

Last year in the *Standard Bearer* there were two articles by Prof. H. C. Hoeksema dealing with our apparent over-supply of ministers. Prof. Hoeksema, however, pointed out that although there might be a surplus at present, figured over the next five years or so, there is no surplus at all; and he very directly asked the question whether the Lord had a purpose in providing us with such an abundance.

He stated what should be a firm belief among us, that if the Lord provides us with ministers He will also have and provide work for them. In the past two to three years we have seen how the Lord has abundantly given us men into the ministry, and we started worrying so much that we almost encouraged our older ministers to seek emeritus status, (if the church had been an ordinary business, we would have given them financial encouragement to retire early, as they do in Holland at age 60). Were we right? We also started to worry already about places for the class of '79. And what happened? From one home mission post (Victoria), we went to four new fields: Birmingham, Bradenton, Monroe-Mt. Vernon, and Lansing-Charlotte. From one foreign mission field, we went to two: Jamaica and Singapore. And there is still a request for help from New Zealand. Therefore at present we have $21 + 3 + 3 + 4 = 31$ openings, and only 25 ministers.

Do we see what the Lord is telling us? From a surplus in one year we went to a shortage—a still healthy situation, but nevertheless a shortage. Two times now the Lord spoke to us, and He is still speaking to us: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." "Fear not: for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any-more."

In this article I want to look with you at our

churches' denominational statistics, because through them the Lord speaks the same language that He speaks to us in giving us such an abundance of ministers and in then giving us so many new fields.

Through the analysis of the statistics we can not only hear the same message, but it also gives us the opportunity to project in a very concrete way the promises which our Lord gives to us when He commands us to enlarge thy tent.

The gathering of statistics and their correlation has generally the purpose of showing "Where we were," "Where we are," and then projecting "Where we are going." Of course, everybody in business does this, and we find it quite normal to talk about it. However, as soon as we come to doing this with the church, we actually don't know if we are allowed to do this. First this comes about because the church is not a human institution; it is unique, because the Lord very directly calls it into being. However, that same God also gives us understanding and knowledge to use also these talents in His service. That same God also says to the remnant, "Enlarge thy tent," make it sturdy because thou shalt break out—with other words, burst at the seams.

God does not say, "Maybe prepare for expansion," or "Get material ready for expansion," or, "Pray for expansion," or, "Look at it and figure out how it can be done, but don't do anything because it is all My work." No, but He says to the remnant, "Enlarge thy tent," *period*. And then that remnant has to get busy. And who before he builds a house does not sit down and figure it all out?

Our denomination is very small, and therefore using figures per church becomes meaningless. But the same holds true for most businesses. Therefore Descartes gave us a concept rule that works in most cases; and it basically involves building figures to the greatest possible combination, and then breaking these totals down again into components. This process, of course, generally is done in different ways till we see a pattern developing; and then we start projecting that pattern.

For the purpose of this study, therefore, I took the figures of our total membership from 1964 to 1979 and divided these into three periods of 5 years each: 1964 to 1969, 1969 to 1974, and 1974 to 1979.

	period 1	period 2	period 3
total membership at end of period	3107	3471	4235
total membership at beginning of period	2885	3107	3471
increase during period	222	364	764
% increase from beginning of period	7.5	12	22
average % increase annually	1.5	2.4	4.4
average membership per congregation at end of period	163	173	201

Over the whole period Classis East grew from 257 members per congregation (7) to 277 members per congregation (9).

Over the whole period Classis West grew from 92 members per congregation to 145 members per congregation.

Let me now on the basis of these past statistics project the next five years, Dec. 31, 1979 to Dec. 31, 1984. Our past growth period shows each period at an almost doubling growth of 1.5% 2.4%, 4.4%. We project therefore for the next period an average of 8% per year, which means an increase of 1694 members from 4235 to 5929.

Projecting 8%, you ask if I am not too optimistic (actually, you probably use another word). I feel I am not: first, because in our last 5-year period we showed a growth greater than the national population growth; and that is generally a healthy sign. There are all indications that there is a growing interest in our denomination by others, by people who are coming to their wits' end and finally have to come to that little and despised church to be fed again from sabbath to sabbath with the sincere milk of the gospel. Our present average is 201 members per congregation; with a 1694 increase, we must expect five new congregations in the next period, bringing at the end the average per congregation to 228 members. Past figures seen above show increases from period to period of 10 and 20 members per congregation; this increase calls roughly for 30 more members per congregation, including 5 new congregations.

Five new congregations over the next five years is not much if you consider all direct facts available to us. Grand Rapids: one more congregation.

Grand Rapids statistics:

1964: 5 congregations, 354 members average

1972: 5 congregations, 362 members average

1973: 6 congregations, 324 members average

1979: 6 congregations, 368 members average

You can see from these statistics that in Grand Rapids we are almost due for a seventh congregation, although due to the relocation of First this will

probably be at the end of our projection period when the average congregation in Grand Rapids should have 390 members.

Presently we have four mission posts; assume 2 new congregations out of our home mission work.

Look at your map of Canada, and realize that at present 5 families from our Lynden church are living in the B.C. lower mainland and have to cross the border every Sunday. The area has something like 23 churches of Dutch Reformed background. It seems logical that with a few more families a new congregation would be born in that area.

In Alberta there is the beginning of 2 young families and 4 individuals (12 members) in Lacombe. They are now travelling a 160-mile round trip every Sunday.

Our church in South Holland should have grown too large by the end of the period.

There are now inquiries out of the province of Ontario, where there is the greatest concentration of Reformed churches in Canada.

The above are only things that I am aware of. But I think it shows that an expectation of five new congregations is not too high. Except for First, Grand Rapids and Isabel, all our congregations, although there are ups and downs, show a continual increase and steady growth.

So what should we expect by the end of 1984? May I project that we have grown to 26 congregations, still 2 classes, from 4 home mission fields to 8, from 3 foreign missions openings to 6, including possible assistance and help to churches in New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, South Africa, Ireland, Scotland, Holland, Germany, etc. All of this adds up as follows:

26 congregations
4 theol. professors
8 home missionaries
6 foreign missionaries
<u>44 ministers</u>

Presently we have 25 active ministers, from which during that period probably 2 will seek emeritation, leaving us with 23 ministers. We have 6 students, and we will need in the next five years 21 new ministers. Considering all the above, there is no surplus. We are heading for a shortage. So we had better start asking the Lord, Who also commands us, "Enlarge thy tent," to call men to the ministry. And we also should start asking our young men very directly, intreatingly, to consider the call to the ministry. See, the fields are white for the harvest! Pray the Lord of the harvest that He send forth reapers.

