

The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

...Few things do as great harm to the cause of the gospel as does the ungodly testimony of the lives of the members of the church. Men must see the good works of those who believe the gospel of Christ Jesus and glorify God in heaven.

See "The Urgency of the Preaching of the
Gospel" — page 329

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MEDITATION

Moses' Keeping of the Passover

Rev. H. Veldman

"Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them."

Heb. 11:28

The preaching of the cross, according to I Corinthians 1:18, is foolishness to them that perish. Actually, of course, it is the wisdom and the power of God. This preaching of the cross speaks of a power that saves. But it is foolishness to them that perish, to the natural man. He cannot, being carnal, discern the things of the Spirit, of God. For the spiritu-

al, regenerated child of God, however, this preaching has become the wisdom and the power of God; through it he has been saved, by the Lord's irresistible grace.

This surely applies to this text. How foolish it was, apparently, to keep the passover, sprinkle the blood upon the doorposts and expect the salvation

of the Lord during that night! And when Israel left Egypt immediately thereafter, what a foolish route they took, to head for the Red Sea; it is no wonder that Pharaoh must have thought that Moses was completely beside himself. However, the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

ITS PREPARATION

The passover in this text was, of course, the feast of Israel's deliverance, when the angel of the Lord passed over Israel because of the blood upon the doorposts and smote all the firstborn of Egypt, man and beast. For this deliverance, preparation had to be made. First, Moses must be prepared. This preparation required forty years. Secondly, Israel must be prepared. Years were also required for this preparation. And, thirdly, Egypt must be prepared. We must bear in mind that the peculiar feature of Israel's deliverance was that it was exclusively the work of Jehovah and perfectly in harmony with His unchangeable love and righteousness.

First, Moses must be prepared. Once he thought himself ready. At the age of forty he had resolved to visit his people in their affliction. Then he had slain an Egyptian. He had done this believing that his people would recognize in him their deliverer; he had expected Israel to rally behind him. He believed that the time had come when he would lead his people in their deliverance. However, rude had been his awakening. It became evident to him the next day that his people rejected him and would have exposed him to the king of Egypt as the slayer of the Egyptian. And he had fled to Midian. And now he spends forty years in the land of Midian. Finally he is called by Jehovah at the burning bush. Now he is ready to deliver Israel. He had learned patience, walking behind Jethro's sheep for forty years; now he is deeply aware of his own incompetence, recoiling from the task of leading his people. Now he no longer places his trust in himself and/or his people. All his confidence in himself is gone. He has become a fit instrument to be used by the Lord.

Secondly, Israel must be prepared. Forty years ago they were not ready for their deliverance. Israel must cry unto the Lord for deliverance; they must be conscious of their utter misery and helplessness; they must long for deliverance, and their sole expectation must be from Jehovah. And now the time has become ripe also for them. They cry unto the Lord for deliverance, and the Lord always hearkens to those who cry unto Him.

Thirdly, Egypt must be prepared. Egypt must be prepared, for what? Egypt, the world power at this time, must fill its measure of iniquity, must reveal the utter folly of sin. This world power, in unbelievably foolish pride, must actually commit the un-

believable folly of opposing the Jehovah God of Israel, the one and only Lord of hosts, must experience the wrath of God in ten devastating plagues, and refuse to let Israel go because of its refusal to acknowledge the living God and His authority to command Israel's release, even then when divine wrath and desolation are visited by God upon the land. For this Egypt was prepared. Egypt no longer had a king who was sympathetic to Israel. Now a king had ascended the throne who knew not Joseph and hated Israel; God placed him upon that throne. God raised him up, hardened his heart to make His power known. Jehovah led this king and his people in the way of the folly of sin, in order that the folly of sin might be fully revealed, and the Lord would reveal Himself as the one and only living God.

And so all things are now ready for Jehovah's manifestation of Himself. Moses had been prepared in the desert—which was also true of Elijah the Tishbite, of John the Baptist and of the Saviour. The time was ripe for Israel's exodus.

ITS KEEPING

Literally we read: "Through or by faith he made the passover." Later, in Canaan, Israel kept, observed the passover. Here it was made, brought into existence. The meaning is that Moses, through divine inspiration, instituted it, called it into existence.

First, the passover was the feast of Israel's deliverance. With nine mighty plagues the Lord had devastated the land, and the tenth was at hand. The time had come for the tenth and most devastating plague. All the firstborn, from the greatest to the least, also the firstborn of the cattle, would be struck by the destroyer; a howl unprecedented would be heard throughout the land of Egypt, and Israel would be begged to leave. Israel would not be touched. The Lord had made a distinction between Israel and Egypt, and that night it would become very plain who were the people of God in that land. From now on Israel would commence to live as a separated people, consecrated unto the Lord; for this reason they were to eat the passover.

We know how the passover was kept. The tenth of the month they were to separate a lamb from the flock, not older than a year and not younger than eight days short of a year, without blemish. Four days later they were to sacrifice it, not cut it into pieces, nor break a bone of the animal. The blood they must strike on the doorposts and upon the upper doorpost; they were to roast it whole; not more than twenty and not less than ten may eat of it. Whatever was left of the lamb must be burned. And they were to eat it as ready to depart out of Egypt, their loins girded and their shoes on their feet and standing with their staves in their hands.

These instructions Moses had received from the Lord.

The significance of this feast is plain. Israel is now consecrated as a people to their covenant God. Until now they had not been a separate people, living in a land not their own. They had not yet been delivered, and the world did not yet know, and certainly did not believe, that Jehovah had a people. Now they are to be consecrated as a people to the Lord. The Lord was to deliver them, lead them into a country of their own, consecrate them unto Himself as His covenant people. This would take place through the passover. It would be the feast of their deliverance. The angel of the Lord would pass over Israel, but he would destroy the firstborn of Egypt, and Egypt would beg them to leave the land, heaping upon them gifts of silver and gold. Israel's deliverance would be accomplished and it would be accompanied by the destruction of the enemy.

Moreover, the passover had also a typical significance. Of course, the cause of Jehovah's selection of Israel lay not in the people but in God alone. They surely were not worthy of it. It is only because the Lord loved them with an unconditional and unchangeable love. Fact is, the sprinkling of the blood was never revealed to the Egyptians. Israel alone received this revelation. And this emphasizes the typical character of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt. The blood upon the doorposts is a symbol of the blood of Christ. This deliverance is a symbol of our deliverance out of the bondage of sin through the blood of Christ; Israel's departure into Canaan is a symbol of our deliverance into the heavenly Canaan through the blood of Christ, and also through the wilderness of this world, by God's almighty grace.

This passover, now, Moses kept or made. To be sure, also Israel observed this feast. But in this text the emphasis falls upon Moses, inasmuch as he, directed by God, instituted it and therefore made it in the land of Egypt. Then, to whom was the blood upon the doorposts a sign? It was surely not a sign to Jehovah. It was not a sign to direct the angel of the Lord as he destroyed the firstborn wherever the blood was not upon the doorposts. The Lord needs no signs to direct Him on His way. Besides, it was night in the land of Egypt. The blood, of course, was a sign for the people. It was a sign whereby Israel embraced the significance of the passover. O, Moses undoubtedly did not understand it fully, and Israel surely did not; besides, thousands there were who simply "went along." Yet, they realized one thing: it was because of the blood that they were selected, and that blood was a symbol of the Blood that was to come. Israel embraced Jehovah's love of them, only purely for Jesus Christ's sake.

ITS POSSIBILITY

Apparently, this passover was an act of folly! First, God's selection of Israel was not because Israel was any better than Egypt. Why should the Lord favor Israel, us, above the world? Are we any better? Of course not! Secondly, had Pharaoh given any indication that he would release the people? How the land had been devastated! And had the king given any sign that he was relenting? Had he not become more obdurate and rebellious with the passing of each plague? Had he not commanded Moses in his last interview with him to remain out of his sight? How foolish it would be for Israel if Pharaoh now would not let them go! Imagine, they were eating of the passover as if they were departing! And what if, on the morrow, the king would not let them go? What if Pharaoh would change his mind? What would they be able to do about it? How could Israel, unarmed, oppose the mighty king of Egypt?

Their keeping of the passover was possible only by faith! First, it was surely a confession of sin. Indeed, this sprinkling of the blood was a sign, not for God, but for the people. With this they confessed their own sin and unworthiness. And this confession is possible only by faith. Only when we see and acknowledge our sin can we confess our sin. Secondly, Israel embraced the word and promise of the Lord. Israel believed that the Lord would deliver them that night and lead them out of the Egyptian house of bondage. Israel believed that the blood upon the doorposts was a symbol of another Blood that was to come, and that the Lord would surely fulfill His word of promise. And believing, Israel's faith was surely the evidence of things unseen and the substance of things hoped for, the taking hold of the invisible, of that which appeared absolutely impossible. And this is surely the faith of the church throughout the ages.

We look not upon the things that are seen. All we see is sickness and death and the grave.

We look upon the invisible God, God's faithful word and promise.

We believe in Jesus; He will lead us safely home.

*Take time to read
The Standard Bearer*

EDITORIAL

The Depth of Apostasy in the Netherlands

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

Sometimes that attitude of a church with regard to things pertaining to a Christian walk and with regard to discipline furnishes a clearer index of its spiritual level and life than does its attitude toward sound doctrine. It is not that the latter is no index, nor that the latter is not important. Nor is it true that the two are unrelated: there certainly is a reciprocal relationship between soundness in doctrine and uprightness of walk, even as there is such a relationship between apostasy in doctrine and a decline in sanctification of life. The two go hand in hand. But sometimes, I say, deterioration and deviation in the area of sanctification and discipline serve to indicate more clearly a church's apostasy—perhaps simply for the reason that they are more graphic and more repulsive.

Of this I was reminded by a recent report in the *RES News Exchange* which was enough to make one vomit.

