

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

— A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE —

Our children must be put in mind of the things of God! We are to excite them unto this. We are to do this by our example, by our study of the Word, by our alert attendance unto the preaching of the Word, by our prayers together as a family, and our prayers in their hearing for them. This is our calling as covenant parents.

See "An Exhortation Concerning Our

Families" — page 181

## CONTENTS

Meditation—	
Our Hope in the Future .....	170
Editorials—	
"Together On The Way" — The Train	
Is On The Tracks .....	173
A Worthwhile Commentary .....	175
Translated Treasures—	
A Pamphlet Concerning the	
Reformation of the Church .....	175
From Holy Writ—	
Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures .....	177
My Sheep Hear My Voice—	
Letter to Timothy .....	179
Guest Article—	
An Exhortation Concerning	
Our Families (2) .....	181
Letter from the Seminary .....	184
The Signs of the Times—	
A Pilgrim's Perspective (3) .....	185
Question Box—	
The Laying On of Hands .....	186
Special Feature—	
The Spiritual Strengths and Weaknesses	
of the Protestant Reformed Churches,	
and Possible Remedies (1) .....	188
Books Reviews .....	190
News From Our Churches .....	192

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## MEDITATION

## Our Hope in the Future

Rev. C. Hanko

*Ques. 57. What comfort doth the "resurrection of the body" afford thee?*

*Ans. That not only my soul immediately after this life shall be taken up to Christ its head; but also that this my body, being raised by the power of Christ, shall be reunited with my soul, and made like unto the glorious body of Christ.*

*Ques. 58. What comfort takest thou from the article of "life everlasting"?*

*Ans. That since I now feel in my heart the beginning of eternal joy, after this life, I shall inherit perfect salvation, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man" to conceive, and that, to praise God therein for ever.*

*Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 22*

I believe in God.

These two articles bring us to the conclusion (should I say, climax?) of our confession of the

Christian faith as summed up in the Apostolic Creed. We are reminded that throughout this confession we have been privileged to place the triune,



covenant God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the foreground. He is the source of all our life as the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth. He is the God of our salvation in His Son, Jesus Christ, in Whom and with Whom we have the victory of sin and death and are possessors of an inheritance which is laid away for us in safe keeping in the heavens. He is also the goal, the purpose of our lives, since by His Spirit He unites our hearts in the blessed hope that we shall dwell with Christ and all the saints in His presence, to behold His face in righteousness, to be satisfied with His fulness, to praise and adore Him throughout all eternity. For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him are all things. This God is my God by the wonder of His grace. I believe in GOD.

#### Our Comfort.

Our book of Instruction confronts us with the very personal question, "What comfort doth 'the resurrection of the body' afford thee?"

As essential as oxygen is to the lungs, so essential is the hope of eternal life to the believer. No more than we can live without breathing can a child of God live without that blessed hope. Wending our way through the valley of the shadow of death, which we entered at our birth, we meet the struggles and trials of each day with our eye fixed on the light that shines at the end of the dark valley, the light of the eternal Day. We are born again unto a living hope that longs for the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, the only treasure that never fades away, which God has in safe keeping for us in heaven (I Peter 1:3, 4).

It is in this comfort that we live and die. We are told in our Catechism that this comfort consists of three parts. We look forward to a conscious life immediately after death. We anticipate the reunion of soul and body upon Christ's return with the clouds. And we experience a strong yearning for the heavenly perfection of a covenant fellowship with God in Christ among all the saints in a new and perfect creation, world without end.

#### Life after death.

The question is often raised, After death what? Unbelief informs us that death is death. It adds that it is scientifically impossible for a soul to carry on a conscious life apart from the body. How will the soul see? hear? speak? Even in Reformed circles doubt is created as to how a loving God can cast sinners into everlasting torment. Is hell, then, but a threat? Then how do we know that heaven is more than an illusion?

Let unbelief rave, our faith rests securely in our God, so that we can confess with the inspired Psalmist, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in right-

eousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15). This is confirmed by our Lord Himself in the parable of the rich man who opens his eyes in hell, and of Lazarus who rests in Abraham's bosom. This is obviously a parable, yet Christ did not intend to arouse false hopes in us, but spoke of a reality that compares with the figures of the parable. That reality is assured to the repentant murderer on the cross when Jesus tells him, "Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Another evidence of life after death is given to us in the resurrection and ascension of the Lord. Jesus did not enter an empty heaven, to reign there all by Himself, but He joined Enoch, Moses, and Elijah in their glorified bodies, as well as all the saints who had gone before. Revelation 6 speaks of the saints under the altar who cry with a loud voice, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (verse 10). As he waits to join the assembly of the saints before the throne, Paul confidently reminds us that when this earthly house of our tabernacle is broken down, we have a building of God, a house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (II Cor. 5:1).

Therefore we are confident that when the hour of our departure has arrived we shall pass, as it were, through the revolving door of death, out of this temporal existence into our heavenly mansion with all its new relationships, splendor, and purposes. We leave this present vale of tears with tear-stained eyes to be comforted as a child is comforted by its mother, having all our tears brushed away in eternal joy and glory; a glory so rich, so grand, so completely satisfying, that all the suffering of this present time will prove to be more than worthwhile in having brought us to such a great salvation.

This "intermediate state" is, nevertheless, still not our final perfection. Our souls will still be awaiting the reunion with the body. Moreover, the church of the redeemed will not yet be complete, for new members are arriving every day. And, finally, the heavens must still be renewed in that final transformation that joins heaven and earth together in glorious perfection. Yet, even so, the saints are already rejoicing before the throne with Christ in His exaltation.

#### The resurrection of the body.

We can appreciate the emphasis on Christ in this Lord's Day. At death our souls will be with Christ, as He gathers the members of His Body unto Himself until all the elect are gathered in. Moreover, we will be completely restored in the image of Christ in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Besides that, our present bodies will be raised



from the grave by Christ's power. Still more, our present bodies will be transformed into the likeness of the glorious body that Christ now possesses in heaven. Finally, death will be completely swallowed up in victory. We will be with Christ and like Him in His glorious kingdom to live and reign with Him over the entire new creation.

The apostle Paul speaks of the mystery that takes place at the sounding of the last trumpet. The dead shall be raised incorruptible! The veil is already partially lifted from that mystery in the wonder of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. On Friday afternoon Jesus' corpse was wrapped limb by limb, as also torso and head, in linen wrappings and laid away in a sealed tomb. On Sunday morning nothing of that corpse remained, nothing but the mute testimony of the empty linen clothes. The resurrection body had left its earthly wrappings, even as a plant emerges from a bulb. The tomb was vacated. Shortly after, Jesus appeared to the women, meeting them on the way as they walked home from the tomb. After that He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to Peter, and to the men of Emmaus. They all recognized Him as the Jesus they had known and loved. Some even touched Him. When they questioned whether it was He, He showed them the nail holes in His hands and feet. He proved that He was no ghost by eating in their presence. Jesus had a real body—the same body as before. Yet it had undergone an amazing change. It was no more bound to time and place. Closed, even locked doors could not prevent Him from entering a room. Suddenly He made Himself visible to the disciples, and as suddenly He faded out of sight. At the sea of Galilee the Lord repeated the miracle of the large catch of fishes. Again, as before, He called them to preach the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. It was difficult for the disciples to understand the change that had come over Him. For even when He was not present He still knew that Thomas questioned His resurrection. There were mysteries here that seemed beyond human understanding. The apostle John expresses the sentiments of the other disciples quite succinctly when he writes, "And none of the disciples durst ask Him, Who art Thou?, knowing that it was the Lord." They knew, yet they wondered, filled with amazement and questions. After forty days Jesus left them and entered into the cloud of glory before their very sight, so that they could testify that they had seen the risen Lord enter into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

Our present earthly bodies will be conformed unto the glorious body that Christ now possesses in heaven. This mortal body, that is subject to death since the time of our conception, will be raised to live eternally. This corruptible body, now bur-

dened with weaknesses, sicknesses, and diseases, will be raised in incorruption. No one will ever say again, I am sick. This natural body that sees only earthly things, hears only earthly sounds, speaks only an earthly language will be raised to live a perfect life in heavenly fellowship and glory. Now we know in part, but then we shall know as we are known. Now we are still subject to sin and guilt, then all sin will be foreign to us!

Already in Paul's day the question was raised, How can these things be? Faith answers, We expect our Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, Who will change our vile bodies, that is, the bodies of our present humiliation, into the likeness of His exalted, glorious body. How do I know? My exalted Savior is given power to subdue all things, nothing excluded, to Himself forever (Phil. 3:21).

#### Life Everlasting.

What is it? At this point we stammer for we venture to say something about that which beggars description and exceeds our fondest imagination. We can best follow the example of our Catechism, which in an instance like this simply refers us to Scripture to be reminded that life everlasting is the culmination of all those things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" (I Cor. 2:9).

What is life? Let the scientist continue his research and the philosopher his vain speculations. GOD is Life! The triune, covenant God lives His own holy life in intimate fellowship in the dazzling brightness of His own glorious perfections. This God is our God, for He takes us into His heart and into His life, makes us heirs in Christ to a perfect salvation, that we may behold His face in righteousness and be satisfied with the fullness of His glory forever.

How do I know? I experience the beginning of this eternal joy through faith even now! To our God be the power, the glory forever!

I believe in GOD!!

*The Standard Bearer  
makes a thoughtful  
gift for the sick  
or shut-in. Give  
The Standard Bearer.*



## EDITORIALS

Prof. H. C. Hoeksema

# "Together On The Way" — The Train Is On The Tracks

This is the way Editor J. van der Graaf (*De Waarheidsvriend*, Nov. 25, 1982) aptly characterized recent decisions toward union by 1986 between the Hervormde Kerk and the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN).