We have heard about reformation in the past, but we do not expect one more today. O ye of little

faith! If ye had faith like a mustard seed! Why no more reformation? Is it for us to decide that there will be no more reformation? Could it be that the Lord will use us, even us? Could it be that for that gathering, that reformation, He created the Protestant Reformed Churches in 1924, and that therefore 1953 was necessary?

Let us therefore come boldly before the throne of grace as congregations and ask for additional ministers. Let us therefore come boldly as young men and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." So that generations not yet born may say of us, "By faith...."

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Mission Work Among the Jews

Prof. Robert D. Decker

There has always been a good deal of discussion (and no little disagreement) in the church concerning the Jews. Just what place do the Jews occupy in the history of redemption? What does the future hold for the Jewish people? Will there be a mass conversion of Jews at the end of the ages? These are just some of the questions debated and discussed in the church for years already. But in that discussion there is one question which dominates and that is this: what is the church's calling with respect to the Jews? Ought the church direct a significant part of its missions work to the Jews? Some churches do. They have special missions to the Jews. It is our purpose in this and succeeding articles to examine the question of the "priority of the Jews" in the light of Scripture.

Among the plethora of books dealing with the principles of missions (many of these are of little value) is an excellent work by the late Dr. J. H. Bavinck, a Dutch missionary and professor of missions, *An Introduction To The Science of Missions*. On pages 69-74 Bavinck has this to say concerning the "Jewish question":

Any discussion of missionary activity requires a threefold distinction between the work among the heathen and Mohammedans, among the Jews, and evangelization. The question of the mutual relation between these aspects can then be raised.

The Scriptures do not make a distinction in principle between missionary activity among the heathen and among the Jews. In Luke 24:47 Jesus instructed the apostles by saying "and that repentance and remission of sin should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem." These words indicate that Jerusalem has a preferred position at least with respect to temporal sequence. However, in Acts 1:8 the privileged position of Jerusalem is no longer

emphasized, for we now read that the apostles must be witness of Christ "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Missions to Israel and missions to the heathen are here simply mentioned in conjunction to each other.

Other passages of Scripture also give the impression that since the rejection of Christ by official Israel, through the Sanhedrin and the leaders of the people, Israel has lost any special claim. Israel is now as anyone else: since it rejected the kingdom of God, the kingdom must be given to "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43). Among this new people there will also naturally be many Israelites, but they are not an elite with special privileges but are simply ordinary members of the church of Christ. It is noteworthy that in the missionary command of the Lord, reported in Matthew and Mark, mention is made of going "into the whole world" and of "making disciples of all people," but in neither of these instances is Israel expressly named. Israel now simply belongs to the "world," to "the nations."

Nevertheless, the book of Acts gives sufficient recognition to the fact that Israel enjoyed a temporal priority, since Jerusalem was the point at which missionary activity was to begin. And as a matter of fact the history of missions did begin in Jerusalem. In fact if God had not adopted special measures to open the door to the outside world, missionary activity would have been in danger of also ending at Jerusalem. Paul was conscious of the priority of Israel in all his work. It was to the Jews of Antioch that Paul stated, "it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing that ye put it from you and judge yourself unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). In the next verse Paul quotes from the Prophet Isaiah, "for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salva-

tion unto the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47). In connection with the first proclamation of the gospel the issue was as to how far the Jews, both in and outside the land of Israel, approved the official condemnation of Jesus by the Sanhedrin. If they disapproved and recognized Christ as the Redeemer then they belonged to Him, to the true Israel around whom God would build His church. Such was the manner in which God fulfilled His former promises to Israel.

A certain priority, in so far as temporal order was concerned, was assigned to missions to Israel in the first church. Israelites who believed in Christ, however, did not hold any special or privileged position within the church. It is of course, true that at the very beginning the church of Jerusalem exercised a certain supervisory capacity, and the conclusions that it reached through its elders and the apostles had a certain authority in the other churches. However, this authority subsequently disappeared of itself and the other churches assumed a position of equality.

The question as to whether or not a priority ought still to be assigned to Israel must in my judgement be answered negatively. The first missionary work began in Jerusalem, and outside of Jerusalem it first took place in the Synagogue. For it was then necessary that all Israel be confronted with the choice as to whether they would concur in the decision of the Sanhedrin. Such priority (which never involved a priority in position but only in time) received its full recognition, however, in the first missionary activity. Missionary activity did begin in Jerusalem and in the Synagogue, but once the majority of the Jews assented to the decision of the authorities in Jerusalem and judged Jesus to be a false Messiah, they lost all preferential treatment. From then on Israel simply belonged to the nations, to the world to whom the gospel must be preached. It no longer had a special position, since the kingdom of God had been taken away from it.

The question remains as to whether or not there are still promises which are unfulfilled concerning the future of Israel. This problem has become urgent since the establishment of the state of Israel.

The Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel are of four-fold character.

The children of Israel who lived in the dispersion are repeatedly promised that they will return to Jerusalem. Isaiah writes, "Lift thine eyes round about and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side" (Isaiah 60:4ff.). Hostile heathenism will release the children of Israel and they will again gather together in Jerusalem.

The second type of promise refers to the genuine conversion of Israel. We have already referred to the well-known thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah and to the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel. Numerous references are found in all the prophetic writings to the coming conversion and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The third type deals with the spontaneous coming up of the heathen to Mount Sion, attracted to the new glory of the reborn Israel.

And finally, the fourth promise refers to the mighty salvation that shall be displayed before their lowered eyes.

Now it is evident that the first of these promises was fulfilled in principle when Israel returned from Babylon. It was spiritually fulfilled when many Jews who had been dispersed in Greece and Rome, and throughout the world, were converted to Jesus Christ and thus reunited to the people of God. This promise was not concerned with the city of Jerusalem, the local Jerusalem, but with the Jerusalem that refers to the great King, the great son of David. It is exceedingly difficult to answer the question as to whether or not there is an unfulfilled element in this promise which has now begun to be fulfilled in the formation of the state of Israel. But in any case a single element of this prophecy ought not to be isolated from the other three. For within the context of the prophecy, return from captivity and dispersion is intrinsically connected with genuine conversion and a new entrance into the salvation of the Lord. The return of countless Jews to the present day land of Israel contains many elements which remind us of ancient prophecies. Nevertheless it may be the case that in principle, from a spiritual point of view, this return is something completely different, something that is entirely outside of the horizon of the prophets. And yet it appears to me that it is possible that God may use this reunion of the people of Israel as a means to a new spiritual growth. For this reason missions to Israel and particularly in the land of Israel have a great importance, and we must reverently await what God may do.