Those of us who have followed the Dutch scene will be aware of the key areas of doctrine in which the Gereformeerde Kerken (hereafter GKN) have departed in recent years. They have virtually rewritten the doctrine of Holy Scripture. They have excised from the Canons the doctrine of reprobation (and thus principally election, too). They have failed to discipline those who deny the whole Biblical scheme of creation, the fall, and redemption. They have failed to discipline a denier of the atonement. Time after time they have failed in their calling to maintain the Reformed faith.

But the report to which I now refer is enough to turn one's stomach.

Here is the story.

(Amsterdam) The "Bill guaranteeing equal treatment" recently introduced by the Dutch government is meeting with strong but mixed reactions from churches and confessionally oriented groups. If it becomes law, the bill would forbid discriminatory treatment, particularly in the area of sexual preference and marital lifestyle. An exemption from the law would be allowed for activities which are based on a religious

confession or life view, such as worship services and certain religious institutions. However, Christian organizations and institutions, such as service organizations, are not included among the exceptions and would have to comply.

Before I continue with the report, let me call attention to the language used here. It is euphemistic language, designed to call by nice, unoffensive names that which the Bible calls by its right names and designates as *sin*. Sexual preference? A term like this suggests an option between a heterosexual or a homosexual life. And even the latter term, you know is rather bland with respect to the sin question. The Bible speaks of vile affections, of women changing the natural use into that which is against nature, of men burning in their lust toward one another, of working that which is unseemly, of men burning in their lust toward one another, of working that which is unseemly, of abusers of themselves with mankind. And marital lifestyle? The reference is neither to marriage nor to a "lifestyle." The reference is to "shacking up (*hokken*)" or to unmarried couples living together as though they were married. The Bible calls this living in fornication! Let us beware that we do not allow ourselves to be lulled to sleep by this "polite" language that has become so common in our day. It is designed to cover up the sinfulness of sin.

Now we continue with the report:

The Council of Protestant Christian Education has declared that school boards should have the right to exclude from employment homosexuals and unmarried people living together. The Association for Christian Schools (Unie "School en Evangelie") issued a statement against any discrimination on the basis of sex, homosexuality, or extra-marital cohabitation, but the chairman of the Association, Dr. K. de Jong, took an opposing position. The Society of Christian Instruction (Christelijke Onderwijsbond) also rejected all forms of discrimination. It did recognize, however, that in extreme cases school boards may exclude homosexuals and cohabiting married (sic) people.

Can you imagine Christian schools that "do not

discriminate" against those who walk in such sins and that allow their children to be trained—supposedly in the fear of the Lord—by the words and the example of such persons? Evidently in some Christian school circles in the Netherlands it is more important not to "discriminate."

The report goes on to describe briefly the reaction of some others:

The agitation which the bill has caused is not limited to the schools, but has spilled over into the churches. Deputies of the "Liberated" Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have criticized the bill because the proposed law would publicly brand the churches as communities within which the evil of discrimination must be allowed. The Central Office for Catholic Education is of the opinion that the law attacks the evil of societal discrimination too "absolutely."

Spokesmen for the Evangelical Alliance spoke out sharply against the proposed law. In reaction, the Protestant Foundation for Responsible Parenthood appealed to the Netherlands Reformed Church (NHK) [Hervormde Kerk, HCH] and the Reformed Churches (GKN) to declare themselves in favor of the antidiscrimination bill and thereby take a firm position against the Evangelical Alliance.

Although the *RES News Exchange* furnishes only a scant report of the various reactions, some of which sound extremely mild on this issue, it seems as though there are only a few voices raised in disagreement.

The report then goes into more detail concerning some of the reactions in the GKN:

The moderamen of the GKN asked the government to extend the time in which responses may be submitted. It also asked the Churches' Commission for contact with the government to study the bill. Dr. A. de Kuiper, General Secretary of the NHK and the Rev. A. C. Hofland, President of the General Synod of the GKN, both made a personal statement that they oppose the exclusion of homosexuals from Christian education. Hofland emphasized that a distinction should be made between how a person is by nature and the ethical decision he (e.g., a homosexual) takes regarding what he is. It is wrong, said Hofland, to discriminate against someone because he is a homosexual but a school board needs the freedom to decide whether the ethical decision a homosexual makes fits into the position of the school.

About the reaction of Prof. Klaas Runia, who is considered a moderate in the GKN, the *RES News Exchange* reports:

...In Runia's judgment, the motivation for the proposed law must be sought in the shifting viewpoint on sexual relations that has occurred in recent decades in the Netherlands; specifically: the right of unmarried couples to live together and the freedom to live in a homosexual relationship. Now that a large part of the

population no longer agrees that such lifestyles should be condemned, the administration wishes to protect those who practice these lifestyles from discriminatory treatment. That the government clearly sensed a problem is indicated by the fact that churches and religiously-oriented organizations are exempt from the law in their hiring and membership policies. On the other hand, a Christian hospital would no longer be allowed to refuse employment to someone who is a partner in a so-called common-law marriage or who lives in a homosexual relationship.

Runia's major difficulty with the proposed law is its failure to see that religious convictions and lifestyles based on them are inseparable. The mixed reactions the bill so far has received mirror this failure. Some opponents feel that the law does not go far enough and churches should not be exempt, for nondiscrimination is a universal human right. Others maintain that Christian organizations and the like should also be exempt. Runia states that in effect the bill discriminates against those who for conscience' sake cannot accept as bona fide employees practicing homosexuals and unmarried couples living together. Though sympathetic to its intent, he contends that in its present form the law goes too far. He agrees with Professor I. A. Diepenhorst in an interview in *Trouw* that the majority may not impose its views on the minority.

It is evident that even Runia's mild opposition to this bill can hardly be said to be based on principle, at least if this report is accurate. In the first place, he evidently confuses the matter of motivation and occasion, or reason. It can hardly be said that the "motivation" for a bill like this must "be sought in the shifting viewpoint on sexual relations...." The latter might be the occasion. It must not be overlooked that the *motivation* involves a moral judgment with respect to the sins of homosexuality and fornication—whether in the sphere of church, education, or society at large. In the second place, while it may be true, as Runia suggests, that in effect the bill discriminates against those who for conscience's sake cannot accept as employees practicing homosexuals and unmarried couples living together, the matter of discrimination, or so-called reverse discrimination, is surely not the fundamental issue. It is surely a mistake to look at all this in terms of its being a mere social issue of discrimination versus non-discrimination. In the third place, it can hardly be said that Runia is principally opposed to the law when it is reported that he is sympathetic to it, but contends that "in its present form the law goes too far." In other words, curtail its extent a bit, and then it is all right to grant practicing homosexuals and practicing fornicators a legitimate place in society.

But Prof. Runia's position is mild. Read the following report concerning action by supposedly Reformed men:

In contrast to Runia, the council of the Theological School in Kampen (where Runia teaches) [And I may add: where a host of theological giants in the Reformed Churches once taught. HCH] and the council of the Theological Faculty of the Free University in Amsterdam [Abraham Kuyper's school! HCH] have protested the idea that Christian schools may use "the freedom of education to bar homosexuals and cohabiting unmarried couples from a place in Christian education." Freedom of education is too precious a possession to be used for this kind of discrimination. Runia's Kampen colleague, Dr. J. C. de Moor, has disassociated himself from this declaration of the school on the point of cohabiting unmarried couples and has resigned as Chairman of the Board. His point is that a person cannot choose to be a homosexual or a heterosexual but he can choose whether or not to cohabit.

Is it not amazing! And tragic!

Those who openly and blatantly and brazenly walk in moral filth and refuse to repent of this may not be discriminated against, not even in Christian schools and churches!

I ask: does not God Himself discriminate and exclude them from His kingdom? And does He not require of His church to use the keys of the kingdom of heaven and exclude them as long as they continue in such sins?

And what kind of view of the state and society underlies these views? It is one thing when a worldly government begins to promote non-discrimination of this kind. It is quite another thing when allegedly Reformed men not only support and promote the government's position, but even complain that it does not go far enough. And all this is in the name of the view that any discrimination of any kind in society is wrong! They are more interested in the social gospel of non-discrimination than in the laws of God!

Meanwhile, if you had any doubts as to the low estate to which things have fallen in the GKN, I trust that these doubts have been dispelled by this thoroughly nauseating report of their attitudes on such a clear issue of morality.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

A Pamphlet on the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

(In discussing the positive side of the question, i.e., the renewal or reformation of the church, Kuyper has discussed the need for spiritual awakening in the hearts and in the lives of the individual members. In the last paragraph he insisted that this was essential to all church reformation. He proceeds now in the following paragraphs to the discussion of church renewal. This is a lengthy paragraph and we will divide it into separate articles.)

54. Concerning Reformation By Gradual Church Renewal.

Alas, church corruption seldom limits itself to deterioration in grace among the church's teachers and members, but almost always drags along with itself a cooling of love and godliness, the falsifying of doctrine, and the general collapse of church government. Thus it is necessary, in the second place, to investigate what must be said concerning the second kind of reformation which we call, "gradual church renewal."

We do not mean by this merely the nursing of a sick church.

Neither diagnosis nor nursing ought to be men-

tioned in the church of Christ; and the medical way which we have placed over against the juridical is not opposed to this, but is rather opposed to the surgical.

The matter is this.

If one wants to compare the ecclesiastical corruption of the church with corruption in our bodies, then *medical* treatment leaves the organism undisturbed, while *surgical* treatment, attempting to save the entire organism, disturbs a part of the organism with the surgeon's knife. If now we refrain from surgical treatment in order to restrict ourselves for the time being to the medical, then medical treatment is, obviously, not always of the same kind. Everything depends upon the nature of the sickness to be cured. Sickness can affect either one of the organs, or, without having affected any organ, it can be a weakening or a sapping of the strength of life. If this last be true, medicine tries to cure that weakening through giving nourishment, or to cure this evil sapping of strength through purging. If, on the other hand, one of the organs is

affected, then medicine is used to keep the remaining organs from being affected along with the sick one, and, as far as possible, medicine is used to expel the disease and to restore the affected organ to its original health.