Recently there was what is called a Combi-Synod of the two denominations. Immediately following the conclusion of the Synod of the GKN and just before the Synod of the Hervormde Kerk the delegates of both synods met in a joint session devoted to discussion of and decisions concerning the movement for union between the two denominations. At this Combi-Synod the time-table for union was proposed and adopted by an overwhelming vote. In the paper referred to above, published by what is often referred to as the ultra-conservative wing of the Hervormde Kerk, the Gereformeerde Bond, there is a complete report concerning this Combi-Synod, even including a summary of the discussion by delegates of both denominations. Along with this, there is also a pair of articles in which the position of the Gereformeerde Bond (the Reformed Alliance) is made clear.

Because of the significance of these events in the land to which our Reformed churches trace their origin, we pass this information on to our readers and, along with it, some editorial comment.

### The Time-table

Evidently the entire process of dealing with this matter was well-orchestrated, and the wheels of the ecclesiastical machinery were well-oiled. The entire proposal was introduced by representatives of the joint committee in charge of this movement, with a representative of the Hervormde Kerk speaking first, followed by a representative of the GKN. As we have reported earlier, the main proposal was to set 1986 as the date of the final accomplishment of union. This was all very smoothly introduced by the two speakers. Then followed a speech by a Dr. R.J. Mooi (Secretary-general of the Hervormde Kerk) in behalf of the moderamen of Hervormde synod, after which the matter was thrown open for general discussion and finally voted upon.

Here is the time-table which was proposed and approved:

1983: The classical assemblies of both denominations are asked to hold joint meetings at which the various consistories can exchange their experiences with cooperation between GKN and HKN churches. Such cooperation on a local level, we may note, is supposed to have been going on for some time already; in some localities it has been practiced, but in others (especially where there are congregations of the conservative Reformed Alliance) it has not been practiced.

1984: A proposed "ecclesiological consensus" (a consensus about the doctrine of the church) will be presented to another combi-synod of the two denominations. The mandate for such a consensus was already given to the deputies for "Together On The Way" in 1972. Along with this proposed consensus there is also to be proposed at that time a "declaration of intention."

1985: Broader and lesser ecclesiastical assemblies are to be consulted with respect to the process of reunion which has been put in effect.

1986: In that year they will strive in another combi-synod to nail down the ecclesiological consensus and the declaration of intention as an act in which both denominations declare that they find themselves in a state of reunion. Meanwhile, it was also proposed that delegations from both synods be appointed as a smaller body (a sort of mini-synod) to take charge of the consultations pertinent to "Together On The Way" in the coming years.

Such is the time-table, in brief. And while it was stated that the stipulated dates do not constitute a hard and fast schedule, nevertheless there was no inclination either on the part of the standing committee or on the part of the combi-synod to slow things down and to extend the time-table.

### Discussion and Outcome

In the issue of *De Waarheidsvriend* already referred to there is an extensive account of the discussion, even including a long address, along with three substitute motions, by a Dr. S. Meijers, a member of the Reformed Alliance and a strong opponent of the merger as proposed. In his three motions he attempted to make the Combi-synod see the real issues involved in the proposed merger. Needless to say, he failed to accomplish anything.



It is impossible, for reasons of space, to reproduce in translation the very interesting discussion of this issue which is reported by *De Waarheidsvriend*. We may mention the following items:

1. The moderamen of the Synod of the Hervormde Kerk, through the mouth of the secretary-general, Dr. R.J. Mooi, exhorted the delegates to be cautious. Dr. Mooi pleaded for progress in the "Together On The Way" movement, but with "the finger on the pulse of ecclesiastical life." This obvious attempt of the moderamen to slow down the process of union, however, was in vain. It should be remembered that there are three distinct modalities in the Hervormde Kerk—the Liberals, the Middle-of-the-Roaders, and the conservatives of the Reformed Alliance (a group that is in many respects very orthodox and Reformed). Undoubtedly the moderamen were not motivated by any sound and principal objections to the merger, but by their desire to keep the three wings of the church together, if at all possible, through this entire merger process. And that, I think, will require some sort of magical dexterity.

2. There is considerable fear—and this is not limited to the Reformed Alliance apparently—not only of the various liberal tendencies of the GKN, but especially of what is referred to as the organizational ability and the *activism* of the GKN. The latter are not only liberal—after all, there are plenty of liberals in the Hervormde Kerk, too—but they are very insistently active in promoting their liberal notions.

3. Those of the GKN were very vocal in promoting the proposals. Some were also very open about saying that the present movement for reunion is not their final purpose, but only one event in a much broader ecumenical tendency. They have in view a reunion with "our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters." Thus, for example, a Rev. J. van Drie, of the GKN.

4. The strongest promoter among the delegates of the Hervormde Kerk were the so-called "*Middenorthodoxen*," the middle-of-the-roaders.

5. The strongest and very outspoken opponents among the delegates of the Hervormde Kerk were the men of the Reformed Alliance (*Geref. Bond*). These did not hesitate to emphasize that the men of the GKN today are not the heirs of 1834 and 1886. One said that Abraham Kuyper would turn over in his grave if he heard of the GKN's declarations concerning homosexuality.

But Reformed principle did not prevail. Even the exhortations to caution did not avail. The outcome was an overwhelming vote in favor of the proposed time-table. There were only 14 negative votes on the part of the Hervormde Kerk and 1 negative vote on the part of the GKN.

Indeed, as Editor van der Graaf stated, "the train is on the tracks. The question is only where the obstacles will be found by which the progress of the train will be hindered."

### Evaluation

All of this raises some interesting questions.

First of all, what is going to happen in the Netherlands? Is the outcome going to be some kind of realignment ecclesiastically? At this stage, the men of the Reformed Alliance are not only outspoken in their criticism of and their opposition to the merger; but they are also insistent that the product of this merger will not be the old *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, or, as they like to refer to it, "the church of the fathers." They insist that this is not a return on the part of the GKN to the church which they once left (in 1834 and 1886), but a brand new denomination. This is the position taken by both Editor van der Graaf and by the Rev. L.J. Geluk, the president of the Reformed Alliance. The former writes: "But if the 'state of reunion' actually becomes 'reunion,' we have another church. No more the church of the fathers." And the latter states: "The Reformed Alliance wishes to remain *Hervormd*, and desires *together with others*, on the basis of Holy Scripture and in harmony with the religion of the confession of the fathers, to continue to be reformed through the Spirit of the Father and the Son." If the Reformed Alliance sticks to its guns, this could conceivably result in the future in some kind of realignment ecclesiastically, with the result that those of a conservative Reformed mind are thrown together as some kind of continuation of a "church of the fathers." On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that there are those in the Hervormde Kerk who will do all in their power somehow to keep the men of the Reformed Alliance in the church.

In the second place, these events will surely prove to be of significance for other churches which have fraternal relations with the GKN, as well as for the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, which has been troubled by the question of GKN membership for many years already. Perhaps this is the solution for all concerned. If the plan is consummated and the merger goes through, there simply will not be any GKN any longer. It will have merged itself out of existence. For the RES there is a little problem, of course: the RES next meets in 1984, while the merger time-table speaks of 1986. But that is not an insurmountable obstacle, perhaps.

**Take time to read  
*The Standard Bearer***



## A Worthwhile Commentary

I refer to the book by one of our staff members, the Rev. George C. Lubbers, *Freeborn Sons Of Sarah, An Exposition of Galatians*.

It is not necessary for me to review the contents of this book. It is a commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, and the chapter-divisions of the Epistle are also the chapter-divisions of the book. With some revision and editing, the contents of the book are the same as the contents of the Rev. Lubbers' articles on Galatians which appeared for several years in the department *From Holy Writ*. As anyone who followed the latter will know, the commentary wavers somewhat between being technical and being popular. Ultimately, because of the format, however, this constitutes no obstacle for the reader who is specially interested in either of the two.

It is easy for any reviewer to find things to criticize in a commentary—to note points on which he might disagree or matters which need clarification. This is not my purpose, however, in reviewing any commentary; and certainly not with this one. My main question is this: is the commentary Scriptural, and is it Reformed, and therefore reliable?

The answer to this question is an unqualified affirmative. And besides, the book is characterized by the warmth of a heart that believes what is written.

Congratulations, Rev. Lubbers.

The book is available from several sources for the price of \$6.95, plus postage. One source from which you may purchase it is: Prot. Ref. Seminary Bookstore, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.

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## TRANSLATED TREASURES

### A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

(In the last paragraph Kuyper has discussed the responsibility of individual members, whether ordinary members of the congregation or office bearers in the church, with respect to unfaithfulness and disobedience in the church. He has discussed what the calling of these members is and how they must begin the work of church reformation and separation from the church of which they are members. The discussion in the last paragraph had to do particularly with one's responsibility in the local congregation. In this following paragraph Kuyper discusses the responsibility of the individual member and his calling toward the denomination as a whole.)

#### 57. Concerning Reformation Through Separation From the Existing Denomination.

Our fathers, who undertook the reformation of the churches of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, etc., in the sixteenth century, did not seek separation from their church; i.e., from the church of their locality or even of their parish. They sought a break with the *organization* of the local church. They sought a break with the church connection in which their church stood related with other churches. But they wanted their church as church to continue. It was after the Reformation the same as it was before, and church reformation did not lead to the establishment of a new church alongside

of or over against the existing one. All that happened was that the existing church in profession and worship and organization was purified from errors.<sup>1</sup>

From this it is clear that a new reformation which would be similar to the Reformation of the sixteenth century would indeed break with the organization and with the church fellowship, but would leave the body of the churches as such unharmed. Another suit of clothes, but the same body! That was the password of that time.

This shows the great importance of the second kind of reformation which we discuss in this paragraph: reformation by separation from the denomination.

The character of this kind of reformation is sharply delineated.