The second Old Testament promise of the conversion of Israel is regarded by the New Testament as having been fulfilled by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the conversion of thousands of the children of Israel which followed. Peter refers with great boldness to the well-known words of Joel. The conversion of Israel foretold by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all the prophets has been fulfilled. It has become a fact in Jesus Christ. It was not the entire people of Israel that were converted but those who came to conversion were indeed the Israel of God, the Israel that had received the promises which were "for them and for their children" (Acts 2:39).

The fulfillment of the fourth promise lies to a large measure outside the dimensions of world history. The glory and perfect peace that God shall give when the wolf shall lie down with the lamb can be tasted and foreshadowed here on earth to a degree, but its deepest reality cannot be realized until God "shall wipe away all tears from our eyes" (Revelation 21:4; cf. Isaiah 25:8).

It is thus extremely difficult to determine whether all the promises of God concerning Israel have already been fulfilled. One thing is certain, the New Testament proclaims that all these promises, including the fourth promise, have been fulfilled in the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. They are therefore realized in principle; no single

word of God is in vain. God has done what He said He will do. But the Bible itself teaches that some of the words of God receive more than one fulfillment, and from time to time God weaves the threads of history in an unsuspected way. Thus the above-named promises shall first receive their complete realization in the day when the majesty and glory of the people of God shall be brought within the new Jerusalem.

Is there then no single promise concerning Israel of which we can say with certainty that it remains to be fulfilled within the course of this world's history? This question again brings us back to Romans 9 to 11 and particularly to Romans 11:25, of which we have already spoken. If we understand the "all Israel" in the second part of the text as referring to the natural descendants of Abraham, there is then reason to hold that the gathering of the gentiles will again quicken many Israelites to jealousy (as it did in the past), and bring them to repentance, "so that" the chosen of

Israel will be converted. More than this we dare not say. It is therefore evident that in addition to missions to other nations, missions to Israel demand our full attention. Israel has no priority, no preference, but it must not be forgotten. It is indeed possible that God still has amazing plans for His people. It is possible that this is what Paul meant when he said: "have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness" (Romans 11:11-12).

The only proper attitude for us is to wait, with reverence and humility, to see what God is going to do in this perplexing moment of world history.

We shall comment on this position of Bavinck in the next issue the Lord willing.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

"Who Shot J.R.?" Or, A Celebration of Sin

Rev. R. Flikkema

"Who shot J.R.?" That question has become, what *Time* Magazine in its August 11 issue calls, an "obsession" for "300 million souls in 57 countries" around the world. Staggering figures, aren't they? It is a question which is seen on bumper stickers; heard expressed on radio and television; and yes, even used by the political candidates for the presidency of the United States. It is undoubtedly the case, therefore, that you are familiar with that question.

If, however, you are not, then allow me to explain. The question, "Who shot J.R.?" arose out of a much talked about and extremely popular television program. The program is entitled "Dallas." It appeared on the television screens a year ago, and has, practically from the very outset, been the number one rated show of the year. It is (so I understand, for I have never watched the program, nor do I intend to watch the program) all about a rich family living in Dallas, Texas. The central character of this family, and indeed of the whole program, is a man by the name of John Ross Ewing Jr., hence the initials J.R. On the last program of the past season this man, John Ross, J.R., was shot. By whom, no one knows. And so, I

understand, no one will know until the beginning of the fall season. And, therefore, the question, "Who shot J.R.?"

And therefore too, the title of this article. Right? Wrong! I am not in the least bit interested, in this article, in giving my own personal opinion concerning the answer to that question. To put it bluntly, I could not care less! Nor am I interested in this article in writing a condemnation of the program out of which the title of this article arose, or even a condemnation of television in general for airing such a program. I am not interested in that as such.

But this I am interested in, and this I do care about. I am interested in and I care about the signs of the times. The signs which our Lord Jesus Christ talked about and which the holy Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ talked about, and for which signs we the chosen people of our Lord Jesus Christ must watch. Jesus told us to "watch for ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." Watch! For what must we watch? The answer to that question is, for many things. But one of those many things is exactly the abounding of iniquity. In fact, Jesus literally says that in Matthew 24:12.

There Jesus says, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." In the last times, Jesus would have us understand, iniquity, sin, in its basest and worst forms shall abound. It shall overflow. The cup of sin and iniquity shall be filled to overflowing. And sinful man who causes the cup of sin and iniquity to overflow will glory and boast in the sin and iniquity. For that we must watch!

And it is exactly because of that, that sign of the times, the abounding sin in which sinful man glories and boasts, that I write this article. The program "Dallas," with its much talked about question, "Who shot J.R.?" is proof positive that indeed in the last times iniquity shall abound. I have already stated that I have never watched the program. But I do not have to watch the program in order to say what that program is all about, and that it promotes nothing less than, the abounding of iniquity! I know that from that article in *Time* magazine to which I referred above. When I read that article I was just shocked, and so also should every child of God in whose heart the love of Christ, and Christ's commandment to live in a new and holy life, is still warm and vibrant. If you read that article you will discover that the central character, J.R., is a man who is totally evil. All that he does is evil. All that motivates him is evil. There is not a single redeeming factor about him. He loves nothing better than to commit adultery, the lust of his flesh. He thrives on nothing better than lying, cheating, and stealing in order to advance his material gain. He is a very vain and proud man who will do anything to enhance his proud, vain person. As evidence of that fact, so that you may know that what I am saying is a fair, and in the final analysis, mild description of this man, I quote from the beginning of *Time's* article. As this man lies on the ground, having been shot, these thoughts arise in his mind:

As he lay crumpled on the floor of his office, with two bullets in his stomach, his thoughts pinwheeled off into fantasies of his real and idealized past. His first word had been "Mammon." As a child he had torn wings off flies and sold the insects' bodies to science. In high school he had peddled exam answers to his fellow students, then told his teacher that they were cheating. In college he had impregnated an entire sorority and used the offspring to stock a black market agency.

No wonder he proved such a success when his daddy brought him into the family business: skewering the town's most powerful men out of millions while he was seducing their wives. All in all, a cause for celebration.