If one now applies this metaphor to the church of God, then also, in connection with that church, a sickness is imaginable which comes about by means of contempt of grace, which manifests itself only in individuals, but which leaves the organism of the church unaffected. Nothing may or can be used against this evil other than the pure preaching of the Word in the pulpit, as well as in the homes. If, on the other hand, the corruption is of such a kind that not only the members but also the organism of the church itself is affected, then this method is insufficient, and good medicine must be applied to it to restore the affected organism to its original purity by expelling or destroying the evil element.

How one must do this depends, naturally, on the nature of the organism. The skillful physician works on the lungs differently than on the liver, on the kidneys differently than on the heart. Therefore, it must be asked, also in connection with the church, if corruption creeps into her organism, what are the channels, the ways, the procedures, which the organism possesses to drive out, heal, and restore? The answer is: these methods are of two kinds. The exercise of ecclesiastical discipline and the improvement of ecclesiastical ordinances. Thus it is as clear as day that the curbing of evil through reproof, suspension, and excommunication of unfaithful office-bearers, or also through reproof, censure, and, if need be, the banning of unfaithful members of the church, no matter how juridical, belongs to the medical way of church restoration. This is just as true as the fact that the strengthening of the power of life takes place through the preaching of the Word.

Nursing care is surely not a method of healing, but is either neglect of duty or the helplessness of hopeless despair. The physician who limits himself only to diagnosis is not worthy of this office. And the question whether one wants to treat the matter medically, whether preaching of repentance and conversion is sufficient, or rather, whether to proceed to the exercise of discipline and the revision of the Church Order, depends not on personal opinion, but only on the nature of the corruption which the church shows itself to have. If evil only finds expression in despising grace, then only a call to repentance is needed. But if the disease has penetrated more deeply and has affected the organism itself, then one must not stand by doing nothing, but must put his hand to discipline and the Church Order.

The ministers in Jesus' church are surely not only preachers of the Word who can justify themselves before God when they only preach the Word on the pulpit and to a part of the families. They are by virtue of their office also *church rulers*, and as such are bound to the exercise of discipline and the maintenance of good order in matters of the church. To have the notion that the preaching of the Word is enough, while the task of church rule is left undone, comes down to nothing else than a preaching of that Word to others while the minister is himself disobedient to the calling of his office, and this without any twinge of conscience.

Yet, warning must be raised against another one-sidedness, namely, against the attempt and effort of those who, without any consideration for backsliding in grace and with a conscious minimizing of the powers which lie in the Word, imagine, in Pharisaistic pride and great unspiritual shallowness, that the seriously ill can be cured by magic if only they would cut off heretical elements and energetically revise the regulations of the church.

He who judges in this way knows neither his own heart nor the needs of the congregation nor the powers of the kingdom of heaven. What appears in the organism is hidden yet more deeply in the hearts and families, and church renewal shall never be anything else but a visible sham if the cure does not begin with the punishment of sin and the renewal of the covenant. The punishment of sin does not begin with the world nor with the undecided, but it begins with the people of the Lord themselves, and among that people each begins within his own heart.

Without that spiritual background each attempt towards church renewal is plagued by unfruitfulness. Then one can indeed put on a veneer, but never can bring out the lustre. Without personally clinging to grace, there may be a great deal of puttering and fumbling, but one does not cause the church to grow.

Bureaucratic men, knowledgeable in the law, who, in cold irresponsibility, plan together and devise how to take away the existing evils, may deliver piles of nicely organized regulations, but will never be considered worthy by the Holy Spirit to build the Lord's spiritual house.

One sees an extremely painful example of this in the Hague Synod.

How these gentlemen have struggled and squirmed in order, by means of always new stipulations and always nicer regulations and ever more efficient measures, to heal the rupture in the church and to even out the roughness in the church. And yet what other fruit have they seen from their diligent industry and unmistakable

talent and far from scanty exertions, than increasing dissatisfaction, a continual diminishing of power, and a further eating away of the gnawing cancer of sin.

Is this due to their lust and good will, or less ability, or lack of prudence?

He who thinks this is mistaken.

Most of the gentlemen who applied their strength to this idle and purposeless work were men of much good will; most decidedly they surpassed most of us in ability, and they were astute in judgment. No, what they lacked was the knowledge of the disease and the means of healing. They sought in the skin that which was deeply hidden in the kidneys. They ignored their own heart. They themselves did not have the sense of falling in guilt before a God Whose name was dishonored in and

by His church. The Word of God was not recognized by them. They sometimes spoke of grace, but they did not understand it experientially. Prayer had become a form to them and the Holy Spirit did not preside in their gatherings.

And, naturally, in circumstances such as this, one plows on rocks.

Church decline is a punishment of God, a plague which He brings on us and lays on His people for their sins. Just because of this the Lord cannot take this plague from us unless beforehand he who feels guilt confesses it and is reconciled in the blood of the cross. Without that conviction of sin there can be no true repentance and conversion. And where this renewal of the covenant is lacking, how can one hope for a better church?

THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

Missionary Methods (11)

Prof. Robert D. Decker

In his book, *The Planting and Development of Missionary Churches*, Dr. John L. Nevius makes a strong plea for the planting and development of indigenous churches. By this Nevius meant that converts should be gathered into congregations which are native to their land and independent of the domination or control and support of the sending, "foreign" church. To achieve this goal Nevius argued vigorously and convincingly that the converts and newly organized churches must be allowed to develop naturally and with as little interference on the part of the foreign missionary and the church which sent him as possible. In this connection Nevius strongly contended that the missionary ought to use as little paid help as possible. Leaders, from the new converts, should remain in their daily occupations. With the thrust of this we agree. Allowances would, however, have to be made for some modifications caused by the varying circumstances in different countries. For example, among the educated and civilized Chinese of his day Nevius had little difficulty finding capable and reliable leaders for the mission stations. That would no doubt be quite different for the missionary working among some primitive Indian tribe in South America. But up to this point Nevius is cor-

rect. His methods not only make good sense but are in harmony with Scripture.

Nevius continues by giving a brief summary of the work of the Baptist and the Presbyterian Missions in China. Preaching tours were organized by Protestant missionaries in the year 1860. Though difficult to determine with certainty, it appears that Dr. Nevius began his work in China in the early 1870s under the auspices of the American Presbyterian Mission. China was struck by a severe famine in the spring of 1877. For three months the missionaries devoted almost all of their time to famine relief. They distributed aid to some thirty thousand people from more than three hundred villages. This represented a turning point in the work. "The famine relief presented us (the missionaries) to the people in a new and favorable light, and gave fresh impetus to our work of evangelization. The establishment of stations may be said to have fairly begun after the famine, though a spirit of inquiry had been awakened before" (p. 31).

On matters of mission policy or missionary methods all of the missionaries, both Baptist and Presbyterian, were essentially agreed. All of the stations (potential churches; not yet organized)

provided their own houses of worship. This meant that neither the Baptist Board nor the Presbyterian financed the construction of church buildings for the Chinese fields! The converts built their own churches. This is a fact well worth our attention. For the sending church to build churches on the foreign field is a serious error. This fosters a spirit of dependence on the part of the mission church. The missionary and his sending church impose themselves upon the native Christians. The latter soon come to believe that they cannot stand by themselves. This makes it extremely difficult for the native church to be truly indigenous. This also makes it extremely difficult for the newly organized church to do its own work of missions and evangelism. Remember, an American missionary in China is a foreigner to the Chinese. An American-built church in China is conceived of as an American and, therefore, foreign institution. Our churches ought to learn from this! This is not to say that we may not contribute toward the building of churches on mission fields or toward other mission causes. But we must not build churches for the converts. We must not do for them what they can and ought to do for themselves. If we wish to be instrumental in gathering churches by the preaching of the Word, churches which are indigenous to their own land and culture, churches which will by the grace of God become centers of missions and evangelism, then we must emulate these missionaries to China of a century ago.

None of these mission stations was staffed by a resident, paid preacher. One or more of the members of each station voluntarily conducted the worship services on the Lord's Day and attended to the general spiritual needs of the company of converts to which he belonged. All of this was done under the supervision of the foreign missionary who visited the stations periodically. In all of these stations much emphasis was placed on catechetical instruction. The converts were systematically taught the truths of Scripture. Special instruction was given to the voluntary leaders so as to enable them to teach others. The statistics at this point are interesting. By the 1890s the Baptist Mission consisted of approximately one hundred or more stations and the Presbyterian Board supervised some one hundred fifty stations. The Baptist stations according to Nevius multiplied largely through the voluntary labors of unpaid Christians. Their staff of Chinese workers consisted of one native pastor who had been converted and baptized some twenty years previous to this, four evangelists who were paid by the mission, and two elders who were paid by the native Christians. To care for his one hundred fifty stations Nevius had a staff of only two paid, Chinese helpers. These two were paid in part

by the mission and in part by the converts. For the rest the work was done by volunteer Chinese leaders. Mind you, this was not in the early stages of the work. These fields were established mission fields. If it be true that Nevius began his labors in China in the early 1870s then the work had been going on for some twenty years.

The chief characteristic of the "Nevius method or plan" is that the care of the various mission stations is entrusted not to paid preachers set over them and resident among them, but to leaders belonging to the stations. Nevius gives the following summary of his method: "These leaders are simply church members among church members, pursuing their daily calling as before conversion. They form a very important link in the chain of influences starting from the foreign missionary. Next to the missionary is the native helper, who is generally a well-instructed Christian of some years' experience. He is under the control and direction of the missionary, and acts for him in supplementing his labors and carrying out his instructions. Next to the helper is the leader, through whom principally the helper brings his influence to bear on the Christians and inquirers generally" (p. 32).

