

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

. . . let us never lose sight of the fact that to forgive is to forget. God deals with us as if our sin never existed. Also in that respect we must be imitators of God. If there is anything that is offensive among saints, it is the evil that sins of the past are repeatedly brought up, even though they have supposedly long been forgiven!

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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Editor-in-Chief: Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema

Department Editors: Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Prof. Robert D. Decker, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, Prof. Herman C. Hanko, Rev. Ronald Hanko, Mr. David Harbach, Rev. John A. Heys, Rev. J. Kortering, Rev. George C. Lubbers, Rev. Thomas C. Miersma, Rev. Marinus Schipper, Rev. James Slopsema, Rev. Gise J. Van Baren, Rev. Herman Veldman.

Editorial Office: Prof. H.C. Hoeksema  
4975 Ivanrest Ave. S.W.  
Grandville, Michigan 49418

Church News Editor: Mr. David Harbach  
4930 Ivanrest Ave., Apt. B  
Grandville, Michigan 49418

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**Business Office:** The Standard Bearer  
Mr. H. Vander Wal, Bus. Mgr. PH: (616) 243-2953  
P.O. Box 6064  
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**New Zealand Business Office:** The Standard Bearer  
c/o Protestant Reformed Fellowship  
B. Van Herk, 66 Fraser St.  
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

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## MEDITATION

# The Keys of the Kingdom — A Personal Obligation

Rev. C. Hanko

*Ques. 85. How is the kingdom of heaven shut and opened by Christian discipline?*

*Ans. Thus: when according to the command of Christ, those, who under the name of Christians, maintain doctrines or practices inconsistent therewith, and will not, after having been often brotherly admonished, renounce their errors or wicked course of life, are complained of to the church, or to those, who are thereunto appointed by the church, and if they despise their admonition, are by them forbidden the use of the sacraments; whereby they are excluded from the Christian church, and by God Himself from the kingdom of Christ; and when they promise and show real amendment, are again received as members of Christ and His church.*

*Heid. Catechism, Lord's Day 31*



I believe a holy, catholic church.

Scripture teaches us that there is one, universal church, chosen from eternity and redeemed by the blood of Calvary, gathered by the Son of God from the dawn of history even until our Lord returns, from every nation, tribe, and language, according to God's sovereign purpose. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). This universal church is washed in the blood of our Savior and sanctified by His Spirit, made sons and daughters, heirs of eternal life, to live in intimate covenant fellowship with God to His glory. I believe that one, universal church, of which I am and forever shall remain a living member.

It is exactly for that reason that we are called to be imitators of God, as beloved children, walking in love, even as Christ hath loved us (Phil. 5:1). We are to be holy, as God is holy, and perfect, even as our heavenly Father is perfect. Jesus prays in His highpriestly prayer, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in them, that they may one in us" (John 15:21).

Yet as long as God's church is here on earth, its members struggle with imperfection and sin. Apart from the fact that there is a carnal element in the church, the fact remains that we all are sinful saints, with but a small beginning of the new obedience. As long as we are in this body of sin and death, sin corrupts and pollutes everything we say and do, both in our relationship to God and to one another. Our virtues are also our weaknesses. A determined person can be very stubborn, a meek person may prove to be a coward, a zealous person can be a trouble maker. It all depends on whether grace or sin has dominion in our mortal bodies. All of us, without exception, must guard ourselves from evil and the evil one. Every one of us needs God's forgiving mercies every day. The forgiveness of sins is one of the most blessed gifts of salvation. In the same breath with which we confess a holy, catholic church we also confess that we believe the forgiveness of sins. Therefore Scripture admonishes us, "And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, *forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*" (Eph. 4:32).

That can only mean that God has entrusted to each of us as members of His church that precious, blessed gift of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. In the world there can be no real forgiveness, neither can anyone forgive another, for all true forgiveness is on the basis of the merit of Jesus Christ on the cross. This precious gift is entrusted only to us as members of His church. It is one of the keys

of the kingdom.

This key power is the most powerful and most effective exercise of authority that can be found in the world. There is, for example, the authority entrusted to parents, which they must exercise in the name of Christ over their children, bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This involves punishment, sometimes even the use of the rod (Prov. 13:24). There is also the authority entrusted to the magistrate, obligating him to protect the innocent and to punish the guilty, even to the extent of the death penalty. But far greater than these is the authority of Christ entrusted to His church, which saves, but also condemns to hell, looses and binds, opens and closes the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18.

The eighteenth chapter of the Gospel to Matthew has been referred to as the forgotten chapter. "Forgotten" is hardly the word. A better word is "ignored." I am thinking particularly of that part of the chapter which reads: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. If he shall not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you. Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18:15-18).

What a weighty mandate! If thy brother (or sister) shall sin against thee. This we often like to consider as referring only to some personal affront. This is not true. My brother can also sin against me by his persistent sin against God. Our Catechism speaks of doctrines or practices that are inconsistent with the Word of God. I may argue that this is none of my business. But also that is not true. My love for my God cannot allow me to be silent while His name is being dishonored. Still more, the brother is walking in sin, and sin leads to damnation. That is certainly a concern of mine. It may also be that the brother somehow sins against me personally, speaks evil of me or in some manner offends me. Neither may I ignore that.

Scripture tells us, "Go and tell him his fault." That is not an easy thing to do. It is much easier to sit and mull over it, to become bitter and resentful. It is far more appealing to ignore the offender, to act as if he does not exist, or to tell *others* about this evil doer. Jesus warns us, "Take heed to yourself" (Luke 17:3). How readily we become equally guilty



by our bitterness, backbiting, or slander. In that case we must first take the mote out of our own eye before we venture to take the sliver out of the brother's eye. Christ requires of us that we go and tell *him* his fault. We must do so privately, for sin must be so grievous to us, that we try to keep it as secret as possible. Would we care to have our wrongs shouted from the housetops? Jesus says, "Tell him between thee and him alone."

To carry out this mandate, we must first do some prayerful soul searching on our own. Anger, bitterness, jealousy, or any ambition to get even must be overcome. A holier than thou attitude is certainly not becoming. Paul refers to himself as the chief of sinners. Can we have a better estimate of ourselves than that? Or am I less depraved, less liable to fall into sin, than my erring brother? This is time for prayer, for much prayer, that I may be guided by the Spirit of Christ in this difficult task God has laid upon me. I also need courage, spiritual courage to do the right, and to do it in the right way. Nor must I put this off for some favorable opportunity, no more than I can wipe my hands clean after having talked to the offender just once. Brushing aside all fears and all excuses that try to prevent me, I must seek my help, my courage and strength from God, waiting upon His blessing.