That is the man J.R. And that is what this whole program is all about. The interest that this program has for millions of souls around the world is not the

answer to the question, "Who shot J.R.?" Not in the least. But rather the interest that this program has for millions of souls around the world is none other than evil, lust, corruption, adultery, stealing. In one word, sin! Sin and the advancement of sin is what interests millions the world over. The celebration of sin is what interests millions the world over. A life of sin according to J.R.'s own words, which we quoted above, is "a cause for celebration." Mind you, a cause for celebration! And the millions the world over who cannot wait until this program is aired each week, also consider sin a celebration.

Man today is not interested any more in living a new and holy life. Man today is not interested any more in striving evermore to keep God's commandments: thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not covet; and all the rest. All that man today is interested in is living a life of sin and living a life that is a total violation of God's commandments. God says, thou shalt not kill; and man says, I will kill! God says, thou shalt not commit adultery; and man says, I will commit adultery, not just once but over and over again! God says, thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not covet. And man says, I will steal, bear false witness, and covet! I will! Violating God's commandments is what life is all about. Life and life's celebration is no fun unless I do violate God's commandments. In short, the word of man today is: I love the abounding of iniquity and I will do everything within my power to cause sin and iniquity to abound evermore!

I insist that, because that is the word of man today, and because that word of man is so vividly portrayed on the program "Dallas," 300 million people watch it so faithfully and glory in it. It is no small wonder that, with 300 million people glorying in that vivid portrayal of sin, there are very few left across the world who glory in the Word of God and in God's precepts. It is no small wonder that, with the abounding iniquity in our day and age, the words of Jesus are true, "the love of many shall wax cold." It is no small wonder!

But, thanks be to God, when Jesus told us that the love of *many* shall wax cold, He did not say the love of *all* shall wax cold. Oh, no! The love of *all* shall not wax cold. We may be sure that there will always be a faithful few in comparison with the millions of ungodly whose love remains warm. In the midst of abounding iniquity, in the midst of the world's celebration of sin, is your love warm? Watch then! Do not join the world's millions who watch this damnable program. Do not join the world's millions who glory in what this program portrays. But watch! Watch for ye know neither the

day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.
And be faithful, faithful in your calling to live as

Christ the Son of Man would have you live, even
unto the end.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

Letter to Timothy

October 1, 1980

Dear Timothy,

We must conclude, in this letter, our discussion of the conscience. We talked last time about the fact that one who does not walk according to his conscience (as enlightened by the Word of God) creates many problems in his life so that he suffers great mental and spiritual distress. I want to discuss with you what a pastor must do under these circumstances as he comes face to face with this problem.

It is well to remind ourselves at this point that our problems in life are the result of sin. There is, according to the Word of God, only one solution to the problem of sin: the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The healing power of the cross of Christ comes to the people of God through the preaching of the Word of the cross; more specifically, as the pastor brings that Word of God to the sheep entrusted to His care as he deals with them pastorally. This is a fundamental position and we must not be permitted to stray from it.

The pastor is a preacher of the Word of God. That is all he is called to do. He is not a psychologist or psychiatrist and ought not to presume to be one. He is not a director or counselor (if something different from preacher is meant by this) or consultant. He is not an expert in mental disorders or a narrowly trained professional in a particular branch of learning. He is a preacher. That is all. He must always only bring the Word of God.

There are many temptations to stray from this calling in the course of his work. The lofty claims of psychiatry and the promises which this branch of healing hold out to ministers often tempt him to enter this rather esoteric world. It appeals to a minister, who is not on his guard, to gain competence in this field because it gives him a sense of possessing something others do not have. Further, the temptation to engage in a bit of psychology is strong because some have the idea that psychological techniques give one who

possesses them a certain "power" over his patients or over those who come to him for help. And there are those who like this sense of power. This is a very evil thing, rooted in pride, and must be resisted with might and main. Still others may be tempted to forsake the Word of God because sometimes God's Word does not work as swiftly as we would like to see it work. God has His own purpose and time for all things. The power of the Word is God's power through Jesus Christ. And God makes that Word effective in His own way. The minister who relies upon the Word relies upon God. He is deeply aware of the fact that he is ineffective and can do nothing other than work as a servant of the Word. But, not content with leaving the matter in God's hands to be worked according to God's purpose, he becomes impatient or dissatisfied with the Word and determines to set out upon his own way. The Word does not seem to be doing what it ought to do in his judgment. And so he resorts to be doing what it ought to do in his judgment. And so he resorts to other techniques and methods in the hopes of gaining his ends.

All of this must be strenuously resisted. I cannot warn you enough against the temptations which these things bring about. And it cannot be said often enough that the minister of the gospel is a *preacher*. He had better *preach*. There is nothing else which he can do or ought to do.

But at the same time, that Word which he brings is the greatest power this world has ever seen. There is no power like it anywhere, simply because it is the power of God unto salvation. He is a servant of that one power which is able to heal broken hearts, bind up all the wounds that sin makes, bring comfort and peace to the troubled, and solve the problems which sin creates in this sorry life. If he is properly impressed with the great power of the Word, he will be content to limit himself to that Word in all his work.

Now, just because the Word is the Word of God

which always accomplishes God's purpose, it is well also that the minister be reminded of the fact that the Word also carries with it a two-fold power: it is a savor of life unto life, but it is also a savor of death unto death. It is a two-edged sword which saves and hardens. It is the effective means in God's hand to accomplish His purpose in the salvation of the elect and the damnation of the wicked. God is at work in the preaching of the Word. And God works to do what is His good pleasure to do.

This is important to remember because the preaching of the Word will not have always its desired effect—i.e., from our point of view. We would like it if the Word were always the means of healing and saving. But we know that God wills otherwise. And the preacher of the Word must reckon with this fact.

The point is that we are not only the victims of our sins when we suffer all the troubles and problems which sin brings, but we are so opposed by nature to all that is of God that we reject out of hand and with total disdain the Word of God which is the one power which can heal us and solve our problems. We all have this natural aversion to and hatred of the Word of God. This will not be changed until God in His grace is pleased to make our hearts receptive to that Word so that we receive it, bow before it, and submit ourselves in all our lives to its good instruction.

This will never happen to the wicked because God is not pleased to give to them this saving and sanctifying power. Upon them the Word will come as a hardening power. And this too is according to the purpose of God Who does all His good pleasure and acts always according to the counsel of His will.