Just as we discussed more broadly in the second chapter concerning the formation of the church, so

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<sup>1</sup> The distinction Kuyper has in mind here is the distinction between the local congregation and the denomination. One who engages in church reformation seeks not separation from the denomination, but the renewal of the local congregation.



we must be reminded here that the church of Jesus is one in all places of the world and wherever God has His people. One is the Head of us all. Thus we are one body under Him Who has bought us with the price of His own blood. But just as the one light of the same sun streams into the different rooms of one house through different windows to be divided by the walls in the basement and attic, in the front and back rooms, in the hall and upper rooms, without being anything different from the one and same light from the same sun, so it is also with the streams of light from Jesus' life in His churches on earth. All these churches together form one house; but in that one house there are many different rooms separated by walls; and in those separate rooms streams the light not from a source of light hidden in the middle of the room, but directly from the sun through skylights and windows. Thus there is one organized life of Christ, just as the light of the sun is one throughout the whole earth and sky. And also there is one house on earth, one church, in which the different churches form only rooms or apartments which have contact through doors. But the light which streams in comes from outside and makes each room its own room with its own light and its own life. This is the urgent reason why it must never be permitted that a local church be considered as a sub-division, a section, or compartment of a national church. This idea robs the church of her honor as church. She is sub-division, section, compartment, or, rather, to speak organically, she is member or cell of one indivisible church of Christ, and receives as such her light, her love, her life, directly from Him. The church will thus remain church even if all the other local churches with which she is connected fall away. She exists not because the national church exists, but only because the life of Christ is revealed in her. It may thus be said that she is a part of the universal, catholic, holy church on earth; but never that she is a compartment or sub-division of a group of churches on earth. Indeed, she does not come into existence because that group of churches exists, but the other way around: that group exists because the churches of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, etc., first exist independently and now enter into relations and connections with each other. Not, we must understand this well, as if this relation and connection are not necessary, and as if good churches by the very pressure of life and of love shall not come together of themselves; but in the sense that the existence of the church always precedes the existence of the federation, and the church federation is born out of the churches. The opposite is only the greatest exception.

In the meantime, this church federation, which has been established by the churches for the use

and profit of the churches, can, after the passing of time and through a change of circumstances, become an inconvenience and hindrance to the spiritual blossoming of the churches and to her growth in salvation and sanctification.

Yet, if after the spiritual decline of nearly all the churches, the whole church federation has degenerated into a dry and dead federation of churches and is held together only by regulations, then it cannot be any different than that any spiritual revival and every attempt towards church renewal in one or more of the federation of churches shall be frustrated by a wrong spirit which has slipped into the church federation.

Nevertheless, such a church federation binds together. Churches living in such a federation are no longer free to act as they please. They live under communal rules and under the power of mutually agreed upon gatherings in Classis and Synod. By these communal rules the door of the one church is open for the members of the other churches. Because of the influence which they mutually exercise on each other, the manner of government of all is regulated by one communal church order, and the changing of that church order is not the right of one church, but of all the churches together.

Three conclusions follow from this.

The first is that with the spiritual decline of the churches which live in common fellowship, a lack of spirituality must necessarily and gradually slip into the church order and the rules of communal living, so that at last, the ecclesiastical rule is served instead of the Word of the Lord, and the Word itself is opposed.

Secondly, with such a spiritual decline in the churches, the natural bond of common confession is lost. To replace that lost unity the church is compelled to emphasize human authority and regulations in an attempt to preserve that unity which in fact is gone. In the measure that God's Word is set aside, more emphasis is laid on the authority of human ordinances.

Thirdly, because a consequence of such a spiritual decline of the churches is that the rules of her fellowship are brought into conflict with God's Word and the authority of human ordinances is considered especially holy, churches which seek reformation according to God's Word must oppose both the regulations hostile to the Word of God in the corrupt church order and the imaginary majesty of the human authority which clings to that church order.

Progress in these cases is gradual.

If, by God's grace, a desire and impulse arises in a certain church to live according to the Word of



God, then that impulse will manifest itself first of all in a very small circle. But it will soon attempt to spread itself outside that small circle in the denomination at large. Reaching the circle of spiritual office bearers, this impulse will manifest itself in the consistory. Then the consistory finds itself confronted with this all-decisive question whether it shall reestablish the honor of God's holy name in the congregation entrusted to it, or whether it will oppose the spiritual awakening of the church. Neutrality in this matter is impossible. Every consistory chooses either for those who are concerned for church reformation or against them. The excuse that each man for himself shall continue to proclaim the Word without supporting those who seek reformation is hollow and empty. Indeed, the Lord has not established in His church only independent preachers, but an office. This office means that all preachers stand in a mutual relation, are responsible for each other mutually, and thus shall determine for themselves their responsibility to direct the church according to God's Word, or to cooperate together to permit their church to persist in its deviation from God's Word. The choice might be painful, but one cannot escape it.

Now one of two things are true. If a consistory chooses against the spiritual awakening in the church and if it maintains, for the sake of the church federation, human ordinances contrary to the Word of God, then the church federation battles against that spiritually awakened part of the church and the unfaithful consistory serves the wicked church government in its opposition to those who are zealous for the Word of the Lord. If the consistory recognizes its obligation to return to obedience to the Word of God, the danger is present that it will be called to account by the hostile church federation.

These two distinct cases must therefore be kept separate.

A conflict can develop between a person and the church federation in which the consistory becomes an accomplice of the church federation. But an entirely different conflict is possible when not only an individual person, but the consistory itself comes into conflict with the church federation as it functions as the head of the congregations.

We shall discuss each of these two separately.

## FROM HOLY WRIT

# Believing All the Prophetic Scriptures

*Rev. G. Lubbers*

## Chapter III

### The Great Hermeneutical Rule Of Interpreting Prophecy - Continued

It ought to be fully evident that Jesus is the only One Who gives us the key of knowledge, so that we as His church may have the proper understanding of *all* that the prophets have spoken, in various times and diverse situations (Luke 24:25, 26). He was not simply a better teacher than the Scribes and Pharisees were; He was the One Who, admittedly, spoke not as the Scribes and Pharisees, whereas He spoke with authority which demanded obedience. He was the prophet, Whom all must hear, as He gave Divine answers on earth (Matt. 7:29; Mark 1:22).

Yes, He was different! Radically different from the Scribes and Pharisees, yea, from any other man. He was Immanuel, God with us, the Word made flesh.

Did not the very demon-world and all the powers of hell obey His word of authority? (Mark 1:26).

The populous adjudged that He spoke a "new doctrine," whereas even the demons obeyed Him with trembling and hellish fear. Yes, He was the One Who was mighty in work and deed before God and all the people. And so His work and word is all authority, and these works testified of Him that He was the mighty and true Prophet of God Who should come into the world (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:4). Even when Paul preaches this word it does not lose its power (I Cor. 2:4, 5).

Yes, this Jesus is the true Prophet of God! The very prophecies in the Old Testament are words which Jesus spoke through the prophets by His Spirit (I Peter 1:11). He is the chief Prophet Who reveals to us the secret counsel of God concerning our redemption. For is the Christ not the "I Am" before Abraham "became" on the scene of history in Ur of the Chaldees? (I John 8:59). And does not John testify of the greatness of the One coming



after him as being "before him"? (John 1:15). This Christ wrote His own suffering and death in the Old Testament Scriptures by the prophets. He is the One Who cries in Psalm 40:7, "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." And this great Prophet, the eternal Son, speaks here, yea, God spoke in these last days in a Son! (Heb. 1:1, 2).

Truly, by the prophets Christ has us see the tremendous activity of holy men as they searched out and inquired diligently of the sufferings to come upon Him, and of the glory of His kingdom to follow! And in all of the Scriptures this glory is Christ's reward for suffering the inexpressible anguish and torments of hell for us, His people! (Isaiah 53:10, 11, 12; Phil. 2:9; Heb. 2:9).

We are taught by the Scriptures that these prophets, holy men of God, knew very well that what they struggled to see in the searchlight of prophecy lay in the future, in the fulness of time. They were not speaking of the things which would be realized in their own time. Abraham looked to a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. He looked for a better country, that is an heavenly (Heb. 11:10, 14-16). That is the secret of their pilgrimage! They looked with earnest expectation of hope for a better country. He saw Christ's day from afar; he rejoiced greatly to see Christ's day, yea, he saw it in the prophetic word of promise, "In thee and in thy seed shall all nations be blessed" (Gen. 12:3; 17:6-8). Abraham never thought of the promise as being fulfilled in terms of a mere earthly kingdom for his natural descendants from Isaac. Such, as we shall point out in depth, was the vain dream of the Jews of Jesus' day, and such is the vain teaching of Premillennialism, especially of what is known as Dispensationalism, following in the footsteps of Darby and Scofield. But father Abraham distants himself from such as these!

Well we take notice of this and be warned!

But to return.

Did not father Jacob, when he was too blind to see with his natural eyes, see in the prophetic light the future glory of the twelve patriarchs? Yes, he gathers these sons about his bed and blesses them. And is the future greatness of Israel not in Judah, from whom the Christ is born? (Heb. 7:14). Yes, our Lord sprang out of Judah. And this Jacob saw crystal-clear in his prophetic vision, and he said, "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies.... The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10). Yes, dimly Jacob saw the

sufferings to come upon Christ and the glory to follow. It will be the glory of His New Testament church, as later seen by Isaiah, the Seer, some seven hundred years before Christ. Do we not read, "and the Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising. Lift up Thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves, they come to Thee: Thy sons shall come from afar.... and the wealth of the nations shall come to Thee" (Isaiah 60:3-4)?

Truly the "people" shall be gathered unto Shiloh, as He comes out of Judah!

Judah, thou art he!

And did not even that wicked Balaam prophesy of the sufferings to come upon Christ and of the glory to follow? In most beautiful poetic strains Balaam says in the Spirit of prophecy, "I shall see Him but not now: I shall behold but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth."

Yes, it was revealed unto the prophets that they spoke of things to be fulfilled, things that shall befall the twelve tribes in the latter days when Shiloh shall come!

How did these prophets know this?

The Bible tells us that this fact of the future glory of Israel among the "nations" in the New Testament times was "revealed unto them." That is what we read in I Peter 1:12, "Unto whom (the prophets) it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into."

Here we have it told to us in clear and unmistakable language that the prophets indeed had the "church" of the New Testament in mind when they prophesied in the Old Testament. Not simply did they surmise that they were speaking of great things, but they were fully certain of this by Divine revelation. This was, so to speak, a disclosing already of the great "mystery" hid in God from the ages, and which was fully disclosed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in His glorious ascension to heaven.