"If he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." To gain the brother must be my one motive, my single goal. Sin, after all, is transgression of God's commands, sin dishonors God, sin works like a deadly cancer in the soul, sin involves all of us, for when one member suffers we all suffer. How readily others will use the sin of the brother to condone their own sin. How readily this sin becomes a choice morsel of gossip. How readily the congregation, and sometimes the whole denomination, is branded as that kind of people. But our chief concern centers in the offender. "He which converted the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

Jesus tells us that there is joy in heaven when one sinner is brought to repentance. If the angels rejoice, should we not also rejoice at this evidence of God's grace in him who sins? We should be the first ones to forgive wholeheartedly, even as God forgives us. But let us never lose sight of the fact that to forgive is to forget. God deals with us as if

our sin never existed. Also in that respect we must be imitators of God. If there is anything that is offensive among the saints, it is the evil that sins of the past are repeatedly brought up, even though they have supposedly long been forgiven!

But there is also the possibility, of course, that we appeal to a deaf ear, and only meet with stubborn resistance, to a point where our warnings are no longer desired. To this Jesus responds, saying, "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Again we are reminded that we must not blazon abroad the brother's sin. The knowledge of it must be confined to as small a group as possible. We are to take along one or two witnesses. Possibly one will be sufficient at first. Some are of the opinion that Jesus means to tell us, that if we still do not attain our goal with one witness, we take along two. In any case, the party that is called in to accompany us on our disciplinary visit must be a *witness*. He may not just "sit in" on the visit and try not to become involved. He must attentively listen to the accuser and the accused. He must determine whether the accused is actually guilty, whether the accuser has properly presented his accusation, above all whether he has done so in the spirit of Christ. On the other hand, he must determine whether the accused remains unrepentant and has even become hardened in his sin.

But even that is not all. Jesus adds, "And if he shall neglect to hear them." Notice, not, if he neglect to hear *him*, that is, the accuser, but, if he neglect to hear *them*." Here is where the need of a second witness may enter in. The parties who are called in as witnesses must be so thoroughly convinced that the erring brother is not only guilty, but also recalcitrant to all admonition. Also the witnesses must do all in their power to save the erring brother from the error of his ways.

This burden that God often lays upon us may seem impossible to bear. And it is, from every human point of view. But here again the wonder of grace enters in, what is impossible with man is possible with God. God works the wonder of His grace in us, in all His children, creating the peace of Jerusalem. And there is joy in heaven, as well as in the church, when it is said of the sinner, "Behold, he prayeth!"

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



## EDITORIAL

# About Guests at Communion

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

From two or three different sources in recent months I have been asked for advice about the subject of admitting guests to the communion table in our churches. The subject is not that of admitting guests from sister congregations in our denomination. That, it seems to me, is not a very difficult question. Every consistory should follow the rule that such guests shall be admitted and welcomed provided that, according to their own testimony, they are communicant members in one of our churches and are "in good standing." If a consistory has such a rule, then admission to the Lord's Supper can be achieved through such persons appearing even on Sunday morning to be granted permission — in spite of the fact that the gathering of the consistory before the service is *not* a duly constituted consistory meeting. However, the question on which I was asked for advice was a bit different. It concerned guests at the communion table from *another denomination*.

If you look in our Church Order (even the new edition) you will find nothing on this subject. And most of our ministers and elders will not recall that this question was ever dealt with by our broader assemblies. Since my memory and experience go back a bit farther in our history, I was able to tell my questioners that at one time this question was indeed dealt with by a broader assembly, Classis East, and that a very significant and helpful decision was reached, a decision which is, of course, still *binding* in our churches. Further, this decision is of even greater significance because it dealt with *principles*.

Although I published this material some thirteen years ago in answering a question about "close" communion (Vol. 47, p. 422), I will repeat it here, as a matter of information.

At the same time, I have a suggestion about consistories keeping this decision available. The problem, you see, is that decisions of this kind tend to be lost in the dust of history. We have no official collection of significant decisions of past synods and classical meetings. In the last congregation which I served as pastor the decision which I am

about to quote, I recall, was pasted into the minute book for future reference. That was a good idea. Another possibility is that a consistory keeps a file of significant classical decisions, keeps that file up-to-date, and refers to it as needed. Whatever the method, something should be done to maintain continuity with the past in this respect. I think this is especially important because of the fact that in recent years our churches have gotten almost an entirely new generation of officebearers, who, because of their youth, are simply not acquainted from memory with important decisions and precedents of the past. And it stands to reason that as our churches grow older, this problem will also grow.

What was the decision?

It arose out of an appeal from Holland to Classis East in 1945. The case involved the Consistory's admitting a member of the Christian Reformed Church to its communion table as a guest. By way of the process of protest and appeal, the matter came to Classis East; and a study committee consisting of Revs. H. Hoeksema, G.M. Ophoff, and R. Veldman was appointed. In due course, this committee reported, and their report was adopted by Classis East. Here follows the report, which was adopted *in toto* by Classis.

### **Report of the Committee *in re* Protest Against the Consistory of Holland**

Esteemed brethren:

Your committee, appointed to advise classis *in re* protests against the Consistory of Holland, in regard to its action of permitting a member of the Christian Reformed Church to partake of communion in their midst, reports as follows:

The protests against the Consistory of Holland and the latter's reply required of your committee to inquire into two matters:

1. The particular, concrete case of Holland, admitting a member of the Christian Reformed Church to its communion table; and
2. The general question involved, whether it is principally correct to admit, under given circum-



stances, members of other denominations as guests to our communion table.

I. As to the general question, concerning the principle involved in the case of Holland, your committee is of the opinion that members of other churches, not in all respects agreeing with our Protestant Reformed Faith, may be admitted to our communion table upon their request:

A. Provided:

1. That such members are at such time, and most probably will be for some time, deprived of the opportunity to celebrate communion in a church of their own denomination.

2. That proper request be made by such member at the earliest possible opportunity, at the Consistory, in order that the latter may be in a position properly to investigate the faith and walk of the petitioner.

3. That upon proper inquiry the Consistory is satisfied that such members:

a. Know and repent of their sins, and trust for forgiveness and salvation only in the blood of Christ; also that they seek the Lord's table for the strengthening of their faith, and are desirous to lead a holy life.

b. Reveal themselves as believers in their walk and conversation, and are not defiled with any of the sins mentioned in our Form for Communion.

c. Do not belong to any secret society or worldly union, membership of which bars our own members from the table of the Lord.

d. Are not under discipline in their own church.