But even in those who are the saved and redeemed, there is this natural aversion to the Word. It is not necessary to point out to you in detail how we too prefer the ways of our sin to the ways of God's commandments. We press our sins closely to us, are most reluctant to give them up—even when we know they are the source of all our grief and trouble, and steadfastly resist submitting to the Word of our God. Thus, oftentimes even in God's people will that same resistance to the Word be found which is present in the wicked. But through the faithful ministration of the Word, God will, in His mercy, be pleased to make that Word effective—but always in God's time and in His way.

When all of this is applied to the question of the conscience, the implications are readily apparent. The conscience is the voice of God in us passing judgement upon all that we do. But that voice of God speaks only in connection with His Word. And

so it is that the Word will not only guide the conscience but also show us how we have tormented our consciences by refusing to walk in God's way. It is the Word of God which will bring confession of sin and the healing power of forgiveness.

But it is this which presents a problem. The conscientious minister who takes seriously his calling to bring the Word of God knows too that the Word must be addressed to the particular needs of the people who come to him for help. To use an example, it is not, quite obviously, satisfactory to read to a couple having marital problems the history of Jonah in the whale's belly. He may expound that history in all faithfulness according to the Scriptures, but those whose marriage is coming apart in their lives will wonder a bit what the history of Jonah has to do with all this. He is under some obligation to bring that particular Word of God which fits the need of those in trouble.

But the problem is, at least on many occasions, that the minister himself does not always know the deeper need which a person has. If a person is in deep trouble because of a troubled conscience, neither the person himself nor the minister may be clearly aware of the sin which lies at the root of the problem. And if he does not know what the deeper problem is, he finds it difficult, if not impossible, to find an appropriate Scripture passage.

Now this problem must not be over-exaggerated. There is a point here which needs to be very strongly stressed. Any minister who has any experience in this kind of work knows that God uses His own Word in very surprising ways, and uses unusual passages to accomplish His purpose. It is not strange that a sermon on the doctrine of creation, e.g., is able to bring a sinner to repentance—although the relation between the truth of creation and the sin of the sinner is not clear to us. Nor need we be always emphatically and deliberately subjective and personal in our bringing of the Word. I myself witnessed a minister speaking to a very old woman, who was very confused and troubled, of the objective truth of justification by faith alone as based on Romans 4, and who brought peace and joy to her heart. There was nothing subjective about his ministry at that point and there was no effort made to apply that particular Word to the needs of that person at that moment. But the Word of God did its work.

If, therefore, a minister does not know what the particular problem of an individual might be, rather than make wild guesses he might better choose to read and discuss a passage of Scripture which speaks of the power of sin and the cleansing power of the cross. Once again, the point is that his reliance must be on the power of the Word.

Nevertheless, a minister must know, insofar as that is possible, what the need of the person who seeks him is. And if and when he comes to know that need, he must bring the Word of God which addresses itself specifically to that need. God's Word speaks to all the circumstances of life—without exception. God's Word is everlastingly relevant. There is no problem, no trouble, no temptation, no sin which lies outside the reach and power of that Word.

And, particularly in connection with the conscience, the minister must bring home in a very forcible fashion that there is only increased trouble and sorrow in the way of sin. God's wrath and hot displeasure rest upon all those who forsake His law

and walk in the way of transgression. But it must be also pointed out from God's Word that there is peace and joy, blessedness and true spiritual serenity in the way of obedience to God. Confession of sin carries us to the cross. And the cross is the power of forgiveness for all our sins no matter how great they may be. The blood of Calvary cleanses from sin and gives us the power of a new obedience. Through that cross is life and joy, peace and happiness. There is no other way. In the cross we are able to walk in good conscience before God.

Fraternally in Christ,
H. Hanko

TRANSLATED TREASURES

A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

(Kuyper has been talking about the institute of the church and particularly about the special offices in the church. In connection with the latter, he has just finished in the previous paragraph a discussion of Christian discipline.)

31. Concerning Worship.

Public worship aims exclusively at the holy activities which take place in the public gatherings of the churches. Neither that which happens in families nor that which happens in particular gatherings may be included under this title. Public worship is that which the church as church does in the hour of spiritual fellowship and communal worship under the exercise of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. From this follows, first, that the leadership of the public worship must be placed in the hands of the minister of the Word and that the direction of it belongs to the jurisdiction of the consistory. If many churches are gathered together, then the control for those churches must be established by the Classis. Or if yet more churches are gathered, the control is by the Synod. But also classical and synodical decisions are ruled by the decision of the consistory. Secondly, it follows that the minister of the Word does not function in the gathering of the congregation to express his personal spiritual life, but, in the name of the Lord,

to declare the sin of the congregation and God's unending mercy; and, likewise, in the name of the gathered multitude, to go to God the Lord with prayers, doxologies, and thanksgiving. A certain fixed procedure is indispensable for this. If all the ministers change, or also, in larger churches, more than one minister work alongside each other, it must always remain the one church which in all its many services finds again her unity and continuity. For that reason, formularies for the administration of the sacraments, for installations, for public exercise of discipline, etc., are explicitly commanded. A general order of worship ought to be established for the public worship in large churches. That which must be sung ought to be determined. And even a certain form prayer ought not readily to be condemned. Also, it must be understood in this connection, that no form worship or formalism must be introduced. The free utterance of the Spirit in the congregation ought not to be bound by human regulations. Finally, in the same city or large village more than one church building may be used for worship. Likewise, certain definite preachers and certain definite city districts in the form of parishes may be limited to individual church buildings. But all these worship services ought always to belong under one consistory so that in each of these worship services,

no matter in what church building they are held, the same confession is made and the same liturgy is followed.¹

Looked at from this viewpoint, the so-called hymn question is an ecclesiastical question of serious concern. As long as, e.g., the church of Amsterdam is connected with other churches with which it was one since 1775, the regulation and direction of the public worship of what may be sung is exclusively the determination of the national synod. All earlier synods decided that only the Psalms should be sung and so this decision can only rightly be revoked by the national synod. The synodical deputies, however, who in 1806 introduced the hymns had not received a mandate to do this from any single national synod. But, according to Reformed church polity, a deputy neither can nor may do anything but what a synod charges him and specifically orders. And because a provincial synod never can nor may undo what a national synod has decided, so the provincial synod of 1805 possessed absolutely no authority to nullify the decisions of the national synod of 1619. It thus could not transfer a power to her deputies which she herself did not possess. The introduction of hymns was thus illegal in the fullest sense. And the synod of 1816 could not justify this illegal deed because it, following her mandate, was only a ruling body, and all introduction of changes in the spiritual matters of the church were intentionally excluded from her jurisdiction. Thus we will not discuss the question whether it is good or bad to sing hymns along with the Psalms in the public worship of the congregation, something which is now commonly the practice. We express only as our opinion that the introduction of the so-called evangelical hymns was church politically illegal in every respect and thus far has never been made legal.