The verb "revealed" in the Greek is "*apokaluphee*." The basic meaning of this verb is to remove the cover which hides something from our view. It was an act of God's special revelation to all the prophets. Not only does the more sure word of prophecy shine more and more unto the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:19), but while the prophets searched out and inquired of



that mystery of the Cross and glorification of Christ, they were told, informed from their very message, that these things all lay in the perspective of the prophecy of Noah: "...God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant" (Gen. 9:27). Only a deliberate passing over, or what is worse, an outright denial, can be blind to this truth blazoned on every page of prophecy: that the prophets were receiving the Gospel message which should be preached by the apostles, who would be moved and led by the Spirit of Christ sent down from heaven!

Let him that reads take note!

When we, therefore, hear Jesus interpreting all the Scriptures to the travellers to Emmaus and to the disciples in the upper room on the evening of the resurrection day, we can only be amazed that they did not understand that the Christ must suffer all these things to enter into His kingdom for our salvation!

Only unbelief in all the Scriptures explains such slowness of heart.

And it is only stark unbelief concerning all that the Scriptures teach which today denies that all the Old Testament Scriptures are prophetic of the Cross, death, resurrection, and glorification of the Son of God in the flesh. Truly, what was true of these dear disciples after three years of teaching by Jesus is still true today in those who fail to preach the full counsel of God in regard to the doctrines of the Bible as they culminate in the final return of Christ to make all things new!

The real rule of Christ's hermeneutics is: The Scriptures *interpret* the Scriptures! Ever He says: have ye not read?

When Jesus, therefore, opened the minds of His disciples, breathing on them the Spirit (John 20:22), then they understood that they could go and preach the kingdom of heaven. They were no longer limited to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:6), but now they will be His witnesses in all the world, beginning at Jerusalem; yes, it will be from Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth!

Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem (Gen. 9:27).

In Abraham shall all kindreds of the earth be blessed (Gen. 12:3).

And now all things shall too be better! It will be a better sacrifice, a better priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, a better temple, a better worship of a truly cleansed conscience from dead works to serve the living God. For in the great hermeneutic of Jesus the disciples are told that they shall, according to what is written, preach repentance in Christ's Name among all nations, beginning in Jerusalem!

Earthly Jerusalem is not the city toward which all things are moving, but it is the city where the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the church, so that from out of this earthly city the glad tidings, which were promised to the fathers might herald forth clear and strong!

## MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

### Letter to Timothy

January 15, 1983

Dear Timothy,

I suppose it is not surprising that you should ask: what is a "Christ-centered" sermon. The ultimate compliment that can be made about any sermon is that it is truly "Christ-centered." And the ultimate criticism of any sermon is surely, "That sermon was *not* a 'Christ-centered' sermon."

If someone says of your sermon that it is not Christ-centered, they are really saying that you did not preach the Scriptures, the Word of God. This is, of course, serious criticism and precisely means that you have been unfaithful in your calling. You have been taught that every sermon which you

preach must indeed be Christ-centered, and God's people know very well that if a sermon is truly to feed their souls, it must be truly Christ-centered.

There is good reason for this. There is first of all the fact that Paul himself, the great preacher of the early New Testament Church and the instrument of a large part of divine revelation in the New Testament Scriptures, said: "We preach Christ crucified!" And he meant by this that Christ crucified formed the content of all his preaching. He never talked about anything else in all the sermons which he gave, but Christ crucified. Scripture tells us this so that we may model our sermons after those of the inspired apostle. Our sermons too must speak of Christ crucified.



And this is not surprising. Sermons must be based on the Scriptures, which form the content of our preaching, and the Scriptures are, themselves, the written record, infallibly inspired, of the revelation of God as the God of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures are an *organic* unity. As an organism, they are composed of diverse parts. There are differences of testaments, and of books; differences of kinds of writings (poetry, history, prophecy, e.g.), and contents; differences in the styles of the different men God used, and the way these men expressed themselves; differences in language (Hebrew and Greek), and literary form; differences which are rooted in the organic development of the promises (the revelation of God in Christ is different in Genesis from what it is in Isaiah), and the fulfillment of the promise in our Lord Jesus Christ. An organism needs differences to be truly an organism. But there is, in Scripture, one principle of unity—as every organism must be a unity of diverse parts held together by one fundamental principle: and that principle of unity is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Everywhere in Scripture Christ is talked about—nothing else. Those who want to emphasize some kind of disjunction between Scripture itself and the divine message of Scripture (a ploy used to attack Scripture's inerrancy) find a great deal in Scripture which is not a part of the divine message of salvation. But they do not understand Scripture. Whether Scripture is talking about the creation of the world in Genesis 1, the flood in Genesis 7, the chronologies in I Chronicles, the plight of Jonah in the whale's belly in Jonah 1 & 2, the problems in the Galatian Churches, or the footsore and weary apostle Paul in his trek across Asia Minor, the Scriptures are talking about *Christ*.

My old Bible teacher in high school emphasized this point by saying: "Wherever Scripture is cut it flows with the blood of the Lamb." How true that is. Or, to change the figure, Scripture is like a portrait of Christ. It is a perfect portrait painted by the hand of God. There are more important and less important parts of that portrait—the differences between the background and the face (after all, the book of Romans is more important than the book of Esther); there are the predominant features of that portrait and less noticeable features (relatively obscure texts with which we are not acquainted and which are somewhat difficult to understand, and texts which we have learned as children, which almost every child of God has memorized); there are light places and dark places; but each part is necessary for the perfection of the whole, and, taken in its entirety, the Scriptures are a perfect and beautiful portrait of Christ. When we look at Scripture we

see Christ. We see Him not face to face, it is true. (See I Corinthians 13:12.) Only in glory will we see Him face to face; then we will have no need for Scripture anymore either. Our seeing is limited to looking in a glass darkly. But it is the divine portrait of Christ Jesus. And it is very beautiful.

But if all this is true, then it stands to reason that one who preaches from Scripture (as all preaching must be) is also one who preaches Christ-centered sermons. One who is truly biblical is also one who is truly Christ-centered in his preaching.

But we must ask the question and answer it more specifically: What is meant by a Christ-centered sermon? You asked for some particular ideas and your request almost makes it sound as if there has been some discussion about this in your congregation. Such discussion can only be good. It can be good for you because it will remind you of the importance of preaching Christ-centered sermons. I recall the days when I was still a student in Seminary. Our Hermeneutics professor was telling us about the need to preach Christ and Him crucified. He told us that we would probably not appreciate very much what he had to say on this point because we would be so conscious of the need to preach Christ as the center of our preaching that we could not possibly imagine anything but a Christ-centered sermon. But he told us that it is unbelievably difficult to preach always so that Christ is indeed the center of every sermon; that we would surely forget this somewhere in the course of our ministry; that there would be many sermons which would indeed be Christless unless we consciously and deliberately went out of our ways to remind ourselves of the importance of this truth. He suggested that, prior to writing out our sermon, we put a cross, similar to the one on which Christ was crucified, on the upper right hand corner of the first page of our sermons to hold continually before our mind the need to preach Christ crucified. I recall that I did indeed think he was a bit foolish to emphasize this so strongly because it seemed to me a thing incredible that a minister of the gospel could do anything less. But he was speaking from experience; and now I too speak to you from experience. It is indeed the easiest thing in the world to make a Christless sermon. We do indeed need to remind ourselves of the importance of doing this every time we sit down to make a sermon. We get bogged down in the grammar and syntax of a particularly interesting passage. We become overly enamoured with the background and history involved in a certain part of God's Word. And we forget all about the cross. Or, we are so adept at holding our fingers in the prevailing ecclesiastical or congregational winds to adjust our preaching to the current sentiments of the majority whose favor we covet that



the need to be pleasing prevails in our thinking and Christ and Him crucified gets shoved into the background.

The churches which extol the virtues of man (see Robert Schuler's latest book) are so busy patting man on the back that they have no time to talk about Christ and the cross on which Christ died. The ministers who are so overcome with the world's social ills that they preach on world hunger, world poverty, world war, world this and world that, have no time left to talk about Christ and the cross on which Christ made atonement for sin. The churches who are slickest at making use of radio and television (and who depend upon their audience to finance their elaborate ventures into the field of electronic evangelism) produce neat and eye-catching shows and put on elaborate productions, but fail miserably to set forth Christ crucified.

But the congregation also must know what a Christ-centered sermon really is. It is to be feared that this is not always the case. One wonders sometimes how much the spiritual discernment of the people of God has been dulled by failure to study God's Word and by perpetual engrossment with TV, worldly amusements, and what the apostle John calls the lust of the eyes. Can a congregation always tell what is a Christ-centered sermon and what is not? One wonders sometimes. It is very easy for a congregation to be carried away by oratory, by a glib tongue, by a smooth speaker who has a way with words and a knack for the well-turned phrase. Swept off their feet by sheer oratorical ability, they speak of being especially blessed by a wonderful sermon. Or a congregation may be dazzled by the brilliance of exegesis which a minister presents, by the many "quotes" which he is able to make which show so clearly that he is scholarly,

well-read, and a hard worker besides; they may be moved by the pathos which a minister is able to elicit from his audience as he leads them down tear-stained paths; they may be aroused to heights of excitement by the ability of a skilled drawer of word pictures to make sermons dramatic; they may even appreciate the wit of a minister who dares to bring his audience to laughter in the solemnity of worship; or there may be those who are satisfied and delighted that the dominee this morning really got after those rascals in the congregation who were so in need of being admonished. But all these things are sometimes substitutes for Christ-centered preaching. Christ was not there, and the congregation did not notice it.

Christ speaks through the preaching. God's people come to church to hear Christ. But Christ always talks about Himself—about Himself as the revelation of God the Father triune to Whom belongs all praise and glory.

Paul, after telling the Corinthians that he preached Christ crucified, went on to say (I Corinthians 2:1-5): "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

That ought to be our preaching.