B. Grounds:

1. The bread and wine are, according to Scripture, the communion of the body and blood of the Lord; to refuse guests under circumstances as above described would be tantamount to excommunicating them from the body of Christ.

2. The conditions stipulated above are in accord with all that our Confessions teach concerning the Lord's Supper and the worthy partakers thereof. Cf. Heid. Cat. questions 75-82; Conf. Belg. Art. 35. And the same conditions quite satisfy the demands of our Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper.

3. This custom has been followed in the Reformed Churches, and is in accord with the opinion of its leading theologians, since the time of the Reformation.

C. Advice:

Your committee advises classis to adopt the above as a general declaration of the principles in-

volved in the matter.

II. Your committee, however, is of the opinion that the action of Holland's Consistory does not in all respects agree with the above declaration of principles; for:

1. First of all, there appears to have been no urgent need for the particular member of the Christian Reformed Church that applied for admission to the Lord's table in Holland's Prot. Ref. Church, to do so:

a. There are several Christian Reformed Churches in Holland where applicant could have celebrated communion.

b. Even if he could not have partaken of the Lord's Supper on that particular Lord's Day, this would not have been sufficient reason for him to seek and for the Consistory of Holland to grant him admission to the latter's communion.

2. The difference between our Churches and the Christian Reformed is not merely one of doctrine, but also one of discipline and walk: by a deliberate act of expulsion they declared that we have no place in their communion.

3. By admitting the party in question to their Lord's table, the Consistory might expect to give occasion for offense in the congregation. It would seem that, in view of the relation between the Protestant Reformed and the Christian Reformed Churches as referred to under 2 above, a public declaration would have been in order that the Christian Reformed applicant did not agree with the action of his own church whereby they expelled us from their fellowship.

B. Advice:

Your committee advises:

1. That Classis adopt the above judgment of the committee *in re* the concrete case of Holland as its own.

2. That Classis declare:

a. That the Consistory of Holland, although in the abstract it has the right to admit guests to its communion table, erred in its application of the general principle involved to a concrete instance.

b. That the protestants, only in as far as their complaint has reference to the concrete case, and not the general principle involved, had occasion to be offended at the action of their Consistory.

3. That Classis so advise and inform both the Consistory of Holland and the protestants, by furnishing them with a transcript of the above declarations and decisions.

Respectfully submitted,  
Your Committee



## MISSION REPORT

# Our Domestic Mission Activities

*Rev. J. Kortering*

Since 1977 our domestic mission committee has been made up of members of Classis West in the Hull-Doon-Edgerton area as well as members of Classis East in the Grand Rapids area. This year the membership consists of EAST: Rev. R. Flikkema, Rev. J. Kortering, Rev. R. Miersma, Rev. B. Woudenberg, Mr. G. Feenstra, Mr. J. Kalsbeek, Sr., and Mr. C. Kregel; WEST: Rev. M. Kamp, Rev. J. Smith, Mr. H. Hoekstra, Mr. A. Kooiker, and Mr. E. Van Ginkel.

Our meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month at 10:00 a.m. Michigan time. The eastern branch meets in the consistory room of Hudsonville Church while the western branch meets in the consistory room of Doon Church. We are joined by telephone hookup, with an amplifier system, so that we can converse together. Our meetings last an average of three hours.

One of the purposes of this arrangement is to allow for broader representation in our mission activities. Over the years this has worked out quite well, though it has its difficulties. Recently it was pointed out by the brothers in the west that it is difficult for them to follow the discussion if they do not have copies of the documents. We are now considering ways to furnish copies of the material to them so that they can have them in advance. Another purpose is that the work can be divided among more persons. Sub-committees can be formed from both east and west to give advice and carry out mandates.

The organization of our committee for this year is as follows: President — Rev. R. Miersma, Vice-President — Rev. R. Flikkema, Secretary — Rev. J. Kortering, Treasurer — Mr. C. Kregel, Vice-Secretary-Treasurer — Mr. J. Kalsbeek, Sr. Our sub-committees are divided as follows: *Jamaica* — Rev. R. Flikkema, Rev. R. Miersma, Mr. J. Kalsbeek, Sr.; *Domestic EAST* — Rev. B. Woudenberg, Rev. J. Kortering, Mr. G. Feenstra, and Mr. C. Kregel; *Domestic WEST* — Rev. M. Kamp, Rev. J. Smith,

Mr. H. Hoekstra, Mr. A. Kooiker, and Mr. E. Van Ginkel; *New Zealand* — Rev. R. Miersma and Mr. G. Feenstra; *Finance* — Mr. C. Kregel and Mr. J. Kalsbeek, Sr.

### NEW ZEALAND

We contacted all our pastors and emeritus pastors and asked if their consistories would release them, and if their family circumstances would allow that they labor in New Zealand for at least six months. (Synod had decided to grant the request of the Protestant Reformed Fellowships in Wellington and Palmerston North to have a pastor come to them and labor six months or more according to the same guidelines as the past two years. Rev. and Mrs. John Heys have faithfully done this labor these past years, but they regretfully informed us that a heart condition which developed while in New Zealand prevented them from undertaking the work this year. We are grateful for the great contribution both Rev. and Mrs. Heys have made on behalf of this work, and that the brother has recovered sufficiently that he may preach among us again.) The mission committee received a favorable reply from Holland consistory and Rev. R. Miersma. We decided to ask Holland consistory to make the necessary arrangements to send their pastor to labor in New Zealand for at least six months and to send him as soon as possible. The Miersmas plan to leave October 22. We appreciate the willingness of Holland Church to see this need and send their pastor. May the Lord use Rev. Miersma and family as a means for the spiritual and numerical growth of the fellowships in New Zealand and return them to us in safety in the spring.

### JAMAICA

Since Rev. and Mrs. Lubbers labored full-time in Jamaica, some ten years ago, this mission field has been without the benefit of a missionary. Some brethren have gone there and labored for different lengths of time, tapes have been sent, and cor-



respondence has been carried on, but all through the years the Jamaican Christians have desired a missionary. Now, the Lord has answered that prayer. Prior to Rev. W. Bruinsma's accepting the call, he and his wife, with Rev. and Mrs. Joostens, travelled to Jamaica to discuss the needs and possibilities of a young missionary family living in Jamaica. Even though this was a brief exposure to the field of work, it served to impress upon them the great need and obvious difficulty of the work.

In preparation for leaving by the target date of October 16, many things had to be decided. The pastoral relationship with Faith Church had to be concluded in July, and Rev. Bruinsma was installed in the office of missionary in early August. Both he and Rev. Joostens, who is pastor of the calling church, have been working together to prepare material that can be used for instruction in the field. The broad guidelines of labor presented to Synod of 1983 were referred to the calling church and the missionary for implementation. This includes training the ministers and other young men who may be available, laboring with the existing churches in the areas of preaching, pastoral care, Sunday school and catechism instruction, visiting, and deacon's work.