The opposite idea, that people must still only sing the Psalms of Dathenus, will not do. This is a question of practice which says nothing about the great principle whether men are bound to God's Word in their singing in God's house. That great principle is: "In God's house nothing else but God's Word, also in our song!" That principle our legal and spiritual synods have emphatically confessed after the example of Dathenus and Marnix. This was done also over against the Remonstrants who first demanded hymns. And such a principle can, yes, most certainly must be changed by a later national synod if it appears to be wrong according

to the Word of God. This is true because then that change takes place in the legal way and not, as in our case, in an illegal manner.

32. How A Church Enters Union With Other Churches.

A church must not stand alone, because it is not the church of Christ but only a manifestation of the church of Christ in one single place. Gatherings in other places which, in the same manner, are manifestations of the same body of Christ belong with her and she with them. From this emerges the explicit obligation to maintain correspondence with other churches within the realm of the possible. That obligation originates only then, when, in other places, the church of Christ comes to such a manifestation that it is recognizable as the church of Christ. If this is not the case, then a church cannot begin correspondence with it. If the other churches lose that character, then they must cut off correspondence with them. Unity of confession is the indispensable foundation upon which all ecclesiastical correspondence, and thus also all church union, must stand.

Where such a unity of principle appears, and this church union be sought through correspondence, this church union ought to have the purpose: 1) of the drawing up of a common confession of the churches and the treatment of any gravamina against these confessions; 2) the regulation of public worship and the public ministry; 3) the maintenance of mutual oversight over each other; 4) the common defense of the rights of the church over against third parties; 5) the removal of differences between the churches mutually; 6) the care of the ministry of the Word through the establishment, if necessary, of seminaries, the examination of candidates, the approbation of called ministers, the dismissal of those who depart, etc.; 7) the regulation of the transfer of members from one church to another, whether for the administration of baptism or the Lord's Supper, through so-called attestations; 8) the maintenance of fellowship by delegating deputies to each other's gatherings.

The maintenance of the confession in the ministry and worship service stands on the foreground because the spiritual character of the church is symbolized by this. To establish Formulae of Unity and to see to it that these are maintained is the first obligation of all churches which enter church union. Not, and this stands sharply on the foreground, in order to hold these writings as of equal value with the Word of God, but because anyone who stands outside or inside the church must be able to know what the church confesses concerning the Word of God. These Formulae never bind the conscience. Only Holy Scripture binds the conscience and these

¹Kuyper is referring here to the practice in the Netherlands where all the people in one city belonged to the same congregation even though they met in various church buildings throughout the city.

formulations always remain subject to examination by Scripture. On the other hand, no one is free to teach against these Formulae in the church. Properly, each one who has a gravamen ought to bring this to the church so that it may be examined. And each one is obligated to submit to the expression of the church in this matter or to separate from the church which according to his conviction chooses against the Word of God. It is at this point that all the difference exists between a Remonstrant and a Reformed church union.

This church union or this correspondence with other churches is under the government of a synod. But, because not all the churches which stand together in correspondence can come together on synod, people have, from old times and rightly so, organized the neighboring churches along the lines of districts in smaller groups under the name of a Classis. In this Classis, then, all the churches from the district come together as freely confederated and united. Yet, since the whole congregation and even its consistory cannot appear in full number, only the ministers with the elders come together. These ought to vote not by roll call but ecclesiastically² and under the direction of officers who are chosen before every gathering and whose office disappears when the gathering ends. If there is no classis then there is nothing but individual churches existing alongside each other. And every idea of perpetual officers or moderamen must be zealously averted in the church of God as an intrusion of papal tyranny. Indeed, the classes may commission deputies but never in any other way than with a definite mandate. Thus, never must a committee be appointed which would deliberate and decide as a sort of college, but rather separate committees must be appointed which carry out the mandate of classis.

²Kuyper means here, to vote by consistory; i.e., that each consistory receives one vote.

From this classis and by this classis the delegates of synod are chosen. The connecting link of a provincial consistory is in every respect in conflict with the principles of Reformed church polity, and now, all the more, when men have allowed provincial synods to lapse. The church ought to delegate directly from the classis to the synod whether to the provincial synod which, in its turn, appoints to a general synod, or whether directly to a national synod. But whether the climb is made to the general synod by one or two steps, the same regulations apply to the provincial and general synod as applied to the classis. They come and they go without leaving behind a synodical committee or synodical officers and are called together again and again by a church or classis which has received a mandate for this. Upon meeting, the body then names its officers and discharges them when it adjourns. Committees are charged with the carrying out of the decisions, but always for a definite matter and with a definite mandate. These committees report only when the synod comes together again. On the general synod effort is put forth, and rightly, to hold correspondence with foreign churches insofar as they have the same confession. This correspondence can be expressed in a mere greeting or, as at Dordt, it can have a double purpose: to help churches which find themselves in difficulties and to express the unity of the Reformed church world over against those who think differently.

The churches do not maintain correspondence with churches of another confession although the closer relationship to the Lutheran churches has always led to a brotherly inclination towards those churches who have this name. And it remains the calling of the church always to strive towards reunion of that which belongs together and yet cannot live together until it becomes one in its confession.

QUESTION BOX

Rev. C. Hanko

Writing a Minister-elect

A question was given to me by one of the readers of the *Standard Bearer* who wishes to know whether it is proper for the consistory and members of a vacant congregation to write to a minister whom they have called.

There are various opinions about this. Some con-

sistories do write the minister they called, some societies write him, and some individuals. But there are also consistories and members of the congregation who think it is very wrong to write the minister-elect. They reason that they must not try to influence the minister to accept their call, nor

must they try to influence him in any way. The minister must be guided by the Holy Spirit to make a decision pleasing to God.

The main question is, what is the purpose in writing a letter to the pastor-elect? If the intent is to persuade him to come, to try to talk him into accepting the call because he is a man whom everybody likes, then certainly this is wrong. The congregation may be sorry in the future that they resorted to those tactics.

But there can also be a good motive and a sound purpose in writing the minister who is considering the call. This purpose must be to inform him of the needs of the congregation and the specific labors that will fall upon him if he accepts the call. This is especially true if the minister is rather far removed from the congregation and may not know the particular needs of that flock. In that case, particularly the consistory should write him, giving him an honest account of the needs of the flock.