In the next section of his book Nevius explains how his method was actually put into practice in the mission in China. It is our intention to present this material and then offer some evaluation of it. His goal in all of this Nevius states in these terms: "It is our aim that each man, woman, and child shall be both a learner from some one more advanced, and a teacher of some one less advanced" (p. 32). To achieve this goal, "the missionary does nothing which the helper can do for him, the helper does nothing which the leader can do, and the leader does nothing which he can devolve upon those under him. In this way much time is saved, the gifts of all are utilized and developed, and the station as an organized whole grows in knowledge, strength, and efficiency. The leader constantly superintends, directs, and examines those under him; the helper directs and examines leaders and their stations; and the missionary in charge has a general supervision and control of the whole" (p. 32, 33).

In practice this was implemented as follows. Dr. Nevius himself visited each local station twice per year. If this seems insufficient it must be remembered there were approximately one hundred fifty stations under the Presbyterian Board! Nevius claims he was able "to examine carefully into the circumstances of each one of them and the progress in knowledge and performance of Christian duties of each Christian and inquirer" (p. 33). One of his helpers had charge of forty stations, each of which he visited regularly every two months. The other helper had charge of ten stations and devoted part

of his time to evangelistic work outside of them. The remaining stations were without the care of a native helper. These were visited only by the missionary. The forty stations under the one helper were divided into seven geographical groups of from four to seven stations. The helper visited these groups once every two months, spending about a week in each. On Sundays the helper led a combined worship service for the group. One object of the combined service led by the helper was that the leaders of the individual stations were thus taught how to conduct the services of their stations during the seven or eight weeks when they were without the helper. Two services were held each Lord's Day, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. The same order of worship was followed for both services. The morning worship was preceded by an informal Sunday School in which the emphasis was on Bible knowledge, memorization of the Scriptures, Bible stories for the children, etc. The worship services consisted of singing, reading of the Scriptures, exposition of the Scriptures, and prayer: "the whole occupying not

more than three quarters of an hour" (p. 33). This is followed by the "Scripture story hour." A member of the station previously appointed tells the story. The leader then quizzes the group on the facts, and practical applications are drawn. A more advanced catechism class on doctrinal subjects followed this.

Leaders were sometimes formally chosen by their stations. "More generally, however, they find themselves in this position as a natural result of providential circumstances" (p. 34). Sometimes the leader was the originator of the group. It happened too that leaders were replaced by later, more gifted converts. In any event, Nevius claims, "Christian sympathy, and responsibility grew up spontaneously" (p. 34). The chapels of worship were built and owned by the natives. Often these were not even separate buildings but added to the houses of the leaders.

We shall continue this in future issues. Some comments by way of evaluation are in order as well.

THE DAY OF SHADOWS

Dwelling Safely in Goshen

Rev. John A. Heys

Slowly, as the strong, plodding oxen drew the wagons which Joseph had sent for his father, Jacob made progress toward Egypt, leaving the promised land of Canaan behind him. Upon arriving in Egypt he sent Judah to inform Joseph that they had reached Egypt, and to seek to make sure that they settled in the land of Goshen.

That he sent Judah and not Reuben is noteworthy. Judah was his fourth son while Reuben was his firstborn. And it is to be observed that Judah is coming more and more to the foreground in this account of what happened in this portion of the Day of Shadows. Indeed there is that shameful act of Judah recorded in Genesis 38 that reveals to us that he went in unto what he considered to be an harlot and actually was his daughter-in-law, to whom he had promised his youngest son to raise up seed for his dead brother, and whom he had disappointed in that he failed to give her this son when he was grown. But after falling into this sin, which Judah confessed, he is presented on the pages of Holy Writ as taking leadership in the family. This

indeed is prophetic, for out of Judah's loins came the Christ Who is the Head of His Church and the King of all kings and Lord over all lords. The man in whose line of descendants Christ is to be born did manifest kingly dignity and a gift for leadership and rule.

Judah it is who persuaded the other brothers to sell Joseph rather than to kill him, and so to enrich themselves with silver (Genesis 37:26). Judah is the one who spoke up when his father "chewed them out" for telling this ruler in Egypt that they had a younger brother at home (Genesis 43:3). Judah steps forward and speaks words which move his father to let them take Benjamin along to Egypt (Genesis 45:8). In Genesis 44:1 we read of Judah as the head of the eleven brothers. For we read, "and Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house." We do not read that Reuben and his brethren came, but Judah and his brethren. Not the oldest and the younger brethren, but Judah and brethren both older and younger than himself is the way Moses, as infallibly guided, recorded this procession to

Joseph's house. There it is Judah who speaks and says, "What shall we say unto my Lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found" (Genesis 44:18). And in Genesis 44:18 we read that, "Then Judah came near unto him (Joseph), and said, Oh my lord let thy servant I pray thee speak a word in my lord's ear...."

Nothing strange is it now then to read in Genesis 45:28 that Jacob sends Judah "before him unto Joseph, to lead his face to Goshen." And it was not because Reuben lay with Bilhah, Jacob's concubine, that he is replaced by Judah. Later Jacob calls him unstable as water. But Judah also committed that adultery with Tamar of which we spoke a moment ago. A bit later Jacob also says of Judah that the sceptre, or ruling rod, would not depart from between his feet until Shiloh (Christ) should come. There was now already ruling ability, leadership evident in Judah. This will be sanctified in David and Solomon and have its perfect fulfillment in Christ when He is born "The King of the Jews" and so worshipped by the wise men.

No, Judah did not give something to that Christ Child. His gift of leadership was not handed down by Judah through all these generations to be deposited in the Christ. Judah gave Christ nothing. Christ gave Judah all that he had. But God was indicating what line of Jacob's sons would bring forth the Leader, The Peace Maker, or Prince of Peace. Jacob began more and more to lean upon Judah; and from all that we have quoted it is evident that the other brothers also looked to him for leadership. And it was all officially declared when Jacob, moved infallibly by the Spirit, prophesied those words concerning the sceptre not departing from Judah until the Prince of Peace is come. Jacob did not suddenly see God's purpose in Judah when he blessed his twelve sons and pronounced that the ruling rod would not depart from Judah till Shiloh is come any more than suddenly he saw that Reuben was unstable as water, and that instruments of cruelty were in the habitations of Simeon and Levi. God had shown him now already which son it was to whom He had given the gift of leadership.

In this connection it may also be stated that Jacob did not lean so heavily on Judah and did not send him to inform Joseph of their safe arrival because he had been the spokesman before Joseph. Jacob saw leadership in Judah; and when Jacob lined up his sons to pronounce the blessings of God upon them, God revealed by His Spirit that The Leader of God's people would come out of his loins.

But equally important and interesting is the fact

that Jacob sends Judah so that his face may be directed to Goshen, that is, that he may know the way to Goshen. He needed directions in this strange land. He had no road map and no Egyptian guide to tell them whether to turn to the south or go further west. He must know in what direction he must face to reach the land designated by Joseph (Genesis 45:10).

We find that Joseph first spoke of this land of Goshen, and he told his brothers, before they left Egypt to go and get their father, that they should settle in Goshen. Jacob sought the land of Goshen because of the instructions his sons brought home from Joseph. But above all and first we must bear in mind that God chose this part of Egypt for His people. Yes, we may add that this is the section of the land that the Egyptians also wanted these Israelites to settle in, because they were shepherds, and shepherds were an "abomination unto the Egyptians" (Genesis 46:34). It was the odor of the sheep that clung to their clothes that made the Egyptians abhor and loathe shepherds.

It is claimed by some that Goshen was geographically near where Joseph had his residence. This is possible but must not be given as the sole reason why he chose Goshen. The statement in Genesis 45:10, "And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me" can be taken in a relative sense. Surely being in the land of Goshen they were nearer to Joseph than way up there in the land of Canaan. However, Joseph's reason for choosing this land was not a fleshly one and a selfish one but a spiritual reason, and one that concerned itself with the whole covenant people, yea with the cause of God's covenant as his father's family represented it in that day.

As we pointed out above, it was first of all God's choice and then Joseph's in the love of God. There are a few texts which appear later in Scripture that apply here. There is Numbers 23:9 where we read, "From the top of the rock I see him (Israel), and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Then, too, there is Deuteronomy 33:28, "Israel then shall dwell in safety alone." There is also that New Testament passage in II Corinthians 6:14-18 where the church is warned against being unequally yoked with unbelievers and called to come out from among them and be a separate people. Nor should we overlook the similar circumstances when Israel came up out of Egypt some four hundred years later and entered the land of Canaan which was full of unbelieving idol worshippers. We read in Exodus 23:32, 33, "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee to sin against Me; for if thou serve their gods, it

will surely be a snare unto thee." But listen to this: "And thou shalt consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee" (Deuteronomy 7:16). This, by the way, is one of those passages which many churches today like to soft peddle because it does not fit in with their idea of God being the God of love, and because they want to insist that He hates sin but not the sinner. But let them read Psalm 5:5; Psalm 7:11; Romans 9:13; and Ephesians 5:6 which all speak of *persons* whom God hates, with whom He is angry and upon whom His wrath falls, and not simply on their works, wickedness, disobedience, and iniquity.

And let us not overlook Joshua's farewell message to Israel in Joshua 23 when he declares, "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God. Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you; Know of a certainty that the Lord your God will no longer drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off the good land which the Lord your God hath given you" (Joshua 23:11-13).