To facilitate travel in Jamaica, a new 1984 Horizon was purchased and prepared for the field. We are investigating having a missionary organization, which is equipped to handle foreign exports, arrange the shipping of the car and other personal possessions of the Bruinsmas. A furnished home in the Cave Mountain district has been leased. Their future address is: Ferris Heights, Cave P.O., Westmoreland; Jamaica, West Indies.

Efforts have also been put forth to secure a co-laborer, a pastor or emeritus pastor as stipulated by Synod. To date none has become available. Plans are to send the missionary to Jamaica and evaluate the needs for such a co-laborer and continue to search for such a man.

We covet your prayers, as does also Rev. Bruinsma who wrote, "We are very much looking forward to leaving for the island to begin our labors there. The thought of leaving home and moving to a different country and culture is rather frightening, especially for my wife. We ask that you remember us in your prayers. 'God's Word shall surely stand; His name through every land, shall be adored: Lord who shall lead our host? Thy aid we covet most, in thee is all our boast, strong in the Lord,' *Psalter* number 298."

#### THE HOME FRONT

We now have home missionaries on the two extreme ends of our country, Ripon, California and

Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, as well as in our mid-section, in Elk Grove, Illinois.

Beginning at the far west, Rev. Steve Houck is able once again to take up his labors with strength. After being troubled with lower back pain for some time, he submitted to back surgery in June. During his recovery Revs. C. Hanko and H. Veldman filled in with preaching, pastoral work, and instructing classes. We are thankful to God that Rev. Houck continues to have a good recovery. This is not to say that our missionary and his wife are free from medical concerns. Their young son Jeremy, three years old, has been suffering from a kidney disease. This required repeated hospitalization, diagnosis, and a concern for his life. They have been informed that the biopsy determined he does not have a fatal disease, though the treatment they are giving him involves medication with serious side-effects. Besides facing large medical bills, and experiencing anxious moments, Rev. and Mrs. Houck are sometimes separated for miles due to hospitalization. We do well to pray for them that God may give them strength and patience. God's purpose is good in this, for when we are weak, then are we strong in the Lord. Their address is 1109 W. Rumble Road, Modesto, CA 95350, phone (209) 576-7009.

Having all this concern on his mind, Rev. Houck still labors diligently. He reports that the Word is well received by those who faithfully attend the meetings, and he has opportunity to minister to other families who are in the area. Always, the Word has a two-edged effect: some gnash against it with bitterness, others rejoice in the blessings of our sovereign God.

Pastor Van Overloop and family are settled in their new field of labor. Their residence is 1047 Florida Lane, Elk Grove Village, Illinois 60007.

The termination of labor in Birmingham had its painful side as those who faithfully attended the worship had to make other plans. Some moved from the area, others found new church homes. We trust that, even though it was not God's will to have a Protestant Reformed Church organized at this time, the Word preached will have an abiding effect in the lives of those who heard it. It helps all of us to remember that there is no such thing as failure when we bring the gospel in sincerity and in truth.

Elk Grove Village is in the N.W. Chicago area. The five families that are actively involved have worshiped in our South Holland church for some time already, and Rev. Engelsma has preached in their midst the last months. Most of them have their membership in South Holland. As of September they are having two worship services each Lord's Day at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. The first and



third Sundays are in the St. Bede Episcopal Church building.

Plans are under way to get a radio ministry on WCFL, 11:30 a.m. Sunday morning. A Reformation Day lecture is being planned. A mid-week Bible study is organized. May the Lord bless Pastor Van Overloop and family as they take up their labors in this new field.

Finally, our youngest missionary, Rev. Ken Hanko, was ordained in our Covenant Church, Wykoff, New Jersey on Sunday, September 23. This was a memorable day for the congregation and a special day for the Hanko family as grandfather — Rev. C. Hanko, father — Prof. H. Hanko, and brother — Rev. R. Hanko could all participate, while other family members were in attendance as well.

Rev. Ken Hanko's field of labor is Blue Bell, PA. This is the greater Philadelphia area, especially to the north. The address is The Blue Bell Mission, P.O. Box 95, Blue Bell, PA 19422. Brother Hanko has already been laboring here as a candidate for

about a year. The fruits of these labors are that five of the group have made profession of the Reformed faith in our Covenant (Wykoff) Church and three others transferred membership there from the Blue Bell Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

The group is enthused in the Reformed faith and eager to grow in knowledge and faith.

To arrange a closer working relationship between the missionaries, calling churches, and the mission committee, meetings have been held to discuss ways to implement this work. We have already decided that the three missionaries communicate together by conference phone from time to time to share their knowledge and encourage each other in the work. We also have scheduled a meeting prior to Classis East's meeting in January to discuss methodology, learning from past experience and seeking out Biblical directives for our present calling.

Pray for this work and for our missionaries that the name of God may be magnified in all our labors.

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## TRANSLATED TREASURES

# A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

*Dr. A. Kuyper*

(Kuyper is discussing the marks of the true and false church so that those who are called to engage in church reformation may be able to recognize the difference. He has criticized the view of those who hold to a pure-church ideal and who make the holiness of individual members a mark of the true church.)

This tendency to make the pure state of the church itself a mark of the true church, which is defended by all our Reformers and also by all the Reformed Confessions and by nearly all our good theologians, requires that there be in the church of Christ purity of confession and purity of walk. In this way the heart remains unjudged. One does not touch the state of the person. The person only comes into consideration insofar as the work of the church becomes manifest in the appearance and walk of the individual. The question is not whether each individual member is pure in confession, but whether the church expresses a good confession

and whether in her walk as church the honor of God's Word is manifested. However, because this can only be evident in her public act and walk, it brings us to the point where we must investigate whether principally the preaching is actually the preaching of the Word, whether the handling of the sacraments can actually be a vehicle of sacramental grace, and whether the church through the exercise of discipline covers that preaching and that sacrament.

Yet most permit discipline to slip, not as if the exercise of discipline does not belong to the essence of the church, but in that sense that it is not necessary to the well-being of the church: 1) a concession which must be made because else a strong maintenance of this mark would have led all but unnoticed back to the Donatist stream. Calvin then also declares that the church is already present



when only the Word of God and the sacraments are visible. 2) Moreover, one takes into account the fact that during the first eighteen centuries in which Jesus' church existed in the new dispensation, it was mainly in the first two and in the Sixteenth Century that there was an earnest maintenance of discipline. This automatically brings one before the dilemma whether to make discipline indispensable for the essence of the church or whether to confess that the true church of Christ was not seen for fifteen of these eighteen centuries.