But more about this next time.

Fraternally in Christ,  
H. Hanko

## GUEST ARTICLE

# An Exhortation Concerning Our Families (2)

*Rev. R.G. Moore*

"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." Colossians 3:20-21.

In our last article we treated the calling of our children—the calling to obey their parents in the Lord. However, our Lord also gives the word of ex-

hortation to parents with respect to the family relationship. This calling of the covenant parent is very important for us to hear, and also to understand. Our Lord, in the text quoted above, commands us to provoke not our children to anger. Hear this Word, parents; it is the Word of Christ addressed to us. We are admonished, we are commanded



concerning our relationship toward our covenant children with whom we dwell. Both children and parents, therefore, are directed in a life's walk that is not optional, but is given us by commandment of the living God of our salvation.

We are struck by the fact that to hear this exhortation of our Lord may cause us as parents to face persecution in our day and age. Our Lord teaches us to provoke not our children to wrath. The opposite is implied, that we must provoke our children unto the fear of God. That is the positive truth of our text. But this means according to Scripture that sometimes you have to "beat your child with a rod." Literally this is the instruction of our Lord in the Proverbs. And sometimes we as parents will find it necessary to do this. Sometimes it is also true that we refrain from doing this when we ought to do it. But one thing is sure: the world despises this Word of God! The world says, we may not correct, we may not limit our children, we may not punish them, whether literally by a rod or with other punishment. For, say they, "children have equal rights."

For example, one finds himself striking his child in correction. I have done this by spanking my child out in our yard—spanking him hard, because he needed the correction. Further, this was necessary, for I would not treat my child as a bastard but as a son (Heb. 12). So I spanked him very hard on the behind, correcting him. But do you realize the days are coming, even now are, when I could be put in jail for doing this, for doing what the Lord commands me to do? The powers of Antichrist already begin to say, "You may not correct your child. You may not restrict your children in punishment. You may not tell your older children what they may or may not do." And even, "you may not indoctrinate your child in certain beliefs." This, they say, we may not do because our children have equal and independent rights. These days are upon us. There are laws like this in existence. And, indeed, we may suffer greatly when we heed the words of our text. Beloved, we live in the days in which Antichrist grows in power and stature. We must admit and see this. But know also that our God will abide with us, with rich and sustaining grace as we are put under the fires of persecution. In that grace we must hear and heed the words of our Lord in the text we consider now.

The teaching of our text is that parents are called unto a specific calling as parents of covenant children. "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger." Mothers are also included in this calling. We should see that also. First of all, that is evident from all of Scripture. We referred to a text from the Proverbs earlier, which told children to hear the in-

struction of their father not only, but also to obey the law of their mother. Mothers, too, must not provoke their children to anger; and likewise mothers must instruct their children in the fear of the Lord. However, our text speaks to parents in the head. Fathers are here addressed as the head of the home. And it should be obvious to us that the primary task of the instruction of the covenant seed does indeed fall upon the head of the home—the father. The father is the prophet in the home, from the point of view of that headship given him of God. It is his task to bring the Word of God in the home. He it is that is to guide the family by the Word of God. He it is who has the primary responsibility to see that his children are under the preaching of the Word of God for their nourishment. He it is that is to lead and guide his family in the ways of life. But in this work the mother of the covenant home is the help meet for the man. And it is often that the mother exercises the instruction of the children under the head. She is often busy with the spiritual care of her children, in teaching them their catechism work in preparation for class, in guiding them in their prayer life, etc. And she must also therefore be obeyed by the covenant children in the home. And she also has the calling in this labor of love to provoke not her children to anger. Thus we see that the exhortation of the Lord in our text comes to both fathers and mothers.

Our calling, of the Lord, toward our children is that we are to exercise a rule over them. We have been given to rule our covenant children by the grace of God through our Lord, Jesus Christ. This rule we are to exercise over our children in a way that is right. And the rightness of that rule is determined only by one thing, and that is that it be in harmony with the Word of God. That God calls us to rule our children rightly implies that our children are children in Christ. In your rule, therefore, fathers and mothers, it is needful that you view your children, not as those who may or may not be God's seed, but as covenant seed in Christ Jesus. This means then we do not treat our children as a miscellaneous bunch of seed that we must do missionary work with. Then we could not baptize our children until they became confessing members of the church. But this is not right, this is not Scriptural. As godly parents we look upon our children as the heritage of God, as the psalmist puts it in Psalm 127. The heritage of God is how we view our children! Children, therefore, which are reborn children, which live in and out of Christ, are children who have the Spirit of our Lord dwelling in them. We look upon our children as those who are made new, made alive in Christ, and who sit with Him in heavenly places. Our children must be viewed as created in and through Christ Jesus unto good works which our God has pre-ordained that



the church should walk in them. This becomes the ground, too, that we should instruct them in all and unto all good works. One cannot so instruct the dead. Our calling is to instruct the living in the truth. A dead tree can be watered and nourished, but all that happens is that it more quickly decays and rots. I may never treat my child as though he may be a dead tree. This does not mean that my children do not sin. They do, and I have to call them to repentance. This does not mean either that one of my children may not be a dead tree. Godly parents also face the fact that a child may manifest himself, after being instructed, as having not heard the word, of not holding the truth, and as one that goes lost like Esau. But even then, as we can not discern the heart, we as parents cease not to pray that if it be in harmony with God's will, our God might bring this erring child to repentance.

But in our treating of our family, in our correction and our instruction of our children, we may not treat them as dead seed. Rather, we must always instruct, admonish, correct, and nurture them as living heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Our text demands that, the Word of God demands that! This means that our children ought to hear our instruction in this light. They must hear and know that you instruct, that you correct, that you admonish, and that you nurture them in the name of Jesus Christ and for their spiritual welfare.

Our duty is then, according to our text, to provoke not our children to wrath, but to excite them in the fear of the Lord by a right rule. To provoke our children to anger is to break their spirit by a wrong rule. Parents can do this. They can do this in the first place by treating them as reprobate seed. They can do this by making up all kinds of cruel or unjust requirements for their children. Such is the fruit of the cruel ways of the wicked. Understand, our rule is not to be one of mere might or power. It is true of course that I am more powerful than my children, and that I could make them obey me by sheer force. And it is true that sometimes I must use physical might to correct my child by spanking him. But if that is all my child sees, if our children only fear our might, if they only fear the awesome hand of father, then our rule is not right or good. They must know why we use the hand to spank, they must see that we love them, they must see that the requirements that are made of them are made on the basis and in the authority of God's Word. Of course, this does not mean that they are to be given a reason for every little thing that we tell them to do. A child is likely to ask us, "Why must I do that?" And we as covenant parents may answer, "Because I say so, and as your parent given you of God, that is enough reason." The child is to obey the parent, because this is right in the Lord.

However, even in this case the parent's attitude, word, and deed must evidently be that of love for his child for Christ's sake. Our rule then will be and must be a rule that has its foundation and basis in God's Word. It shall then be a wise rule, a rule of truth, a rule that shall serve as a means in God's hand for the salvation of the church.

In Ephesians 6 we read that to provoke not to wrath is to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Parents, that means that you are to correct and instruct and chasten and rebuke your children in love, by bringing them always before the Word. You are to bring before them and set before them the rule of Christ through His Word. For the Word of God builds up—it builds up the holy faith of our children, even unto the good works which God ordained that they walk in. And as one is well fed and nourished, he obeys the Lord in the new obedience in Christ. Our children will so walk in grace through the means of grace—that is, through the admonition and instruction of God-fearing parents.

Our children must be put in mind of the things of God! We are to excite them unto this. We are to do this by our example, by our study of the Word, by our alert attendance unto the preaching of the Word, by our prayers together as a family, and our prayers in their hearing for them. This is our calling as covenant parents.

Fathers and Mothers, this our high calling is one which we can accomplish only as we live out of Christ, Who is our strength. It is only as we live from faith, faith worked in us by our Lord, that we can and will so rule over our children. May God grant us that grace.

The fruit of all of this is that there is a blessed means of grace working in our families. Indeed, we could break the spirit of our children. And our children could be displeasing unto God. Our old natures would lead us in the ways of sin. But when by the grace of God we heed this calling, then by that same grace we experience the rich blessings of Jehovah. Our covenant God shall bless us, He shall bless our children, and they shall grow into spiritual manhood, perfectly furnished as men of God to praise and glorify God in His service. Further, we as godly parents, in the way of an upright rule, shall have the assurance of the Psalmist that we shall see our children and children's children. And this means that we shall see them grow in faith, we shall see the church of Christ grow ever nearer to the day of our Lord's coming. The right rule manifest in our midst means that Christ is in our midst. For the proper nurture and admonition by covenant parents is a blessed means of grace, under which the powerful working of the Holy Spirit is



exercised, and Christ's children are brought out of darkness into the marvelous light of God's fellow-

ship. The church is gathered and built up and the kingdom of Christ comes!

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*Departments of Practical Theology and New Testament*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

The fall of 1982 marked the beginning of another year of labor for our Seminary. Five men are enrolled in the Seminary: Barry Gritters and Kenneth Hanko are in their final year, while Russell Dykstra, Steven Key, and Charles Terpstra are in the first year of the new four-year curriculum. In addition to their studies, the seniors teach some catechism classes and are licensed to preach in the churches. We thank God for these men and for their diligent and faithful work in preparation for the ministry of the Word.

Of no little concern to the faculty is the fact that there are no pre-seminary students enrolled. Pray with us that God will raise up men in our churches for the ministry of the Word both for our churches and for the mission fields.

Two changes resulting in improvement are worthy of note. In previous years Practice Preaching has been done on Monday mornings, while our weekly chapel services were on Wednesday mornings. Now when Practice Preaching is scheduled, it is done in the place of the chapel service. It then becomes our morning chapel at the same time that it is an exercise in Practice Preaching. And following the order of our chapel service, there is singing (without a pianist!), prayer, Scripture reading, the sermon, singing, prayer. This allows practice preaching to be done in a more worshipful and less artificial setting. The second change is that of our newly expanded four-year curriculum. This new curriculum allows room to offer the students a rather wide variety of elective courses (lectures, seminars, independent studies) in all areas of the curriculum. Two electives are offered each semester. Area ministers, both active and retired, are invited to audit these courses; and many of them do so.