We must bear in mind, that when a minister considers a call from another congregation he is actually confronted with two calls, the call of the church he is serving and the call from another church. He must decide whether the Lord wants him to stay where he is, which should always have the preference, or whether he is called of Christ to labor elsewhere. He knows the needs of the flock he is serving. But he may not know the specific

needs of the calling church. He does not receive a voice from heaven telling him what he must do. He cannot judge by mere feeling, or by what appeals to him personally. He must objectively weigh the two calls in prayer before the face of God, asking, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" The result may be, after prayerful consideration, that he feels that the needs of the church he is serving outweigh the needs of the calling church. Or he may even conclude that he does not have the necessary gifts and talents to take up the labors in the church that is calling him. It may also be that he comes to the conclusion that the Lord is telling him that his work is finished in his present field of labor and that the Lord wants to use him in the church that has called him. In either case, he has objectively weighed the facts, has answered the call, and has peace with himself that he has done the right thing.

I see no reason why individual members should not write the minister-elect, if only they bear in mind that they are not trying to influence the minister to act contrary to his convictions, but are sincerely informing him of their own personal needs in the church. But it is my humble opinion that a consistory should by all means write the pastor-elect to present to him in all sincerity the specific needs of the flock entrusted to their care. God will use also these means to guide a minister in what is always a difficult and painful decision to make.

Praying for Babylon's City

A request came to me from one of our readers that I should make a few comments on the passage from Holy Scripture in Jeremiah 29:7, "And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

The question centers about the fact that the Jews in Babylon are told to seek the peace of whatever city in which they find themselves. They must also pray for the city. The question is therefore twofold: First, why would they be admonished to pray for a wicked city of a nation upon which the judgment of God rested? Secondly, what was to be the content of those prayers?

From the context it is evident that Jeremiah is instructed by God to write a letter to the captives in Babylon, who were brought there with Jeconiah, the king of Judah, and a number of his princes. This letter was written shortly after these captives had

arrived in the place of their captivity, probably during the early part of the reign of Zedekiah. The occasion for this letter was the deceptive lies of the false prophets who tried to assure the people that their stay in Babylon would be very brief. Soon they would return to their own country. Nothing could be more demoralizing than to wait year upon year for their return, which did not come. Jeremiah warns the captives that they should not listen to these false prophets, for their sojourn in Babylon would be for a long time, even for three generations, a period of seventy years.

Because of this long stay in Babylon they must settle down, build themselves houses and dwell in them, plant gardens and eat of their fruit (verse 5). They must not forget God's covenant, but remember His promise, "I will be thy God and the God of thy seed after thee" for an everlasting covenant. Only because of this promise they would

in due time return to Canaan, that the Christ might be born. In that confidence they must marry wives, beget sons and daughters, take wives for their sons and give their daughters to husbands from among their own people, that they may bear sons and daughters and may increase in the land of their captivity.

It is from that point of view that they must seek the peace of the city in which they sojourn, and must also pray for the city. They must not despair, as if the future held no ray of hope for them. They must not engage themselves in underground activities or in riots or any kind of disturbances, but they must live peaceably as strangers in a strange land, going about their affairs in a normal manner. They must also pray that God would be with them in the land of their banishment, supplying their every need both physically and spiritually. They must pray for rain and sunshine, for food and drink, for clothing and shelter, making all their needs known in prayer and supplication. But they must also pray that, even though they hung their harps on the willows and could not sing the songs

of Sion in this strange land, they should receive grace to cling to God's promises, continue to bring forth children and seek grace to train those children in the hope of God's promise. Finally, their prayer should include that they might be faithful witnesses of their God, testifying of Him as the only true God, that God might use their witness in this strange land to His own good purpose, always praying with their faces toward Jerusalem in the hope of their deliverance. Excellent examples of this were Daniel and his three friends.

That this is the idea of the text is evident from the verse itself, "For in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

This is also evident from other parts of the Scriptures. We likewise are called to be pilgrims and strangers in the enemy's country, the evil world round about us. And we also are exhorted by God to make "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" I Timothy 2:1, 2.

Book Reviews

FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN, Expository Messages, by Robert S. Candlish; Kregel Publications, 1979; 577 pp., \$12.95. (Review by Prof. H. Hanko)

Candlish lived from 1806 - 1873, was a Scots pastor, and became one of the most respected pastors in the Free Church of Scotland after the death of Thomas Chalmers. He served also as principal of New College in Edinburgh.

This volume, part of the Kregel Bible Study Classics series, is the author's work on I John. It is not a standard commentary in the sense that it is a clause by clause exposition of the epistle; it is rather a reprint of the lectures which Candlish gave on the text. This makes this book a very nice addition to one's library, whether that library be of a pastor who would use the book in sermon preparation, or whether that be our home library where the books are for spiritual enjoyment and enrichment. The chapters are constructed more on the order of sermons and have the homiletical warmth and personal application which many expository commentaries lack. On the whole, the commentary is sound and is a faithful exposition of the text, although the author believed in a universal atonement, as is

evident from his exposition of I John 2:2.

Reading through the book gave me the urge to preach more extensively from I John and it will have, I think, this same effect on our ministers who read it. Purchase the book, but read it carefully and thoughtfully.

STAND BY, BOYS! by K. Norel, translated by Marian Schoolland; Baker Book House, 1980; 80 pages, \$1.65; paper. (Reviewed by Gertrude Hoeksema)

This reprint of the book published by Eerdmans Publishing Co. in 1955 is a true story of the day in 1953 when the North Sea broke through the dikes and flooded much of the Netherlands. The book is an excellent translation and it is filled with drama and suspense. But it is more than just an interesting story. The portrayal of the spiritual stamina and the humble trust of God's people in those days of disaster stands out as a theme through the whole book, and is an example of faith for us. Recommended for covenant children (ages 8 and up).

AFTER THIRTY YEARS . . .

It was the good pleasure of our covenant God to permit our parents, MR. AND MRS. BARTEL ZANDSTRA to celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary on September 13, 1980.

We, their children and grandchildren, thank our Heavenly Father who gave them to us that we might know our God to serve Him, as they led us day by day. We pray that God will continue to be near to them and bless them as they continue to walk together fulfilling their calling given unto them. Truly we confess with them that God is faithful to His covenant always.