No one concludes from this that discipline in Jesus' church is not necessary. The opposite is true. Without discipline a church must become unholy and be ruined. But if one once confesses and believes that the church on earth has the purpose of being an instrument of the Holy Spirit whereby He regenerates the elect by the Word, then it follows directly from this that the essence of the church, no matter how imperfect, is present where the Holy Spirit finds this instrument ready for the regeneration of the elect. And let it be firmly established that the church can fulfill this ministry as long as the preaching of the Word is still found in her midst and the sacraments still seal this Word. Thus it is evident from the root of the Reformed Confessions concerning the church that the exercise of discipline cannot be an indispensable mark of the essence of the church. Just as a human organism continues to live even though one cuts the arms and legs off, but dies as soon as the heart or head is taken away, so it is with Jesus' church. No more than anyone would consider it indifferent if he lost arms or legs, so also no one may say that a church can act and work well if her discipline is destroyed. But also, if the life, i.e., the essence departs from the man when the more important parts are struck dead, so also the essence of the church is first lost when the proclamation of the Word ceases in her or the administration of the sacraments falls away.

In our Confessions, therefore, the idea is not that each church which misses one of the main marks in its full purity shall be presently turned into the false church; but only this is meant, that a church in which the three marks shine must be positively recognized as the true church. There was opposition in those days. On the one side stood the Romish church. Alongside of it roared the Anabaptist sect. And over against both of these the churches of the Reformation had to establish themselves. These churches exhibited at that time the three mentioned marks to the fullest, and it was on that basis that our churches claimed themselves to be very positively and without doubt the true church of Christ.

That this is the meaning of our Confessions is convincingly true from the conclusion of Article

XXIX. Indeed, if the article had meant that each church would be false in which one of these three marks was absent, it would simply have described an earmark of the false church: false is each church which misses one of these three marks. Our fathers were far removed from such a superficial treatment of the matter. Rather, they considered themselves obligated to circumscribe the nature of the false church, not in a negative but in a positive sense; not as a church which places its own ordinances above the Word of God, falsifies the sacraments, and neglects discipline. No, not that, but: "Which bases itself more on man than on Christ and persecutes those who desire to live holily."

Thus, if we pay attention, not to the well-being, but to the being of the church, then the church would first be denounced as the false church when it sets the Word aside, falsifies the sacraments, and persecutes God's saints. According to the spirit and meaning of the Holy Scripture as our fathers understood it, this must never be so conceived as if the preaching of the Word must be completely pure and the administration of the sacraments must be completely undefiled, upon punishment of losing her character as the church of Christ by a lack of the completely worked out quality.

Turretin gives us the sentiments of our church in a clear way when he says: "Further, one must not lose from sight that these signs admit of distinct degrees of necessity. On the first rung stands the pure preaching and confession of the Word, without which no church is conceivable. But already the administration of the sacrament is not on the same level as the preaching of the Word, so that it can be temporarily lost without the church falling away, as the church in Israel repeatedly showed. And this is yet more true with discipline, which is intended undoubtedly to maintain the church in good order, but the loss of which does not directly destroy the essence of the church. But further, if these marks are allowed with certain latitudes so that they can appear purer or less pure, and according to the extent that they more or less approach the Scriptures, the church, even though it remains church is purer or more impure. One must not stretch this to the point that basic errors are tolerated, but only lighter spots. Thus, just as a church which errs in the basics of doctrine cannot continue to stand, so it does not cease to be a church if it errs in a few respects. A church can be impure or corrupt in part without its ceasing to be church. Finally, it is to be noticed that a church is not to be judged according to the particular sentiments of its leaders, but from the public confession which is as such accepted and maintained."

Calvin was of the same mind. His expressions are sometimes even stronger. He recognizes a church



of God wherever there is still preaching and the sacraments are administered.

"Wherever the preaching of the Word is still heard with reverence, and the sacraments are not neglected, there undoubtedly the form of the church is still present." (Institutes, C, IV, 1, para. 10.) And Calvin earnestly warns that where a semblance of these signs is still found, one should not separate himself from it. "Separation from the church is apostasy from God and Christ, and no greater abomination can be imagined than to break unfaithfully the bond of marriage which the First-born Son of God has established with us." (Idem.)

He says in the following chapter: "Who would dare to deny the name of the Church to any gathering to which God still grants the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. . . ? There were certain degrees of apostasy even in Israel." (Idem., L, IV, C, 2, para. 7, 8.) He then points out how sometimes in Israel almost all the preaching of the Word had disappeared and the sacraments were wholly polluted. Even idolatry crept in. But all this did not destroy the essence of the church. (Idem., para. 8, 9.) Sometimes even the prophets and the faithful disappeared, but the essence of the church continued even under these storms of unrighteousness. (Calvin, L, IV, C, 2, para. 10.) "Even though we insist that Rome's church federation can make no claim whatever to the name church, we do not by this deny that there are still to be found churches under her jurisdiction." He only maintains that if one would consider the marks, each of these Romish parishes and the entire body of the Romish church lack the *legal ecclesiastical form*. (Ib., para. 12.)

Add to this also a practical proof. The Lutheran Church never had any exercise of discipline in the

sense of our Confession. Yet there has never been any doubt that the church of the Lutherans was a true church of Christ.

In adding the term "pure" to the preaching and the administration of the sacraments, one must never stretch the point so far that the signs are considered lacking where the preaching and the administration of the sacraments leave much to be desired or where discipline is lacking.

Also here the distinction between being and well-being applies.

There are elements which usually adorn the preaching, which, when absent, do not destroy the preaching as such. And there are also elements in the sacraments which exult their glory, which, when lacking, do not nullify the sacrament.

Also here Calvin gives light: "Our statement that the pure preaching of the Word and the pure administration of the sacraments are suitable to guarantee the genuine character of the church, is not to be so understood that a church must be rejected when these two signs are present in such a way that they create offense. But more must be said. Supposing that something wrong has crept into the preaching or the administration of the sacrament, this does not give anyone the right to leave that church immediately. Indeed all elements of doctrine are equally important." (Calvin, Institutes, L, IV, C, 1, para. 12.)