The subscription list of our Theological Journal continues to grow. Our library continues to expand as well. Some \$650.00 has been spent so far this year for new books and magazine subscriptions. We appreciate the generous support you have given to our library.

Finally, both faculty and students are grateful to the area churches who provide us with a periodic "Seminary Sunday." The preaching opportunities are divided equally among faculty and students. This provides our students with pulpit experience, and it keeps the professors in touch with the congregations.

May the Lord bless our churches and their labors!

Cordially, in Christ,

The Faculty



## THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

### A Pilgrim's Perspective (3)

*Rev. R. Flikkema*

I lie in bed awake. It is late. The dark of night has encompassed me. But I cannot sleep. My thoughts are troubled. I try to sort out the troubles that fill my heart, but it is most difficult. Where shall I find rest?

There are a number of reasons why I am troubled. Christmas and New Year's have come and gone. Life was so busy during those days as well as the days and weeks previous to them. Everyone it seems gets caught up in the fast pace, hurry-up nature of the holiday season. At Christmas it is hurry up to the shopping malls; buy some gifts, very often some last-minute gifts; decorate the Christmas tree; listen to songs of "Jingle Bells" and "White Christmas" with a little bit of "Silent Night" and "Away in a Manger" thrown in for good measure. On New Year's Eve everyone is ushering in the new year. They think about what the new year will bring, hoping it will be better than the last one. The last one was not so good, and so they drown their sorrows in drink as they look to the future.

This has an effect on me. It is almost overwhelming. Something is not right! In fact it is definitely all wrong. It is wrong for the throngs at Christmas to get all caught up in their worldly merry making and attempt to sanctify it with a few Luke 2 readings and religious carol singings. It is wrong for the masses to drink in the new year and drown their sorrows in drink. But it is equally wrong and in fact even more wrong for me to find myself swept along with such wrongness. I know better. But again this year, at least to some degree, I did get swept along. I am troubled!

But another reason which added to my troubles was a phone call which I had received. A friend of mine received the news that he had an incurable illness. He does not have much longer to live. I love my friend. He and I had walked down life's pathway a long time. We went through many things together. But now it seems the Lord is going to take him from this life and the vanity of this life. I am troubled!

Vanity! That word lingers in my mind. Solomon wrote exactly that concerning this life a long time ago. And what he wrote then is just as true for today. This life is vanity. There is no real meaning

or purpose to this life. This life is not an end in itself. How can it be? This life is filled with sin. Wickedness abounds. This life is filled with death. It is nothing but a continual death. This life is filled with turmoil, never ending turmoil. There is no peace in this life, no rest!

How true that is for the ungodly. They are like the chaff which the wind driveth away, the Psalmist said. They are here for but a little time, and then they are gone. They labor—buying, selling, and getting gain. They eat and drink, seeking tranquility in such things. But all their labors and all their eating and drinking get them nothing. For they perish! All their Christmas shopping and all their vain carol singing, and even all their pious talk about the baby Jesus get them nothing. All their "happy new year's," which they can scarcely utter because they are so saturated with alcohol, get them nothing. They vainly think that a man's life consists in the abundance of the things he possesses. They foolishly are like another fool who thought the same way. They show their folly by talking about the baby Jesus at Christmas but forget that it was that same Jesus Who said that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things he possesses. If a man seeks these things, he will die with those things. His soul is required of him.

But how about me and my friend? My friend is dying too. Where is the rest for my friend and me? As I meditate on this question on my troubled bed, my thoughts turn to another person who meditated on his bed also. There was such a person, wasn't there? Yes, there was! He was the Psalmist David. I must find where David talks about himself meditating on his bed. I get up out of bed and, taking my Bible in hand, turn to Psalm 63. There are the words! My eyes fix themselves on what David says in verses 6 and 7; "when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches. Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice."

Therein lies the answer to all my troublesome thoughts: "When I remember Thee upon my bed." What have I done? I have been remembering all sorts of things. But the one thing in all the world I should have been remembering, that I have not. "Thee," my God, I must remember. I must medi-



tate upon God, the God of my salvation. Oh, what a God I have! He is the all-powerful, sovereign God. All things are in His hands. He determines all things, and to the smallest detail accomplishes all the things He determines. Nothing happens by chance, or stands outside of His control. That means that my life too is in God's hands. He directs my life. "My hand is in Thy hand," I hear myself singing upon my bed. In all my doubts and temptations, in all the turmoil and trouble that fills my heart, my hand is in God's hand for He cares for me. Yes, He does! So great was His care for me that He saved me. He performed the work which I could never have performed. He entered into the world of this night—my weary night of sin and death. He took upon Himself my sin and the curse due to me for my sin. His soul was troubled even unto death with a kind of trouble that I do not know nor will I ever know, that of the wrath of God. He, by His bearing of the wrath of God, gave me rest and says to me to come apart in this dry and thirsty land where no water is and rest awhile.

I must do that! In the midst of this life of vanity I must rest in the rest that He has given me. Christmas is past, but tonight I must go back to Christmas day. I must journey once again to Bethlehem and see the rest that is His gift to me. I must not go to the shopping malls. There is no rest there. But to Bethlehem I must go! Whom do I see? I see Jesus, my Savior, my Lord and my God! I see my Christ to Whom I belong so entirely that without His will not a hair can fall from my head. And I am helped! Just to look at my Savior stills my troubled heart. I look at Him with the eyes of child-like faith and trust, and I know that all is well.

Well for me! Well for my friend! Not well for the world. Though my friend and I are certainly no better or one whit more deserving than the throngs of

this wicked world, I know that there is no rest for them. For them this life shall ever be endless vanity and labor. They will continue to make a mockery of Christmas and continue to drown their sorrows in drunkenness, but no rest will they find. And after this life is over and they perish, still no rest will they have. They will awake in eternal labor and trouble.

But for my friend—to him belongs a rest, a rest that belongs to the people of God. He will die. But he will only awake from all his troubles and labors in the eternal rest that God prepares for him.

And well for me! Oh, to be sure, I must remain behind. My friend will leave me behind. He will go before me to be delivered from this dry and thirsty land and from the church militant to join those who have gone on before in the church triumphant. But though I remain behind in this dry and thirsty land, the Lord provides me with food and water and rest along the way. His Word is my food and drink. His light penetrates my darkness. It is true, as also it was for the Psalmist, "Because Thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice."

Yes, I rejoice! Even in the night! Even as I lie upon my bed in the night in the midst of all my troubles, I rejoice. For I meditate upon God. I watch in the night watches. I look for Him to drive away my night, more than watchmen look for morning light! I know He will. The Babe of Bethlehem told me so. With that confidence I watch as a pilgrim looking to the future. What the future holds in store as far as all its details are concerned, I know not. But this much I know, all is well. And so I close my Bible, doing what the Psalmist said in another place, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep for Thou Lord only makest me to dwell in safety."

## QUESTION BOX

### The Laying On of Hands

Rev. C. Hanko

The question box received the following:

Hudsonville's Men's Society in its discussion of Acts 6 had some questions in regard to the 'laying on of hands'. Some of the texts considered were Genesis 48:13, Leviticus 1:4, Numbers 8:10, 27:18 and 23, I Timothy 4:14, 5:22 and II Timothy 1:6. We would appreciate your writing on this in the *Standard Bearer's* Question Box. The question is:

"Could not this practice be used today in the ordination of elders and deacons as well as with ministers? If possible, include comments on its history in the early church, reformation times, and up to today."

As is evident from the question, there are many references to the laying on of hands in the Scriptures. The Men's Society refers to Genesis 48:13



and 14, where Jacob lays the patriarchal blessing upon Joseph's two sons, placing Ephraim before Manasseh as prophecy of the future blessings that God would bestow upon their tribes. They also refer to the laying on of hands upon the sacrifices in the tabernacle and in the temple. Aaron and his sons were to lay their hands upon the sacrifices to show that God laid the sins of the people upon the Great Lamb of God, and to show that the sacrifice was dedicated to God as symbolic of the Christ Who brings the sacrifice of atonement on the cross for the sins of His people.

In the New Testament we read that Christ encouraged parents to bring their children to Him that He might lay His hands upon them and bless them (Matt. 19:13, 14; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15, 16). When Jesus ascended to heaven He lifted up His hands upon His disciples to bless them, symbolical of His blessings that He bestows upon His church as our ascended Lord.

This practice was quite common in the early church after Pentecost. Acts 8:17 mentions that Peter laid his hands upon the believers in Samaria as a sign of the giving of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 19:6 Paul gave to the Ephesian believers the outward signs of the laying on of hands while Christ laid His Spirit upon them. In Hebrews 6:3 this sign is mentioned in close connection with the sacrament of baptism, assuring the church of God's continued blessings upon them. In a sense, it can be said that we still do this at baptism, as well as in pronouncing the benediction in our public worship services.

We come closer to the subject at hand in Acts 6:6 where the laying on of hands accompanied the ordination of the first deacons in the church. Also in Acts 13:3 the church at Antioch, upon instruction of the Holy Spirit, ordains Paul and Barnabas to the preaching of the Word among the gentiles with prayer and fasting, and the laying on of hands. In I Timothy 4:14 Paul reminds his spiritual son Timothy not to neglect the gifts (*charismatos* in the Greek) that were given to him by means of the Word and "with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (see also II Tim. 1:6). Paul warns the church in I Timothy 5:22 not to be overly hasty in using this sign upon new converts or anyone who is not fit for the office.

In the Roman Catholic Church this practice was used in baptism, in healing, in the restoration of those who fell away as heretics, in marriage ceremonies, as well as with the ordination into an office. It soon fell into misuse by making it a sacrament and ascribing to it certain powers, as if the laying on of hands bestowed certain gifts upon the members of the church. In the case of ordination, the right to lay on hands was entrusted only to the

bishops, as successors of Peter, and was regarded as a transfer of the gifts of the office.