From all these passages it will be plain that Jacob's family must live alone. There must be no mixed marriages. Their children are not to be tempted by the idols and idolatrous practices of the Egyptians. The antithesis between light and darkness must be kept. The two seeds of Genesis 3:15 (the Mother Promise) must not become one seed. The only way for them to become one is that the seed of the woman changes her spiritual position. The seed of the serpent cannot change, being spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1 and John 3:3). Satan succeeded in getting the whole human race to hate God; and all come into this world with thoroughly corrupt natures, so that even the child of God (David) must say that he was shapen in iniquity and that in sin his mother conceived him. No, he does not mean that it was sinful for his mother to conceive him, but that what she conceived was a sinful child, totally depraved because Adam had no spiritual life and gifts to hand down to his posterity. But the child of God who has been born again and so is spiritually alive still has his flesh. The world has only an old man of sin. No, that is not stating it correctly. The world has only a man of sin, and because he receives no new man in Christ, his man of sin cannot be called the *old* man of sin. Living according to that old man of sin, the child of God can and often does make friends with the world instead

of manifesting the enmity which God gives His children against the devil and his spiritual seed. And the result is that the things of the world become a snare to the children of such believers; and soon enough, in generations to come, their children and grandchildren are seed of the serpent. All the passages above teach that. Erase the antithesis which God has made between church and world, and you do not improve the world. You cause the seed of the church to become worldly and in time to leave the church and be, in every sense of the word, the world.

To prevent this, Joseph sought a place where the Egyptians would not enter and where the Israelites would be safe from the temptations of the flesh pots of Egypt and its idolatry. Yet there are churches today who loathe and despise all such separation of church and world and openly present before their youth the world with its dainties and idolatry. Churches actually despise the gift of enmity against Satan and his seed that God in His grace gives to His Church. In these churches there is not that antithesis between light and darkness and between elect and reprobate. The whole human race is one big family, loved by God to the last individual in it. There are elect, and the rest are only potential elect. These will decide for themselves whether they will let God elect them unto life everlasting and salvation in His Son. A Goshen for them is an unthinkable thing. In fact for them a Goshen is an unchristian thing. After all, the passages we quoted, including now that one in the New Testament, are only time-conditioned and do not apply today. But what does then apply today? Do the seven letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor and recorded in Revelation 2 and 3 apply? Are there no churches today that are lukewarm and ready to be spewed out of God's mouth? Is it not possible any more today that a church lose its first love? Has everything changed since the book of The Revelation was written and the times now decide what holds for us today of what the timeless God has spoken?

No, no, let us have our Goshens today as well as in the Old Testament dispensation. Let us go back to what Joshua said, "Take good heed therefore to yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God." And do we love Him when we do not fight for the truth, and let those that insult Him with false doctrines and bring strange gods into the churches influence our children and His children? Do we love Him if we despise the keys of the kingdom which He has given us? Can we be His friends and at the same time be friends of the world? Is it possible to be God's friend and Satan's as well? God is light. Do we show love towards Him when we approve of and defend the darkness?

We, too, should therefore seek to preserve the safety we have in our Goshen. Our calling is to stay away, far away, from all that would tempt us and especially our children to become the friends of the world, and so be alienated from God, Who in His holiness cannot fellowship with what is false and sinful. Jesus said it, "He that is not with is against

Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). And if we are one with the world in any spiritual sense we are against God and His Christ. And if we accept the world into our churches we are driving Christ out of them. It is as simple as all that. And it is as serious as all that.

ALL AROUND US

Rev. G. Van Baren

The "Shepherd Case"

Some time ago I reported on the dismissal, without prejudice, of Professor N. Shepherd from Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. His dismissal apparently was involved with his position on justification and on the covenant. Comments have been appearing in some Reformed periodicals — comments both *pro* and *con*. Several letters to the editor have appeared in the *Banner*. One writes in the Feb. 8, 1982 issue:

...Shepherd is not only an outstanding and well-versed theologian, as your editorial so well indicated, but also a loving and humble Christian gentleman, as has been illustrated in his conduct before the board and elsewhere these past six years. Moreover, he is one of the ablest teachers in theology today, having an ability to impart to his students both an understanding of, and his own enthusiasm for, Reformed Truth. My greatest grief is that future classes at Westminster are by his recent dismissal robbed of his teaching, teaching that built so solidly on that of such predecessors as Murray and Van Til.

J. Faber writes in the Canadian Reformed magazine, *Clarion*, Jan. 29, 1982, about the same subject, and in a series of articles, criticizes the dismissal in no uncertain terms. His support goes to Prof. Shepherd. Among many other things, he writes:

...Professor Norman Shepherd is well-known in the Canadian Reformed Churches. As a member of the Committee on Ecumenicity and inter-Church Relations of the OPC he attended some sessions of our General Synod in Orangeville, 1968, the same Synod that decided to establish the Theological College, now located in Hamilton. In November, 1980 he was the first official delegate of the OPC to visit one of our synods. He was well received at the Synod of Smithville..., and during his stay in Hamilton he presented a lecture of our College community. His knowledge of the Dutch language — he even speaks it

fluently — gives him an easy access within the circles of our immigrant churches. But more important than ethnic pride is our recognition of a fine scholar who has acquainted himself with the Reformed theology of the European continent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and who knows the confessional tradition in which the Heidelberg Catechism has a dominant place....

Apart from a single expression — is "state of justification" not too static? — I wholeheartedly agree with Prof. Shepherd's covenantal approach. Here I see him in line with Dr. Klaas Schilder, and, what means more, in line with the Form of Baptism that the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands received from the Heidelberg theologians in the Palatinate....

...The Reformed confessor who listens to Shepherd's tapes about *Life in Covenant with God* recognizes his form of Baptism in the way in which the speaker describes the Covenant as a relation between God and man, a relation of union and communion, a relation comparable to that of husband and wife with mutually binding ties of love and faithfulness. The Covenant is a relation with a promise and with a demand. I was filled with gratitude and even thrilled when I heard how Prof. Shepherd makes an eloquent plea for parental Christian schools based on the doctrine of the Covenant of God with us and our children. Westminster Theological Seminary cannot fulfil its historic function without such Reformed teaching. It is needed, more than ever, in the Presbyterian sector of America, that is influenced by a broad evangelicalism of Baptist brand. The danger is that now the Reformed doctrine of the Covenant will no longer be heard. Where was covenantal teaching in the synodical churches in The Netherlands after Dr. Klaas Schilder and others had been silenced?....

And again from the *Banner* quoted above, W. Robert Godfrey, professor of church history at Westminster, writes from an opposite viewpoint:

As a minister in the C.R.C. and a faculty member at Westminster...since 1974, I read your editorial with considerable interest. I wish to respond to some aspects of your presentation and to clarify some of the facts of the case.

First, the discussions with Mr. Shepherd did not begin because he had said "that saving faith is never without the works of obedience." That is the position of everyone in the discussion as far as I know. The discussion with Mr. Shepherd began because in 1975 he taught in class that works along with faith were the instrument of justification. Mr. Shepherd later said that he regretted making the statement. But the discussion continued because several faculty members believed that while Mr. Shepherd had changed some of his original expressions, the same theological error was still present in some of his other writings and statements.

Second, while discussions have also centered on Mr. Shepherd's view of the covenant, I do not see that these discussions have resulted from differences between Reformed confessional theology in Britain and on the Continent. Except on the issue of the Sabbath, I do not see that the Westminster Confession

represents "restricted covenant theology" in comparison with continental theology.

Third, it is surely an exaggeration to say that the PCA dominates the Westminster Board of Trustees. At the time of the vote on Mr. Shepherd's dismissal, six out of twenty-four members of the Board were PCA. Seven members were OPC and six were CRC. Mr. Shepherd has been opposed by CRC, OPC, RCA, Canadian Presbyterian, and other members as well as by PCA members of the Board.

Our struggle for orthodoxy at Westminster has been "tiresome," and some may feel "fruitless." But the struggle for orthodoxy is an obligation the Lord lays on His people. Our country is full of dead institutions and churches that have given up the struggle. I do not believe that Westminster has rejected the insights of the continental Reformed tradition or has narrowed its position in its struggle. It has only tried to be responsible in preparing men for the gospel ministry. Pray for us.

So two viewpoints are expressed concerning the decision to release Prof. N. Shepherd. Strong feelings are involved. It will be worth following the developments in this case.

Johnny Can't Listen to the Sermon

One of our ministers from the West sent a magazine, *Pulpit Helps*, April, 1982, with some interesting comments on reasons why many children (and adults) find it increasingly difficult to listen to a sermon. This writer places much of the blame on television. Consider for yourself the accuracy of the statements:

...Pity the poor pastor who has to try to convey the Word of God in mere words and who has to wean the flock from milk before being able to present the "strong meat." On TV each night the world's "strong meat" is readily accessible in just about any strength one cares for! And it is all served up in a way that requires no hard work or diligent study to comprehend. Just sit and watch. It isn't surprising that the sermon comes off second best in comparison with what Johnny has just seen on TV.

A third point Postman makes is that television commercials are the modern equivalent of the ancient morality play. By the time an American child is 20 years old he will have seen approximately 1 million commercials, easily making these the most numerous learning experiences he has. And, says Postman, TV commercials are about products "only in the sense that the story of Jonah is about the anatomy of whales." Commercials, according to this media

expert, are really miniature parables in which the problem is stated in the first few seconds, resolved in the middle segment, and concluded with a moral in which the actor(s) fade ecstatically from the screen. Ostensibly a commercial may be selling mouthwash, but in reality it is selling acceptability to the opposite sex. Likewise, automobile and motorcycle commercials are actually selling freedom and independence. And these commercials teach children three interesting things, says Postman: (1) All problems can be solved; (2) all problems can be solved quickly; (3) all problems can be solved quickly by means of some technology.

Little wonder Johnny (or his parents) becomes disenchanted with the pastor who can't wrap up a problem, prescribe the proper pill or machine or prayer that will solve it quickly, and exit smiling all in 28 seconds. The people on TV do it all the time; why can't the pastor? Why does he have to spend 30 boring minutes talking about long-term solutions to life's problems — solutions that require something more than technological answers?...

So if Johnny can't seem to listen to the sermon (or if Johnny's father and mother have the same symptoms) a prime cause could be no farther away than the beautiful color TV set in their living room.

And in another article on a similar subject, found in the *Presbyterian Journal*, March 3, 1982, other impressive claims are made against television:

My concern about what is happening in our country has led me to the area of television. Why television? Because it is the most pervasive and persuasive medium we have. At times it is larger than life. It is the only true national medium.