Our conclusion is, therefore, that for a second church and for the well-being of the church of God, i.e., for churches existing in a healthy and normal condition, the pure preaching of the Word, the pure administration of the sacraments, and the strict exercise of discipline are necessary and indispensable.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

# Golden Opportunities Not Taken

Rev. John A. Heys

Esther agreed to come before the king to plead for the lives of her people, after Mordecai showed her that really she had no choice. If she did not go in to plead for her people, she would die, even though she was in the house of the king. The decree

Haman got enacted was that every Jew must be killed. And the law of the Medes and the Persians altereth not, Esther 1:19 and 8:8. If she would go in before the king, there was the strong possibility that he would not hold out the sceptre, and she



would die for her impudence. But there was the possibility that he would accept her and listen to her plea. So she chose the way that held some hope of sparing her life with that of her people. And so with an expression of shameful, unvarnished fatalism she made known her intention and choice to Mordecai.

But the moon reflects the light of the sun, and in the sins wherein the parents walk the children run. Esther is not to be excused for her fatalistic approach to the matter, but neither is Mordecai to be excused for the godless training which he gave her. And as we pointed out last time, the apple does not fall far from the tree, so that Esther's fatalism can easily be traced to the training in unbelief that her uncle-father gave her. But before we consider her approach to the king, we do well to take a closer look at this tree from which the apple fell. And let it be a warning to us as parents that our failure to speak the language of faith will reveal itself in our children. And words and expressions — how well school teachers and catechism teachers know that — used in the home are spoken out of the home by the children with added force. Thus Esther's fatalistic words, "If I perish, I perish," are an echo of Mordecai's, "there shall enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place," and "who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Both of his expressions are utterly lacking in faith in God. And they explain Esther's words of fatalism that also show complete lack of faith in God.

Certainly Mordecai had his reason for speaking of deliverance "from another place," instead of "from God according to His covenant faithfulness." His unbelief made him speak that way. He saw creatures but not the Creator; and therefore he spoke of a place rather than a Person Who would bring deliverance.

And yet, in a sense, we may say that Mordecai's faith produced these expressions that are utterly void of any suggestion even of the name of God. He has what is sometimes called historical faith. Saving faith it certainly was not. But historical faith is agreement that some historical facts recorded in Scripture actually did take place. It lacks, however, spiritual and personal application and trust in God. It rejects the spiritual implication of these historical events, and it fails to see that our Covenant God works all things together for the good of His church. Thus today the unbelieving Jew believes all the history of the nation of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures, and even claims to believe in Jehovah Who gave us this revelation from Genesis through Malachi. In fact, he even believes some of the historical events recorded in the New Testament. He believes that Jesus was

born in Bethlehem, and that He was nailed to the tree of the cross. But he does not agree that all the events written in Matthew through Revelation are historical facts. He emphatically denies that Jesus was born of a virgin, and that He is the Lamb of God Who died for the sins of His people. You will never find him agreeing that Jesus' resurrection and ascension into heaven are historical facts. Saving faith believes all that which the Scriptures declare. Historical faith is "choosey" and accepts what it wants to consider to be fact, wants none of the spiritual implications of these events, and has no personal application of the joy of salvation as God pictures it to us in His Word.

With that kind of faith Mordecai speaks of enlargement and deliverance of the Jews from another place, and of the possibility that Esther came to the kingdom for such a time as the one in which they lived. He knew the history of Israel, and thus of the deliverance out of the bondage of Egypt, the many deliverances in the times of the Judges when the cycle of sin, suffering because of sin, sorrow for that sin, and salvation through a God-given judge happened over and over again. He knew of the deliverances through Saul and David and the kings that followed them. He knew all too well of the enlargement through Cyrus so that those Jews who chose to could go back to the promised land. But he gave not one fleeting thought to the salvation from sin of which all these deliverances were pictures. He did not see God behind it all, that is, not the God of Scripture. The deliverers he did not see as types of Christ; nor did he look for Christ to come as the Scriptures present Him. Personally he never entered into the joys of the forgiveness of sins.

Mordecai's word "deliverance" is a word that appears only here and only from his mouth. It is not the same word "deliver" that we find in Psalm 34:19 where the psalmist cries with confidence, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." He saw Israel as a nation composed of the fleshly seed of Abraham. He did not see — as many today, both Jew and Gentile, fail to see — that they are not all Israel that are of Israel, and that he is not Jew who is one outwardly, but he that is one inwardly and whose circumcision is that of the heart, Romans 2:28, 29. He did not see that the promises in Scripture are only for the church in that nation of Israel. Mordecai saw great things for the fleshly seed of Abraham. He was not looking for the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He was looking for a lion of Judah's tribe that would conquer all nations and subject them to Jewish rule. No wonder he missed the golden opportunity to use God's name and remind Esther of His covenant



promises. His unbelief prevented it.

His word "enlargement" is also interesting. It means respiration or breathing, and in Genesis 32:16 is translated as space. The idea is breathing room, a removal of pressure so the doomed Jews could breathe freely once again. But it is not an enlargement that removes the guilt of sin. He has in mind a salvation that the flesh of the most wicked Jew could desire. And he believes only that part of God's promises that appeals to the flesh.

Note also that he speaks of Esther coming to the kingdom for such a time as this. Here too God is ignored and denied completely. Had he spoken of enlargement and deliverance that would come from God, the case would be different. But after speaking of a place instead of a Person his statement that she had come to the kingdom was another golden opportunity missed to use God's name, and instead shows a consistent unbelief. Would not faith have said, "Who knoweth whether God hath brought thee to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Unbelief says that she came. Faith would say that God brought her.

And of course Esther was brought to the kingdom for such a time. Mordecai asks, "Who knoweth?" A little child in Sunday School knows; and I do not mean knows by hindsight. All men can now see that, and can see that way. He that has faith in God, who knows God as the Scriptures reveal Him to be, knows that every man is always just exactly in the right place at the right time in the providence of God. God brings us to where we are at any given moment under the particular circumstances of that moment.

We tend to speak of God's providence when what we call big events take place. We see men in the right place at the right time when there is great benefit for the flesh. But when things go wrong, as far as our plans and wishes are concerned, we either blame God for it, or we rule Him out of it and say that we had "bad luck." And then, although we see God in what we call big things, we fail to see Him in the little things, even though He is there just

as surely and with all His almighty power and infinite wisdom.

It is so easy to say that you were, by the providence of God, brought so near to a well-equipped hospital when medical attention was so urgent. Then it is easy to say, "It was a good thing that we were not miles away on some mountain road where even telephones were miles away." Then we would not concede that we were in the right place at the right time. But is this not always the case? Were you ever at the wrong place at the wrong time? O, as far as our plans and wishes are concerned we know such instances. But considering that God has an eternal, sovereign plan according to which all things work together for good to those that love Him, is it possible that we are in the wrong place at the wrong time? Dare we say that the almighty and unchangeable God made a mistake? Listen to the poem sent me in the hospital:

"My Father's way may twist and turn,  
My heart may throb and ache,  
But in my soul I'm glad I know.  
He maketh no mistake."