It is exactly because of this misuse that the churches of the Reformation questioned whether they should continue this practice in their churches. The Lutherans abolished it and later took it up again, ascribing great value to it.

Calvin writes in regard to the laying on of hands at the ordination of ministers, "It is certainly useful, that by such a symbol the dignity of the ministry should be recommended to the people, and he who is ordained reminded that he is no longer his own, but is bound in service to God and His Church. Besides, it will not prove an empty sign, if it is restored to its genuine origin. For if the Spirit of God has not instituted anything in the Church in vain, this ceremony of His appointment we shall feel not to be useless, provided it is not superstitiously abused" (Institutes, vol. 3, page 71).

Rev. Jansen writes in his Church Order Commentary, "At the time of the Reformation many raised serious objections against the laying on of hands for fear of superstition, namely, that this practice would be continued as a 'transfer of gifts of the office.' The first synods frowned upon it. But the Synod of Middelburg, 1581, made a distinction and recommended that the laying on of hands should be used at the ordination of ministers of the Word. This was adopted at the Synod of 's Gravenhage, 1586. The laying on of hands was regarded as a sign of complete devotion to the official ministry of the Word; therefore it was used only when ministers were ordained to their office for the first time, and not for elders and deacons." This is also according to Article 4 of our Church Order.

Bavinck informs us in his Dogmatics that, "The Reformers were of one opinion, that the laying on of hands was no command of Christ and therefore is not absolutely necessary. While some regarded it as important, worthy of esteem and imitation, others regarded it as belonging to the adiaphora and advised against it for fear of superstition. It is not an essential element in the ordination, for neither in the case of Jesus Himself, nor with the appointment of the apostles, nor in connection with the elders (Acts 14:23, 20:28) is any mention made of it. Nor must it be regarded as a sharing of the special gift of the Spirit in the office. For it does not grant, but presupposes, according to the Scriptures, the peculiar gifts necessary for the office, and therefore can never be more than a public designation for those who are called to the office. It is only a sign, a solemn declaration before God and His church that the one who is called in a legal manner and therefore sent of God Himself, has the required gifts and as such must be received, acknowledged and respected by the congregation" (Dogmatics, vol. 4,



pages 124-126).

This is the opinion still held by the Church Order Commentators of today.

Four matters, therefore, are given for our consideration:

There is obviously no principle involved. Scripture neither requires nor condemns it. It is, therefore, left to the discretion of the churches whether they will use it or not. I can add, that the Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore has decided to use the laying on of hands with the ordination of elders and deacons on the basis of I Timothy 4:14 and II Timothy 1:6.

In any case, this must never be considered as having some mystical power or as being a transfer of gifts, but always nothing more than a sign.

Since it is a sign of complete dedication to the office, the fathers decided to use it in connection with the ordination of ministers for the first time, but not in ordaining elders and deacons.

Finally, the fact that we follow the practice of term office for elders and deacons, rather than life office, should also bear some weight in deciding whether or not to introduce the practice of the laying on of hands when ordaining elders and deacons.

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## **SPECIAL FEATURE**

# **The Spiritual Strengths and Weaknesses of the Protestant Reformed Churches, and Possible Remedies (1)**

*Rev. R. Flikkema*

(Note: This is the text of a lecture given by Rev. Flikkema for the Eastern Men's and Ladies' League Meeting, on October 5, 1982.)

Beloved brothers and sisters in our Lord, as you are all aware, I have been asked to speak to you tonight on the subject, "The Spiritual Strengths and Weaknesses of the Protestant Reformed Churches, and Possible Remedies." There are a few remarks that I want to make about that by way of introduction.

In the first place I address you on that subject with a certain amount of fear, as well as a feeling of great inadequacy—fear and inadequacy with respect to myself. When I was asked to speak on this subject the thought immediately crossed my mind: why me? Why ask a young, relatively inexperienced minister like me to speak on this subject? Surely, so I thought, it would have been better to ask one of our older ministers, one with more experience in the Word as well as more experience with respect to the spiritual condition of our churches than I. Because, you see, in order to speak on such an important subject such as this one, it takes insight into the Word. One cannot possibly speak about the spiritual strengths and weaknesses of our churches without an understanding of what the Word has to say to the churches. And too, one cannot possibly speak on a subject such as this unless he has experienced firsthand what our

churches are like from a spiritual point of view. One who knows nothing about our churches, one who stands outside of the sphere of our churches, cannot and may not dare to speak on this subject. There are those outside of the sphere of our churches who have tried to address themselves to this subject. Really, from the very outset of our history and throughout our history up until today, that had been the case. There have always been those outside of the sphere of our churches who have tried to characterize our churches. And, generally speaking, they have characterized our churches negatively, derisively, with malice and hatred in their hearts. But I emphasize once more, that such cannot and may not be done. If you are going to speak about the spiritual strengths and weaknesses of our churches, you must know our churches firsthand, experientially. I do, of course, but, because I am young, my experience is in the nature of the case limited.

In the second place by way of introduction, and this follows from what I have just said, he who does have experience with respect to our churches, whether great or small, and therefore does dare to speak on a subject such as this one, must be extremely careful—careful that he gets it straight; careful that he on the basis of Scripture understands what the strengths of the church of Jesus Christ are, and therefore what our strengths as



Protestant Reformed Churches are; careful that he does not make a strength what in reality is not a strength; and by the same token careful that he does not make a weakness something that is not a weakness. That cannot be stressed enough. I may have certain preconceived notions, and you may have certain preconceived notions about what the spiritual strengths and weaknesses of our churches are. In fact, I dare say that every one of us here tonight came with certain notions on this subject as to what our strengths and weaknesses are. And that in itself is not so bad. But we must be careful! We must be very careful that our preconceived notions are correct on the basis of the Word of God. If they are not correct, if they do not meet the test of the Word of God, they are wrong, and they do no one, certainly not our churches, any good.

And finally, and this in the third place by way of introduction, none of what I have said thus far about my fear and inadequacy, about the importance of carefulness, may be allowed to detract from the importance of this subject, and above all the importance of addressing ourselves to this subject. This subject is important. In fact it is a subject of vital importance. It strikes at the very heart of our life as churches. If I did not think so, I would not be standing here tonight, and you would not be seated here tonight. If we were not concerned about our strengths as churches, and yes, our weaknesses as churches too, we would be at home. But we are concerned. And therefore it is my prayer that God will use me, fearful and inadequate though I feel, to apply carefully the importance of this subject unto our hearts. With that in mind I call your attention to:

The Spiritual Strengths and Weaknesses of the  
Protestant Reformed Churches, and  
Possible Remedies

- I. Our Strengths
- II. Our Weaknesses
- III. The Certain Remedy

What are our strengths as Protestant Reformed Churches? That is the question that we must face at the outset. As I pondered that question many things came to my mind. Certainly, I thought to myself, one of our strengths as churches is the fact that we are what we are, Protestant Reformed Churches: the fact that we are Protestant; the fact that we are Reformed; the fact that we stand in the line of the Reformation of the 16th century; the fact, therefore, that we are the continuation of the church of Jesus Christ; and that, as we are that, we have a very distinct and beautiful heritage — the heritage of the Reformed Church.

And certainly, too, so I thought, the faith which unites us together as Protestant Reformed Churches is itself one of our strengths: the faith

once delivered to the saints, as that faith is written infallibly in the Word of God and set forth and expounded in our creeds (the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt); the faith as that faith consists of sound doctrine. Our emphasis upon sound doctrine is one of our strengths. We insist that the precious truths of God's Word be defended, maintained, and developed at all cost over-against all heresies, false doctrines repugnant thereto. We teach the doctrine of the glory of the sovereign God: that God is sovereign, all-powerful; that He does whatever He according to His own good pleasure sees fit to do, and with absolute sovereignty; that He is not dependent upon the will of man for anything; that He does all that He sees fit to do for and with a view to His own glory and the praise of His holy name. We teach the doctrine of sovereign particular grace: not common grace, but particular grace only for the elect chosen from before the foundation of the world and saved from the depravity of their sin and misery according to free and sovereign grace through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We teach the doctrine of the Covenant: the truth that God has established His covenant in the line of our continued generations, believers and their seed; that that covenant as to its content consists in a relationship of friendship and fellowship with God and His people; that that covenant as to its nature is not bilateral and certainly not conditional, but unilateral and unconditional; that that covenant is solely dependent as to its realization upon God, Jehovah, the I Am That I Am, the party of the living God; and that our part in the covenant is one of glad and joyful and antithetical obedience. We teach the doctrine of the antithesis: our spiritual separation from the darkness of the sin and death of this world, living a godly life in conformity with God's law to the praise of our covenant God, manifesting ourselves to be of the party of the living God. And so we could go on and on. The fact that we in obedience to the Word of God teach such precious truths is one of our strengths.

And then too, so I thought, one of the strengths of our churches is exactly our insistence that those truths be preached! That the truths of a sovereign glorious God, a sovereign free grace, a covenant faithful God Who demands an antithetical life on our part be heard and expounded. Yes, expounded! Not superficially glossed over, and certainly not ignored because they are too deep for God's people to understand or too outdated for God's people to bother with them. But expounded! Preached! We insist that we hear the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ. For that is what the preaching is. It is not the voice of man. It is not even the voice of man talking about Christ, or for that matter talking



about everything else under the sun but about Christ. But it is exactly the voice of Christ as Christ through the preaching powerfully and efficaciously calls sinners to repentance, hardens the ungodly reprobate, and gathers His people unto Himself. That preaching God has given to us. He has given to us faithful preachers of God's Word. Our churches throughout their history have never lacked for sound, biblical, Reformed, lively preaching and preachers of the Word. And they do not now! God has given us as churches a faithful seminary where faithful professors labor day after day and year after year to instruct faithful young men to preach God's Word. God has given us that. That is altogether a gift of God. There is an expression, and that expression is true: as the seminary goes, so go the churches. If you have no strong seminary, you cannot expect the churches to be strong either. That simply will not happen. That our churches are strong is all due to the fact that God has given us a faithful seminary and faithful preaching.