Network television is the greatest educator we have. It tells us what is right and wrong, what is acceptable and unacceptable, whom to believe and not to believe, whom to trust and not trust, and whom we should desire to emulate. In a recent interview most teenage boys said they wanted to be like Burt Reynolds! The medium sold them.

We speak of educational television as if it is a separate channel. Not only is PBS educational television, but so are CBS, NBC, and ABC. All television is educational. That being true, what is it teaching?

It is teaching that adultery is an acceptable and approved lifestyle. It is teaching that violence is a legitimate way to achieve one's goals or to resolve

conflict. It is teaching that profanity is the language of the respectable. But these are only surface messages. The real message is deeper.

It is teaching that hardly anyone goes to church, that very few people in our society are Christian or live by Christian principles. How? By simply censoring out Christian characters, Christian values and Christian culture from the programs. It is teaching that people who claim to be Christian are hypocrites, cheats, liars, or the like. It does that by characterization.

The article continues by giving many concrete examples of the above. It points out further the godlessness evident in the actors and actresses on TV. And it continues by advocating a certain boycott in connection with the worst of the offenders. All of this does give pause for thought. What are we, and our children, being taught daily? How are our own attitudes and morals fashioned by what is shown on TV? And, does it interfere with our religious duties and responsibilities? The answers are troubling indeed.

QUESTION BOX

Catechism Preaching

Rev. C. Hanko

One of our readers writes:

"My question concerns article 68 of the Church Order which reads: 'The Minister shall on Sunday explain briefly the sum of Christian Doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism so that as much as possible the explanation shall be annually completed, according to the division of the Catechism itself, for that purpose.'

"Are the words 'as much as possible' to mean a positive or negative connotation? This also raises a number of questions, such as, What does Rev. H. Hoeksema mean in his preface to the *Triple Knowledge* when he says, 'For more than twenty-seven years I have faithfully preached once a Sunday (except on special occasions) on the Heidelberg Catechism'?

"Is it possible to have Catechism preaching at the afternoon or evening service if impossible in the morning service because of Easter, a fill-in minister, Christmas, baptism, pulpit exchange, vacations, etc., etc.?"

The question centers in the words "as much as possible" in article 68 of the Church Order. Did our fathers mean to say that the Heidelberg Catechism should be preached every Sunday, barring only a few exceptions, or did they intend to convey the idea that the Catechism should be preached every Sunday, but allowing the minister to use his own discretion in regard to exceptions to this rule?

Considering this question from the viewpoint of the time in which the article was adopted, one can only conclude that our fathers did mean to emphasize that the Catechism must be preached whenever this is possible, that is, every Sunday, with only rare exceptions. The fact is that, shortly after the Reformation, Catechism sermons were usually preached in the afternoon service and were poorly attended. People who had recently broken with the Romish Church had still not broken with the bad habit of visiting the tavern or enjoying some other entertainment on Sunday afternoon. Besides, there were many who did not enjoy

doctrinal preaching. So the afternoon services were poorly attended, and ministers often gave up preaching on the Heidelberg Catechism. Therefore the Synod decided that the Heidelberg Catechism had to be preached every Sunday, allowing for as few exceptions as possible. In fact, the statement was made that the minister should preach a Catechism sermon even if his family were the only members present.

In our churches Catechism sermons have become quite customary and our people seem to enjoy them. Especially our elderly people thrive on Catechism preaching, even though they have been through the Catechism with the minister many times. Therefore many people would certainly not object if the minister were to preach a Catechism sermon even on special occasions, as long as he had one sermon that fitted the occasion. This would also be fully in harmony with the Church Order.

But there are practical considerations. On preparatory Sundays the entire congregation cannot attend both services. Therefore the minister is often asked by his consistory to preach two preparatory sermons, especially with a view to those who cannot attend both services. On communion Sunday an appropriate sermon is required in connection with the administration of the Holy Supper and also for the applicatory service. Most Lord's Days would not fit very well with the requirements of these special services. There are also Sundays when the minister is filling a classical appointment elsewhere or is away on vacation. The consistory could request the fill-in minister to preach the Catechism on those Sundays, but the visiting minister might find this extremely difficult, especially since the minister likely is treating the Catechism from a specific aspect. Moreover, on

special occasions it is fitting that two sermons are devoted to the occasion, such as Resurrection Sunday, Pentecost, and other church holidays that occur on Sunday. Both the minister and the congregation may be convinced that this is necessary to satisfy the spiritual needs of the congregation.

It is with this in mind that the late Rev. Herman Hoeksema in his long and richly profitable ministry did not preach from the Heidelberg Catechism with the intent of finishing the material in one year. Besides realizing the importance of stressing the significance of the resurrection of Christ and of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit when the occasion offered, he was also convinced that no minister can do full justice to the material of some of the Lord's Days in a single sermon. This is true, for example, of Lord's Day 3, which covers so much material that a minister can readily preach three sermons on this one Lord's Day.

Since there is no definite principle involved here, the churches have understood this "as much as possible" to mean that the Heidelberg Catechism should be faithfully preached from Sunday to Sunday, with no doctrine left untreated. But this does not mean that a minister must feel himself bound to finish the discussion of the entire Catechism within the 52 weeks of the year, since this is simply impossible. Personally, I have taken the liberty to preach more than once on a single Lord's Day, to devote two sermons to preparatory services as well as to communion and applicatory services. I have almost without exception devoted the entire Sunday to whatever church holiday fell on that day. The result was that it often took two years, rather than one, to cover all the material in the Catechism and to do justice both to the Catechism and to special occasions.

IN HIS FEAR

The Urgency of the Preaching of the Gospel

Rev. Arie den Hartog

The great work of the preaching of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the glorious and wonderful work which the Lord has given to His church. This work involves the bringing of the glad tidings of salvation in Christ Jesus both in the sphere of the established church and on the mission field outside

of the established church. It includes the work of the ordained ministry who are especially the ambassadors of the Lord. In the broadest sense it also includes all of the accompanying labors of the members of the church as they support the ministry through their own efforts, through their

prayers, and through their gifts. It includes also the testimony of the lives of the members of the church as they are called to walk worthy of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and as they are called to encourage and exhort one another. The work of the preaching of the gospel is therefore very really the work of the whole church and everyone of her members.

There is great urgency in the work of the preaching of the gospel. This urgency must constrain us and compel us all as members of the church, it must overwhelm us. It must fill us with holy zeal to be faithful and diligent to perform our calling. Because of the urgency of this work we ought to be ready to exert ourselves to the very utmost. We must be ready to make great sacrifice of our monies and our energies, especially we ought to be ready to give our very selves to this work. There are no sacrifices too great to make for this work because of its great urgency. Over the centuries of the history of the church many faithful saints of God have suffered severe persecution for the cause of this work, many have given their life's blood for it.

Do we as churches and as people of God have a real sense of the urgency of this work? There is always a great danger that we become cold and complacent towards this great work of our Lord Jesus Christ. How easily we become satisfied merely with our own life and salvation and with the status quo in the church of which we are members. It is surely an awful thing when this attitude prevails in the church.

Our Lord Himself stresses the great urgency of this work in the great commission so called in Matthew 28:19, 20, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Our Lord surely expressed the great urgency of the preaching of the gospel when He, looking at the multitudes before Him and being moved with compassion, said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:37, 38).

The apostle Paul, the greatest missionary of all times and our example, often spoke of the urgency of the work of the preaching of the gospel. In Romans 1:14-16 he states, "I am debtor both to the Greek, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;

to the Jew first and also to the Greek." In I Corinthians 9:16 he says, "For though I preach the gospel I have nothing to glory, for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" Many more verses could be quoted.

The great urgency of the preaching of the gospel must be heard and felt in every sermon. The preaching is not merely an intellectual discourse on some doctrine of the scriptures or an interesting retelling of some things that happened in history concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. The preaching is indeed the presentation of the doctrine of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ and it is a recounting of the wonderful things which God did in history long ago; but with that must always come the authoritative and urgent command of God to repent and believe all that which is preached.

There is great urgency that men everywhere hear and believe, repent and turn unto the Lord with fear when the gospel is preached. This is true not only on the mission field but also in the established church. For this reason the office bearers of the church must labor night and day to convince, beseech, and persuade men; they must command, exhort, admonish, warn, comfort, and counsel with all fervency and diligence. In this again we have the apostle Paul as our instructor. In II Corinthians 5:11 he writes, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men"; and again in verse 20 of this same chapter, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." To Timothy the apostle writes in II Timothy 4:1-2, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine."

Wherein does the urgency of the preaching of the gospel consist? At the outset we must of course have a proper God-centered view of this urgency. We must have nothing of the conception of this urgency that is so common in the church world. This is the idea that the work of evangelism after all is dependent upon man. If man does not do it then it will not be accomplished. Those who hold to this idea speak of winning the world for Jesus by the great efforts of man. These teach further that the work of the preaching of the gospel is accomplished by sensational gospel rallies and fantastic campaigns of men. According to them men must be persuaded to believe through emotional appeals and all sorts of gimmicks and tricks. We want nothing at all of any of this and believe that it is all an abomination unto the Lord.

We believe that the preaching of the gospel is

truly a sovereign work of God. It is a work which He accomplishes according to His sovereign purpose to save those whom He Himself wills for the glory of His own name. God is the One Who has chosen certain men unto everlasting salvation even from before the foundations of the world. He determines where and when the gospel of Christ Jesus must be preached. He calls men unto the work of the preaching of the gospel that brings men unto repentance and salvation. God accomplishes all of His purpose. He saves all those whom He is pleased to save. None of His elect ever go lost. It is not the case that if men do not do the work of the preaching of the gospel then many millions who otherwise would have been saved will perish. If a particular church or minister is not faithful to preach the gospel then the Lord will raise up another. He will accomplish all of His purpose and it will never fail.