And O that our people would use the word luck only to condemn the use of it! Some years ago the slogan appeared, "Put Christ back into Christmas." But equally today we should shout, "Give God the glory and rule Him out of nothing." There just is no luck. There is neither good luck nor back luck. There is God moving, directing, exercising perfect control over every creature large and small, visible and invisible, material and spiritual, so that it is at the right place at the right time to fulfil His perfect and sovereign counsel.

Is it because you parents speak that way at home that your children speak as though God does not exist? We ought to make a concerted effort to ban that word luck completely from our vocabularies and render God the glory due to His name. We ought to have Him in all our thoughts and say nothing that ignores or denies Him. We are formed to show forth His praises, Isaiah 43:21. Let us show our faith by our works; and then let us make good use of every opportunity to confess Him.

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## GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH

# The Return to Scripture: Wyclif

*Rev. T. Miersma*

In our study of the history of the doctrine of Scripture, the name of John Wyclif (1330-1384) deserves a special place. An Englishman, well educated and trained, an Oxford professor, pastor and teacher, Wyclif set forth in clear form the fundamental principles of the Reformed doctrine of Scripture more than one hundred years before the commencement of the Reformation. The first full English translation of the Bible is associated with his name as well. He truly deserves the designation, pre-reformer. His work is all the more striking in that the reformers Zwingli and Luther came to largely similar conclusions independently.

The details of Wyclif's early life are surrounded in obscurity, as are his university studies. He evidently studied at Oxford, and after concluding his studies was appointed to the livings derived from several different churches. In those days it was not uncommon for the parish minister to be absent from his charge, pursuing further studies and degrees, and Wyclif was no exception. He continued to divide his time between scholarly labors and his parish responsibilities until he retired to his parish at Lutterworth in 1381.

Wyclif's labors and writings were affected by the changing political situation in his day and by international affairs. The English kings had had a long-standing dispute with the papacy concerning the payment of money to the church, which money was sent to the continent to fill the treasuries of the pope. The papacy at that time was under the power of the kings of France, England's bitter political rival, and, in fact, the seat of the papacy had been moved from Rome to Avignon, France. Thus the English crown and the papacy were constantly at each other's throats over this matter of papal taxes. Further, the church in England controlled large tracts of land and property, much of it in the hands of monastic orders who were not responsible to the regular English clergy, nor under their authority, but answered to the pope alone. In addition the papacy claimed legal preeminence over other

courts, claiming the authority to be the final court of appeals.

This display of temporal power and earthly wealth by the church set it at odds with the aspirations of the English crown, who coveted that wealth and power. It ran counter also to the growing sense of English nationalism. In 1337 England began a long drawn-out war with France which lasted for a hundred years. From this, England, formerly a medieval feudal state, emerged as a nation with power centered in a strong monarchy. Paralleling this development was the growth of English as the national language. Since the days of William the Conqueror (1066), French had been the language of the English nobility, courts, and schools. In 1362, however, a statute was passed by Parliament which decreed that all the proceedings in the courts of law should be conducted in English, and English also began to be taught in the schools.

In this changing political climate, Wyclif stood forth not only as a reformer, but also as an English patriot. He served for a time as the king's chaplain, as well as advisor to Parliament on several occasions. In 1374 he was sent to Bruges, in what is now Belgium, as part of a royal commission to discuss matters of difference between England and the papacy and to negotiate peace with France. The commission itself accomplished little, but Wyclif returned to England and began a series of treatises on political and ecclesiastical reform.

He attacked the secular power and wealth of the church as being inconsistent with apostolic poverty, advocated the confiscation of church properties by the state, and denied the papal right to lay taxes and demands upon English churches. This brought him under attack by the ecclesiastical and particularly the papal authorities. The archbishop of Canterbury undertook proceedings against him, and when this failed the pope also became involved, issuing five bulls or decrees against Wyclif's errors. Wyclif, however, was protected by his friends at court, his general popularity as a preacher, and



by the University of Oxford, from being molested. Wyclif's attack upon the papacy gradually shifted from its abuses to the institution itself. In 1378 the current pope died and a new one was chosen in France at Avignon. A second pope was chosen at Rome. The resulting schism found the church with two popes, each claiming to be the sole representative of Christ and earthly head of the church. This quickened Wyclif's attacks upon the papacy and the corruption of the church. The spectacle of two popes excommunicating each other made the spiritual bankruptcy of the institution all the more apparent.

Wyclif attacked the papacy on several levels: its corruption drew from him the charge, which the reformers were later to echo, that the pope was antichrist. But Wyclif also began a searching examination of Scripture which led him to a rejection, not only of the institution, but also of much of the medieval doctrine of the church. Medieval theology had identified and equated the church in Scripture with the Roman institute. This, Wyclif began to challenge. He, like the reformers who followed him, was a student of Scripture and of Augustine. He was led to the truth of sovereign predestination. This in turn led him to a clearer understanding of the doctrine of the church as the gathering of God's elect, a spiritual and invisible reality, distinct from, though found in, the church institute. This idea was an advance beyond Augustine, and had significant consequences. If the church was spiritual, consisting of the elect alone, then an ungodly pope could not be its head, but Christ alone. Fundamentally this destroyed the whole Roman Catholic system. For if Christ alone was head, then there must be another basis of authority in the church than the visible pope. And so, Wyclif turned to the Word of God and the Spirit of Christ as the sole authority for the faith and life of the church.

This was tantamount to theological revolution. If Scripture alone was the sole authority for faith and life, the law of Christ for His church, then the pope, tradition, and even church councils were subject to it. This reversed the false medieval idea of the church that Scripture received its authority from the church, but rather made the church subject to Scripture. As the reformers were to demonstrate, before that authority of the Word of God, neither pope, nor tradition and practice could stand. They must fall away.

Furthermore, if the church consisted only of the elect, then the church as institute could no longer claim to be the sole interpreter of Scripture, since an unbelieving clergy could not have the Holy Spirit. The right to understand and interpret Scripture was rooted in the Holy Spirit. Wyclif began to assert the right of believers to study and interpret

Scripture for themselves, and the necessity of doing so, since it was by His Word that Christ reigned over His church.