That preaching is one of the strengths of our churches we may know because it is one of the marks of the true church. The marks of the true church are these: the pure preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline. And while we are on the subject of the marks of the true church, we must understand that that last mark of Christian discipline is also one of our strengths. Discipline is exercised in our churches. The keys of the kingdom (the preaching of the Word and the exercise of Christian discipline) that Christ has given His church are utilized in our churches. Christ has given to us not only faithful ministers but also faithful elders. He has given us elders who give wholeheartedly of their time and talents; men of prayer

who pray all the while as they labor in their office, that God will use weakest means to fulfill His will, mighty enemies to still. Christ has given us elders who are not afraid to stand upon the watchtowers of Mt. Zion to defend us overagainst the enemies both without and within; elders who call us to battle to fight the good fight of faith, to watch for the return of Christ upon the clouds of glory. He has given us elders who assure us of God's promise that we are more than conquerors through Christ; elders who set a good example for us to follow by their godly conversation and conduct; elders who are diligent in their calling to go after the wandering sheep and in love endeavor to bring them to repentance, and if they refuse to be brought to repentance to cast them out — out of the kingdom of God, from the church of God, from fellowship with Christ, and from all spiritual blessings and benefits, to use the words of the form for excommunication.

And as a result of all of that, and this too is one of our strengths, God has preserved in our midst faithful covenant homes: husbands and wives, parents and children, godly men and women, sons and daughters who around our tables meet. We have that! We have families who love the truth of God's Word, and who desire to raise up seed and instruct that seed in the truth of God's Word in the home as well as in our covenant day schools. Our schools themselves are a testimony of the strength of our churches — schools wherein boards and teachers labor diligently in the nurture and admonition of covenant youth. All of those things are the strengths of our Protestant Reformed Churches. And let me say, too, so they must ever remain! We must ever insist that those strengths ever be the strengths of our churches.

(To be continued)

## Book Reviews

**FOR WHOM DID CHRIST DIE?** A Study of the Divine Design of the Atonement, by R. B. Kuiper; Baker Book House, 1982; 104 pp., \$3.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This book, written by a former professor at Westminster Theological Seminary and former president of Calvin Theological Seminary, and first published in 1959, could have been a worthwhile and important book.

In the first chapters it deals with the heresies of Liberalism, Arminianism, and Barthianism, all of

which deny the particular character of the atonement. Chapter 4 deals with the Scriptural teaching of particular redemption. All of this is biblically sound, well-written, and an excellent defense of this important truth of God's Word.

But it is all spoiled in the last chapter which deals with what the author calls, "Scriptural Universalism." In the interests of defending "common grace" and, strikingly enough, the free offer of the gospel, Kuiper proceeds to make the atonement universal after all. He does not want an atonement



of our Lord which is universal in its intent or efficacy, but he does defend an atonement which is universal in its sufficiency and suitability. This aspect of universalism is rooted in a universal love of God (p. 68), although this love of God is somehow (the author does not explain exactly how) "quantitatively" different from the love shown to the elect. Hence, from the cross proceed fruits of the atonement which accrue to all men, chief of which is the offer of the gospel. By this offer God speaks clearly of His readiness and willingness to save all those who hear.

It is a shame that such an excellent defense of the truth of Christ's particular atonement should be contradicted by a defense of a position which is neither Scriptural nor Confessional, although the author quotes repeatedly from the Canons in an effort to prove that the Canons teach a free offer.

The argument is also marred by a failure (characteristic of so many defenders of the free offer) to distinguish properly between the general proclamation of the gospel and its particular contents, and between the command which comes to all to repent and believe and the promise made only to God's people that He will save them through Christ. This failure to make these proper distinctions ought not to characterize a clear thinker such as R. B. Kuiper was.

**CULTS IN NORTH AMERICA**, by Earl Schipper; Baker Book House, 1982; 173 pp., \$3.45 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

Many books have been written on the various cults which have risen in our country and there are far more detailed and thorough treatments of the cults than this little paperback. Nevertheless, this book has some advantages to it which make it a worthwhile book to purchase. For one thing, it is far more brief than many ponderous volumes and gives the reader a quick and yet rather thorough insight into the errors of these sects. Further, it contains interesting historical material so that the reader may gain some historical background of these cults. The writing is clear, concise, and accurate and exposes the basic theological errors of these heretical movements.

Two sects not often treated in books on the cults are included in this volume: First Unification Church and The Way International. These latter

two, though of more recent times, have gained tremendous followings especially among young people who have lost their spiritual and theological moorings.

The book is ideal for study in Societies and High School classes and includes topics for discussion and questions to be answered with each chapter.

We recommend the book for those who are interested in a handbook which deals with the important contemporary cults.

**PICKING UP THE PIECES**, Successful Single Living for the Formerly Married, by Clyde Colvin Besson; Mott Media Inc., 1982; 209 pp., \$5.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko)

This is not a very good book and is not to be recommended to our readers. While it deals somewhat with all "singles," it concentrates upon the problems of the divorced. It is supposed to "repair shattered dreams, enlighten, inspire, and help you cope with the trauma of a dissolved marriage." Perhaps the author feels that he is in a good position to do this sort of thing, for he himself is divorced and remarried.

The book uses a lot of slangy language, contains in it many ideas which anyone with any common sense at all ought to know (something very common with this type of book), and fails to deal seriously with sin in the married state as a cause of the breakup of marriages and in various sexual perversions. And, of course, failing to deal seriously with sin, it fails to deal seriously with the power of the cross in the lives of the people of God.

And so we have another manual on some aspect of marriage, as little helpful as the hundreds of others which have appeared in recent years.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Reformed Fellowship Bible Society of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, wishes to express its sincere Christian sympathy to their members, Mrs. Hiram Streyle, Mr. and Mrs. Ron Streyle and John Streyle in the sudden death of their husband, father, father-in-law and uncle, MR. HIRAM STREYLE.

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

Rev. Marvin Kamps, Pres.  
Mary Collmann, Sec'y.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society and the Martha Society of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church hereby express their Christian sympathy to their fellow members, Mr. and Mrs. William Den Besten in the recent death of their father, MR. JAMES DEN BESTEN.

May our God comfort the bereaved family through His Word. (Isaiah 26:3).

Rev. M. Kamps, Pres.  
Mr. David Wiersma, Sec'y.  
Mrs. P. Van Den Top, Sec'y.

### ANNOUNCEMENT!!!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet on Wednesday, March 2, 1983, at 8:30 A.M., in South Holland, Illinois, the Lord willing. Material for the Agenda must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk thirty days before Classis convenes. Delegates in need of lodging should inform the Clerk of the South Holland Council.

Rev. David Engelsma, Stated Clerk  
Classis West



## News From Our Churches

January 1, 1983

Every person familiar with our Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary knows what the seminarians did during their Christmas vacation. They studied for their exams at the end of the first semester. We sympathize with them, knowing how difficult their studies can become. But what about our professors? Surely this was a time of relaxation for them! Actually they spent their vacation time doing what they like best of all, preaching the Word of God in our churches. Prof. Hoeksema preached the morning of the 26th in Kalamazoo. Prof. Decker preached on the 26th at Hope in the morning and at Southwest in the evening. Prof. Hanko and family visited Rev. R. Hanko in New Jersey and preached at Hudsonville on New Year's Day. Our professors greatly appreciate these "seminary Sundays."

Rev. C. Hanko is planning on spending two months in Bradenton, Florida, beginning this January. Since I am mentioning Bradenton, Florida, here is a quote from Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church's bulletin, "...our consistory was requested to take over the mission work in Bradenton, Florida..... This we have consented to do." May God bless the labors performed in Florida.

At this point I will provide you with a lengthy quote from the Church Extension Committee of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church. Most of this quote involves published materials.

"We ordered copies of the pamphlet published by South Holland on *Remembering the Lord's Day* by Rev. Engelsma and one published by our mission committee on *Faith and Practice of the Protestant Reformed Churches*....

"We were contacted by the Southeast Prot. Ref. Church requesting that our pamphlet, 'Is the Christian Faith Easy?' be made available to our other churches in the denomination. This we have done and they are now publishing a list of all material published by the individual churches.

"We also have initiated a newspaper advertising program...in the *Reporter Herald*. This includes a brief witness and sermon topics along with the time of services...." Loveland also has an agent who handles the R.F.P.A. publications.

Many of our other churches are involved in the

distribution of Protestant Reformed materials on a regular basis. Our own missionaries will tell you that many people do not know of our publications at all, and that there are others who do know of them but cannot afford them. Rev. Van Overloop, Rev. Houck, and Rev. Hanko in November found at the end of their visits that they needed "3 *Psalters* ...records and tapes of *Psalter* numbers — a total of about \$30...various Reformed books and other literature.... These items have been or will be given as gifts to those who cannot afford them in most cases."

There are many people who appreciate our published materials. I have three partial quotes from the correspondence that the Publications Committee of our churches received and printed in "Across The Aisle," the news publication of First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids.

"North Ireland...I have profited much from reading the various booklets presented by the Evangelism committee of the P.R.C. I am sure two certain booklets have a very vital place among the elect of God in shielding them from the plague of Arminianism!"

"England...I am wondering whether you can send me a copy of the following booklets by H. Hoeksema.... I am prompted to send for the above after having seen them advertised on a tract named 'The Gospel' which I have enjoyed."

"Our own country...I have for the past six months been in contact with the Evangelism Committee of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church. I'm a firm believer in the Reformed faith and your stand on common grace. Would like to see a mission group started here in New England for the Protestant Reformed Church. I'm willing to work to this goal and in fact have several people who are interested in same."

Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church has sermons of Rev. G. Vos. "Sermons are available both in the Dutch and the English. One English sermon is from the pulpit, the rest are radio addresses. For more information, contact Klaire Berens, either at his shop: 1-616-669-5970, or at his residence: 1-616-669-0377."

DH