But we must not conclude from the sovereignty of God that therefore there is no urgency in the preaching of the gospel and we need not be faithful. God is pleased to call His church to carry out the great work of the preaching of the gospel. We have a tremendous responsibility to be faithful in this work. God's people must always be filled with a fervent desire to do this work by the grace of God to the full extent of their ability. The Lord will surely judge the church severely that does not faithfully perform its calling.

There are various aspects of the urgency of the preaching of the gospel on which we want especially to focus. First of all, in this work we seek the glory of God. It is the very genius of the Reformed and Christian faith that it seeks in all things the glory of God. The truly Reformed Christian has a burning zeal for the glory of God. In the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ the glory of God is particularly revealed. Through the preaching of the gospel the Lord is revealed as the sovereign almighty God, the God of righteousness and truth, the God of infinite love and tender mercy, the God of unchangeable faithfulness. When we as a church and as individuals are diligently engaged in the work of the preaching of the gospel we are thereby showing forth the glory of God. We understand of course that this is true only when we preach the gospel of sovereign grace. A gospel that exalts man in his works and his great abilities is not at all God-glorifying, and to publish such a gospel is a blasphemy in the sight of God. The gospel of a salvation that is founded upon sovereign eternal election, and which involves the deliverance of the sinner who is by nature totally depraved and damnable only according to the wonderful sovereign grace and mercy of God speaks of the great glory of God. A gospel that declares that God not only first saves men by sovereign grace but is also so

Almighty and faithful that He saves and keeps all of His own unto everlasting glory and blessedness, this is a God-glorifying gospel. We as a Reformed church have been entrusted with such a wonderful God-glorifying gospel. Ought we not, above all churches on the earth, be fervent and zealous to preach this gospel. For the sake of the honor and glory of our God we seek to keep this gospel in all the purity of its glorious truth, but we also seek to publish it wherever the Lord gives us opportunity, that all men may know of the great glory of our God.

The sincere and fervent desire for the glory of God ought also to make the members of the church see the urgent need of living worthy of the gospel in all of their lives. Again and again the scriptures emphasize that we must live holy and blameless lives so that the name of God is not blasphemed on our account. The great glory of God in the preaching of the gospel is supported by the glory of God as it is evident in the lives of Christians. When those who confess the truth of the glory of God live lives of ungodliness and worldliness and wickedness then God's name will be blasphemed. When there is hatred and strife in the church between the members, surely the name of God is greatly blasphemed. Few things do as great harm to the cause of the gospel as does the ungodly testimony of the lives of the members of the church. Men must see the good works of those who believe the gospel of Christ Jesus and glorify God in heaven.

Secondly, the great urgency of the preaching of the gospel is derived from the fact that in this work we must obey the command of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ as His faithful servants. It is urgent that the church and all her members see themselves as the servants of Christ Jesus. How especially this must be the case for the office bearers of the church who are in particular the ambassadors of Christ! Just notice how often the apostle Paul in his epistles speaks of being the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. How overwhelmed he was with this consciousness. The church must be constrained by an earnest desire to be faithful unto her Lord in the great work of the preaching of the gospel which He has called her to perform. It is the will of the Lord that the gospel be preached unto all nations. The Lord will not return until this purpose has been fulfilled. In the day of judgment every man will be judged according to the measure of his faithfulness to the Lord. It ought to be the great desire of every sincere child of God to hear in that day from the mouth of the Lord, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Thirdly, the urgency of the preaching of the

gospel is in the fact that this gospel is the power of God unto salvation unto all them that believe. By means of the preaching of the gospel God is pleased to bring men to repentance, faith, and salvation. Our Reformed confessions beautifully emphasize this. We find this in several places in the Heidelberg Catechism. Let me just quote from Lord's Day 25. "Since then we are made partakers of Christ and all His benefits by faith only, whence does this faith proceed? From the Holy Spirit who works faith in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel." Also in the Canons of Dordt we find again and again the emphasis that the preaching of the gospel is God's means unto the saving of men. In the first head of doctrine we read in article 3, "And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings to whom He will and at what time He pleaseth by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified." Article 5 of the second head teaches: "Moreover the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believeth in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This promise together with the command to repent and believe ought to be declared and published to all nations and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel." Article 14 of the fifth head teaches: "And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin the work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by the meditation thereon, and by exhortations, threatenings and promises thereof as well as by the use of the sacraments." It is particularly amazing how often the Canons speak of the preaching of the gospel and the great urgency of it for the salvation of men.

What a wonderful thing it is that it pleases God to use the preaching of the gospel to bring men unto repentance and salvation. What a wonderful thing it is that we as a church are called to perform the task of preaching the gospel. Knowing this we see the urgency of the preaching of the gospel. We know the awfulness of sin and the terrible misery that follows from it. We know the terrible judgment of the just and holy God against sinners. We know the dreadfulfulness of eternal condemnation in hell. We see the terrible darkness in which this world lives. What a wonderful thing that through the preaching of the gospel men are delivered from all of this, and made partakers of the wonderful salvation that is in Christ Jesus. We who have the blessed privilege of laboring on the mission field have experienced this in a particularly wonderful way. What an unspeakably wonderful thing it is to witness men and women brought out of the horrible darkness of heathen idolatry unto

everlasting salvation in Christ Jesus.

The urgency of the preaching of the gospel is motivated by the compassion which the church must have for lost sinners and the fervent desire for their salvation. So great was the desire of the apostle for the salvation of his fellow Jews that he could wish himself to be accursed for their sakes. Do we have such an earnest desire for the salvation of men?

It is through the preaching that we earnestly call men everywhere to believe and be saved. Day and night we must not cease to call men with the gospel if peradventure the Lord will save them. We must give our all for the preaching of the gospel unto this end. With all diligence we must warn, admonish, exhort, and persuade men everywhere so that some might be saved.

This same urgency is connected with the preaching of the gospel in the established church as well. Indeed it is a dreadful thing that there will be those always in all churches who hear the preaching again and again and yet continue in their sins. For such the judgment shall be all the more terrible. Therefore with great urgency the gospel must also be preached in the established church. The word of God says, today if you will hear His voice harden not your heart, for how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation.

In conclusion let me ask some practical questions. In light of the great urgency of the preaching of the gospel are there sacrifices too great for us to make? Dare we say that, especially in the age of affluence in which we live? Are there enough ministers of the gospel in our midst? Why is it that there are always so very few? Do the young men in our churches see the great urgency of this work? Are we ready to give our lives for this great work? We have seen the wonderful things which the Lord has wrought on the mission field here. What a tremendous need there is for the preaching of the gospel, especially of the gospel of sovereign grace which God has given to us. Let us pray earnestly for this work without ceasing. Let us be ready to make any and all the necessary sacrifices. There is no greater work in all the world than this.

*The Standard Bearer
makes an excellent
gift for the sick
or shut-in.*

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The Final Judgment of the Elect

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

After that great and notable day of the Lord when Jesus shall appear to gather His elect people from the four winds there will take place one final wonder of grace — the Final Judgment of this world. Paul speaks of that Judgment in II Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." This final wonder stands intimately related to that great resurrection from the dead. With the coming of Christ all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and come forth. They then shall stand before Christ and be judged; they that have done good will be given life and they that have done evil damnation. Just as *all* shall be raised from the dead, so also *all* shall stand before the great white throne of Christ and be judged. No one will escape judgment, including the very elect people of God.

Many today, in opposition to this, are quite surprised and even irritated when this truth is declared. The children of God standing before God and the world and having their sins exposed for all to look upon? God would not put His people through such shame! God's children standing before a vengeful God Who is filled with anger toward the sinner? How frightening! Indeed, that crushes all comfort and hope in the heart of a child of God! That simply is not true, they would contend; the elect will not be judged in the Judgment Day. Jesus has died upon the cross and shed His blood as a covering for our sin. That sin is, as it were, hidden from God's eyes and we are no longer held accountable for it. Why then would God require of us to give an account of our sin in the Judgment Day? In that day we will be presented before all as having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing. To stand before God in judgment would be senseless.

Those who reason this way, however, do not really understand the purpose of that final day of judgment. When they read such passages as Matthew 24:30 which says, "Then shall all the

tribes of the earth mourn," or Joel 2:2 which also speaks of that day as "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness," they draw a horrible picture of the Judgment Day in their minds. Christ is pictured as One Who comes only to gain vengeance upon the sinner. He is a dreadful King Who in His anger delights in casting sinners into the deep abyss of hell. In fear of that men often react with this denial that the saints will be judged.

In a certain sense, we can understand such a reaction too. During the Middle Ages the Judgment Day was used as a threat to keep the lives of the people holy. The Romish Church kept its laity living in constant terror that if they strayed in the least sense from the traditions of the church, in the Judgment Day they would be punished severely by an angry Judge. Terror of the Judgment became the motive for performing good works. Such a conception of the Judgment Day is still to be found in some churches today. However, if that is the conception of the Judgment it is no wonder that the reaction would be one of going to the opposite extreme and denying altogether the judgment of the elect. The child of God must not live in terror of that day. The fear of hell is not what must motivate the child of God to do good works. One will never gain heavenly glory merely because he is afraid of condemnation in the Final Judgment. Besides, the child of God must never go through life filled with terror and gloom. He above all people must be filled with comfort and the joy of his salvation. Certainly this picture of the Judgment is twisted and at best incomplete.