Mr. and Mrs. John R. Zandstra
Mr. and Mrs. Peter J. Zandstra
Mr. David Allen Zandstra
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Zandstra
Rev. and Mrs. Wilbur Bruinsma
Mr. Daniel Zandstra
Miss Joanne Ruth Zandstra
Mr. Bartel Jay Zandstra, Jr.

Miss Betti Lou Zandstra
Mr. Mark Douglas Zandstra
Miss Rosanne Marie Zandstra
and their 10 grandchildren
18332 Oakwood Ave.
Lansing, IL 60438

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 1, 1980, our parents, MR. AND MRS. ALVIN RAU celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, thank our heavenly Father for the years of love and Christian instruction they have given us. It is our prayer that our Covenant God will continue to bless them and keep them in His care.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon

them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." (Psalm 103:17, 18).

James and Lois Rau
Carol, Cheryl, Kimberly, Rodney
Kenneth and Pat Koole
Justin and Bruce
David and Mary Kregel
Lisa
David Rau
Michael Rau
Rosemary Rau
Grand Rapids, MI

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 4, 1980, the Lord willing, our dear parents and grandparents, MR. AND MRS. JOE OOMKES, will celebrate their 45th wedding anniversary. We thank our gracious God for the many years He has given them to us and for their covenant instruction.

Our prayer is that God will bless and keep them in His care as they continue down life's pathway together.

Bill and Ardith Oomkes
Sheryl, Joan, Mary,
Mark and Jodi Lynn
Herb and Karlene Holleman
Beth and Joy
Doug and Ruth Ryskamp
Ken and Betsy
Grand Rapids, MI

Report of Classis East

Classis East met in regular session on September 10, 1980 at the First Prot. Ref. Church in Grand Rapids. All the churches were represented by two delegates. Rev. R. Hanko led in opening devotions; Rev. M. Joostens chaired the meeting.

The business was routine. Report was given by the Stated Clerk. Rev. C. Haak was elected to serve on the Classical Committee.

Hope and Holland requested and were granted classical appointments. The following schedule was adopted: HOPE (evening service only): September 21 - Woudenberg, October 5 - Bruinsma, October 19 - De Vries, November 9 - Haak, November 23 - Joostens, December 7 - Van Baren, January 4 - Bruinsma, January 18 - De Vries; HOLLAND:

September 21 - Van Baren, October 5 - Joostens, October 19 - Haak, November 9 - Woudenberg, November 23 - Bruinsma, December 7 - De Vries, December 28 - Houck, January 4 - Haak, January 18 - R. Hanko.

The Finance Committee reported expenses of \$746.84, the questions of Article 41 of the Church Order were asked and answered, the concept minutes were read and classis stood adjourned. The next meeting of classis will be held on January 14, 1980, at Hudsonville.

Respectfully submitted,
John Huiskens
State Clerk

News From Our Churches

In the September 7 bulletin of our First Church in Grand Rapids we read: "Church News: Prof. Hoeksema has declined his call to Hope; Rev. Kamps declined Redlands; Holland has called Rev. Kamps." Such an announcement would attract

little attention except for the fact that the clerk of First happens to be none other than K.G.V., our former news editor. Either Mr. Vink is so programmed to church news that he cannot help himself, or he loved the work so much that he desires to continue it on a miniature scale.

A passing glance at many of the bulletins leaves no doubt as to the time of year: announcements concerning the beginning of catechism classes and the openings of our schools abound. Among those school opening activities was the convocation program of our seminary on September 3 at Southeast Church. Prof. Decker spoke on the topic, "Getting the Principal Thing."

While we are thinking about our schools I should make mention of a recent newsletter from the Federation of Prot. Ref. Schools that was distributed to many—if not all—of our churches. As many of you know, the Federation is an organization of seven Prot. Ref. Schools whose purpose is to discuss matters of mutual concern and produce biblically-based teaching materials for use in the Protestant Reformed Schools. We are informed of the Federation's desire to do *more* in the area of producing teaching materials. However, they are restrained by a rather limited budget. This might be a worthy cause for some of our societies to consider when they distribute their funds.

Members of Southwest welcomed into their fellowship Mr. Lau Chin Kwee and his new bride, Foong Ngee, upon their arrival from Singapore. Mr. Lau (this last-name-first business might take some getting used to) plans, the Lord willing, to attend our seminary for two years in preparation for the ministry of the gospel in Singapore. You may have noticed in the recently distributed *1980 Acts of Synod* that the Foreign Mission Committee was instructed to see to the support of Mr. & Mrs. Lau by means of church collections. That this is being done is verified by this announcement, taken from the September 7 bulletin of First Church: "...the consistory readily acceded to the request of the Foreign Mission Committee that we take a collection for this cause. We view it as an unusual opportunity for our people to have an important part in the proclamation of the gospel of sovereign grace among a heathen people, the hearts of a good number of whom have been opened by the Lord, also through our efforts. We therefore heartily recommend to our congregation this cause."

Apparently the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church building project is taking a great leap forward, or maybe we should say, upward. In the September 1 *Standard Bearer* it was reported that siding was being applied; now we read that the steeple is in the process of being built. A glance at the drawing of the new church on their bulletin cover makes it obvious that the construction of their steeple will be no small project.

Among the materials that were passed on to me from K.G.V. was this item of interest on Faith's August 3, 1975 bulletin: "Prof. Hoeksema, his wife and Rev. C. Hanko returned from their Austrial-Asia tour a little past midnight Thursday." One might think that our former news editor was a little behind with the news; however, taking into consideration his concern for space he was likely just saving it for a time such as this when he could report the more recent return of Prof. and Mrs. Hoeksema from those parts of the world, and include both trips in a single news paragraph.

In consideration of the work of news editor, I looked through past volumes of the *Standard Bearer* in search of the roots of this column. After a brief search, I found in the October 1, 1958 issue, written by the hand of "see you in church" John M. Faber: "May this column serve as a means to reach out to the farout outposts of Redlands, Lynden and Loveland, drawing them into a closer circle with the rest of our churches, binding us closer in the bonds of love; yea, let it be a means to embrace one another in the communion of saints." Take note of two things in regard to that paragraph: First, consider how the "outposts" of our churches have been increased since that time to include Houston, New Jersey, and Edmonton, not to mention the active mission fields at home and abroad. And second, one cannot help but be impressed by the superb work that the former editors of this column, namely, or should I say initial-ly, J.M.F., D.D., and K.G.V., have done in keeping with that original statement of purpose. May God grant that this work be continued by means of a new vessel.

C.K.