On the other hand, however, neither may we deny that God's elect will stand in judgment. The passage which was quoted earlier in II Corinthians 5:10 plainly states, "*we must all appear* before the judgment seat of Christ." Surely, we cannot deny the plain testimony of Scripture. Paul writes in Romans 14:10, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment

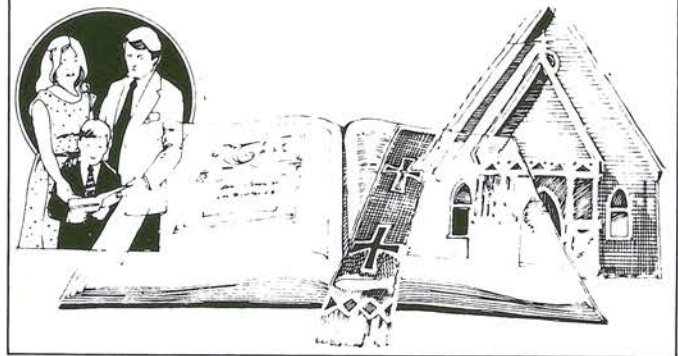
seat of Christ." The elect shall be judged; and their sins — every one of them — shall be exposed. Their judgment is public. When Paul writes in II Corinthians 5:10 that all must "appear" he speaks of all "being manifested or exposed" before the judgment seat of Christ. All the blackness and sin of our hearts shall be brought out into the open; or, in the words of Jesus, "For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad." In that day God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ (Romans 2:16). In this respect the judgment of the elect is no different from that of the ungodly.

Yet, all of this does not discourage or frighten the child of God. This Judgment does not overshadow the joy which he experiences in this life. Let us not misunderstand, those who are rebellious and hardened in their sin indeed tremble at the knowledge of the Judgment. And they ought to tremble also! Scripture is clear in Romans 2:3-5, "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? . . . But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds." Nevertheless, the repentant child of God who serves God with reverence and godly fear will never tremble before this "revelation of the righteous judgment of God." He will not because he understands that this is the very purpose of that Judgment Day: the revelation of God's righteousness. In that glorious day all the works and ways of God, especially His dealings with the moral deeds of men, will in the consciousness of every man be justified. How often we wonder why God has done certain things in our life and in the history of this world! We know that all things are directed by Him to glorify His own Name and also unto the salvation of His people. At the same time, however, many things remain hidden, especially God's actions with respect to the works of His rational, moral creatures. In the day of judgment all will be revealed to us as well as to the wicked. Even the wicked man will have to admit that all of God's dealings with men were just and good.

Included in this glorious revelation of God's justice and righteousness will be the public justification of Christ and His cause. It is exactly in this that the Judgment Day becomes for the child of God a day of triumph and victory. There is no doubt that each of God's saints will bow before the great white throne of Christ and will see his sin as he never did before. It is true too that his sin will be revealed publicly to all. Yet as all look upon those sins they will see each one covered in the atoning blood of

Jesus Christ! All men will have to acknowledge that the work of Christ in His death and resurrection was worthy and sufficient to save His people from sin and death and make them rightful heirs of eternal glory! And in that public justification of Christ and His work all who belong to Christ from eternity will share. In that day the righteousness which has been freely given us by the grace of God through the death and resurrection of our Lord will be seen by all. The wicked shall have to acknowledge that though our sins were many, in Christ we are made worthy recipients of heavenly glory! Surely that day will not be one of gloom and darkness for God's children. It will be a day of glorious victory! We will triumph over our foes — those who mocked us and persecuted us for our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Judgment Day is not a day at the thought of which we tremble in fear. It is a day to which we should look forward in joy and anticipation. Not only will our righteousness in Christ be completed in that day but we will also hear Christ say to us, "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." We will receive our eternal reward and our hope will be fulfilled. That is the comfort of God's saints, a comfort found not in avoiding their own judgment but receiving it.

Take time to read *The Standard Bearer*



RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory and Congregation of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church expresses their sincere Christian sympathy to Rev. G. Van Baren and family in the recent loss of his sister, ALICE VAN BAREN, whom the Lord took to Glory March 24, 1982.

May they be comforted by the truth expressed in Romans 8:18 — "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Gerrit Holstege, Vice Pres.
Perlin Schut, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 18, 1982, our parents, MR. AND MRS. JOHN VANDER WOUDE, will celebrate, the Lord willing, their 25th wedding anniversary.

We their children, are sincerely thankful to our Heavenly Father for blessing us with these God-fearing parents who have brought us up and instructed us in His ways. We pray that God will always be near them and continue to bless them in the years to come.

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

their children,
Rod and Sandy Kooiman
Jim Vander Woude
Tom Vander Woude
Joan Vander Woude

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 21, 1982, our beloved parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents, MR. AND MRS. NEIL DYKSTRA, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. We are truly thankful to the Lord for the privilege of having shared this joyous occasion with them. We are grateful for the many years of love and covenant instruction which they have given us, and we pray that our Heavenly Father will continue to bless them and keep them in His tender care.

"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known Thy faithfulness to all generations." (Psalm 89:1)

Rex and Ann Clawson
Jeanette Voss
Jim and Marge Dykstra
John and Marilyn Dykstra
Lou and Jane Dykstra
Tom and Nell Dempsey
Twenty-one grandchildren
Seventeen great-grandchildren

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Faith, Hope, and Love Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church expresses their sympathy to Mrs. Theresa Lenting in the death of her mother MRS. CORA SIKMA.

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

Rev. D. Engelsma, Pres.
Denise DeJong, Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!

The Scholarship Fund is taking applications for future teachers and/or ministers for the 1982-1983 schoolyear. If you are interested please contact Mike Lotterman, 1382 Su-Lew Dr., S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504 for the application forms. Also an essay of 300 words or more is required on the topic, "My responsibility to Christian education or my responsibility to the Christian ministry in perilous times in the light of II Timothy 3."

Deadline for applications to be received is June 1, 1982.

IN MEMORIAM

On March 12, 1982, it pleased our heavenly Father to take unto Himself our beloved fellow saint, last charter member of our congregation, MR. RICHARD NEWHOUSE at the age of 94 years.

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

Council and Congregation of
Hope Protestant Reformed Church,
Walker, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Faith, Hope and Love Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church mourns the loss of a faithful member, ALICE VAN BAREN, whom the Lord took from our midst to eternal glory on March 24, 1982. We express our sympathy to the bereaved family and pray that our Heavenly Father's love will sustain and comfort them through every coming day.

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

Rev. David Engelsma, Pres.
Mrs. Denise DeJong, Sec'y.

TEACHER NEEDED

The South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a half-day teacher for the 1982-83 school year. Application can be made by writing or phoning before May 1.

Jack Lenting
17014 Wausau Ave.
South Holland, Illinois 60473
Phone: (312) 339-0628

YOU ARE INVITED!!!

To the Annual Spring Lecture
to be held, the Lord willing, at
The South Christian Auditorium, Cutlerville, Michigan.

The Speaker — Prof. R. Decker.

The Theme — The believer and his Bible.

Thursday, May 6, 1982 — 8:00 P.M.

—Plan now to attend — and bring your Friends—

The Lecture Committee

News From Our Churches

Along with the report of Classis West which was printed in our April issue, Rev. Engelsma sent the following informative paragraph: "On the day before Classis, a large group of ministers, elders, missionaries, professors, seminarians, and visitors participated in an Officebearers' Conference arranged by the committee from the West, Rev. W. Bekkering and Rev. R. Cammenga. There was excellent representation from both Classis and from the Seminary. Papers were given on 'The Textual Problem of Holy Scripture' and on 'The English Translation of Holy Scripture.' These conferences are profitable inasmuch as they provide an opportunity for mutual instruction and for good fellowship around the truth of the Reformed Faith which we all love and are called to maintain. The committee is to be encouraged to work at setting up future conferences."

We have also learned that the papers presented at the above mentioned conference will be printed in a forthcoming issue of the Protestant Reformed Theological Journal. *Standard Bearer* readers who are interested in these and other excellent articles should send to the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 4949 Ivanrest Avenue, Grandville, MI 49418, and ask that their names be added to the mailing list.

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From our calling churches we learn that Rev. Kamps has declined the call from Redlands, California; and Rev. Bekkering has declined the call from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Since these declines, both Redlands and Edmonton have formed new trios from which both have called Rev. Koole of our Randolph, Wisconsin church.

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After laboring in Jamaica for better than two months, Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers and Rev. and Mrs. Heys have returned to Michigan. Holland bulletins of February 7 and 14 included some interesting correspondence that Rev. Miersma received from Rev. Heys which should open our eyes just a bit to what their labors in Jamaica involved: "Almost a month of work will have gone by when you receive this letter, and intensive and exhausting (because of the

heat and humidity) the work has been! When we arrived January 12 at 3:15 PM with our winter clothes, we stepped off the plane into 86 degree weather; and it has been in the high eighties every day since. Nights are sometimes cool. The humidity feels like 100% most of the time. Last Sunday I drove (on the left side of the road) to Waterworks — about 10 miles to the east — and dropped off the Lubbers. Then we two went to Cave Mt., drove half-way up on winding, twisting, steep and rough roads, parked the car at the path to the church, and walked up a steep path with sharp rocks for 20 minutes before we got to the top where the church is. The message was well received. Going down took more time, because of the steepness and danger of turning an ankle on the rocks, as well as slipping on the wet grass and rocks. We drove down the mountain after the God of all mercy brought us safely down, picked up the Lubbers and went to the Henden House where we had our sandwich dinner in our rooms at 2 PM. At night we went to Belmont where I preached again with the Lubbers in the audience. A typical Jamaican Sabbath." On more trivial matters (trivial, depending on how you look at it) Rev. Heys wrote: "My wife and I each got a hamburger (with nothing else) and paid \$9.42 Jamaican money or \$5.45 our money! Coffee is \$1.50. A box of All Bran is \$5.95 Jamaican money which is about \$3.50 our money."

Also of interest from Holland we noticed that for the Sunday evenings of January 7 and 31 the bulletin sermon titles were the same: "Draw Near to God." Further investigation revealed that the February 7 morning sermon entitled "Trusting in God Alone" was given also on February 14, as was the evening service of February 7, "The Supreme Trial of Abraham," preached on the evening of February 14. At first glance one might wonder how Rev. Miersma managed to get by with these sermon reruns, and then in such close proximity! Or was he testing his congregation to see if they listen? There is a good explanation for these supposed reruns, and I'm sure our Michigan readers know what it is, since many of our Michigan churches cancelled services due to a rash of weekend blizzards.

C.K.