This led also to the development of new principles of interpretation. First of all, it led to the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture, as the Holy Spirit explained His own writings. The medieval church had placed human reason above Scripture. This principle of spiritual interpretation necessarily undermined the scholastic theology of the medieval church which had married Greek philosophy and Scripture. Wyclif began to attack the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation of the bodily presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, to attack pilgrimages, reverence paid to images, and other superstitions, none of which had any foundation in Scripture. In the second place he turned to the principle that Scripture as its own interpreter has one plain and natural meaning according to the Spirit. He rejected the use of allegory and other corrupt methods of medieval exegesis.

His conclusions necessarily led him to lay stress on the need for preaching. Scripture, he saw, made this the chief mark and task of the pastoral office. With this went the necessity of a clergy educated and steeped in God's Word, and a Bible in the hands of the people. Nowhere did the pope and the Roman clergy show more clearly their bankruptcy than in the neglect of the pastoral function of preaching. At the heart of the Scriptures stood Christ, the head of the church, and His Word to His people. This must be preached. Men must be able to read the Word of Christ and follow it.

The result of this for Wyclif was that he came under increasing attack. He was shielded by his friends, however, and left unmolested. For a time he was placed under house arrest at Oxford, though allowed to teach. He finally retired to his parish church, devoting himself to preaching and writing.

Under his instigation and probable direction a translation of the Latin Bible into English was begun. Wyclif's followers had the major part in this work, although he was also involved in the project himself, and the translation bears his name. At this time Greek and Hebrew were yet little known; Wyclif knew neither language, and the basis of this translation was Jerome's translation into Latin. There were two versions of it: an earlier, slavishly literal one which followed the Latin word order, and was therefore confusing and difficult to read, and a later one written in better English.

The circulation of the Scriptures, the Wyclif translation, Wyclif's emphasis on preaching and his doctrines, found expression in the Lollard movement in England after his death. Wyclif himself died unmolested in 1384. It was not until the 1400s



that the Romish church fully managed to brand him as a heretic, ban his works, and gain some measure of success in eradicating his English translation of the Scriptures. His influence, how-

ever, lived on in the Lollard movement although it was forced underground, and was also felt on the Continent in the labors of John Huss, concerning whom we will have more to say next time, D.V.

## THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

# Preaching and Missions

Prof. Robert D. Decker

Preaching may be defined as "the authoritative proclamation of the gospel by the church in the service of the Word of God through Christ" (Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p. 637). Missions may be defined as that work of God in Christ by which, through the *official ministry of the Word* by the church, He gathers His elect in the new dispensation out of all nations of the world, both Jew and Gentile, with a view to the realization of the manifestation of His glory in the New Heavens and Earth. There are several elements in the definition of missions which deserve our attention. 1) Missions is emphatically and exclusively the work of God in Christ by the Holy Spirit of Christ. 2) Missions is accomplished by means of the official preaching of the Word or Gospel by the institute of the church of Jesus Christ. 3) Missions has as its immediate goal the gathering of the church (elect) both Jew and Gentile out of the nations. 4) Missions has as its ultimate goal the full manifestation of God's glory in Christ in the New Creation. We shall, in this article, concentrate on the first two of these elements.

Preaching and missions! These two are inseparable. There can be no missions apart from the preaching of the Word. Whether it be missions on the home field or foreign, preaching and missions belong together. This is true because mission work is the work of God. God in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit accomplishes the work. This is Scripture. God must "open the door" for the church to preach (cf. I Cor. 16:9; II Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). God must give the increase or the work is futile (cf. I Cor. 3:7 in the context of chaps. 1 and 2). All things are of God Who has reconciled the church unto Himself by Jesus Christ. God has given to the church the ministry of reconciliation.

God beseeches us through His ambassadors: be ye reconciled to God (cf. II Cor. 5:18-21). Our Reformed Confessions teach the same. *The Heidelberg Catechism* teaches us that "the Son of God gathers, defends, and preserves a church chosen to everlasting life. . . ." (L.D. XXI). "God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel. . . ." according to the *Canons of Dordt*, II, 5. (In this same connection cf. Articles XXVII - XXIX of the *Belgic Confession*.) It is God, therefore, Who according to Scripture and the Reformed Confessions accomplishes the work of missions. Even though God gathers His church through His Spirit and Word, even though that Word must be preached, and even though the preaching is done by men, it is God in Christ through the Holy Spirit Who gathers His church out of the nations.

That missions is the work of God is also obvious from the fact that it is God Who saves, not man. God elects His church in Christ from all eternity (Eph. 1). God regenerates His elect so that they become spiritually receptive to the Gospel. God implants the seed of the new life in Christ in the hearts of the elect. God gives them the hearing ear, the seeing eye, and the heart that understands and believes His Word. This work of regeneration is absolutely indispensable to salvation, for without being born again a man cannot even see the Kingdom of God (cf. John 3). God sent Christ to make atonement for the sins of the elect and it is God Who applies the blessings of salvation to the hearts of His people. God calls them out of darkness into His marvelous light, God gives faith, God converts, justifies, sanctifies, preserves, and glorifies His people in Christ (John 3:16; Rom. 8:29, 30).

God also directs the course of missions throughout the world. The Word of God is not sent every-



where, nor is it sent at random, here and there, without purpose. The preaching of the Gospel takes the course which God determines (cf. Acts 16:6-10).

That missions is the work of God is further emphasized by the fact that Christ calls (summons and qualifies) preachers of the gospel (Romans 10:13-15). In close connection with this is the truth that preaching, apart from the operation and power of the Holy Spirit, cannot be effective (II Cor. 2:15, 16).

Hence not man but God is the one Who accomplishes the work of missions. The work does not depend upon man for its success, nor is man able to frustrate the work of missions. Mission work is absolutely and exclusively God's work in Christ through the Holy Spirit. From a practical point of view this fundamental principle is the encouragement for the church and its missionaries in the often difficult work of missions.

This work of God is accomplished by the means of the preaching of the Word by the institute of the church of Jesus Christ. This follows upon the first, fundamental principle, viz. that missions is exclusively and absolutely the work of God in Christ. While this first principle cannot be stressed too greatly in our times, neither must we lose sight of the principle that missions is accomplished by means of the preaching of the Word. It is indeed true that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. It remains forever true that we cannot add to or detract from this great work of reconciliation. Nevertheless God has entrusted to the church the ministry (*diaconia*) of this reconciliation (cf. II Cor. 5:18-21). So important is this principle that to neglect it means we will simply wait and see what Christ will do, we will lose all sense of responsibility, we will fail to realize that what God will do He will do through His church. God does the work of missions, but God does that through the instrumentality of His church. Specifically this means God accomplishes the work by means of the preaching of the Word.

This means, and this needs emphasis in our times, the work of missions is not the work of the individual believer within the church. Every believer is not a missionary. Only those whom God calls and sends through His church are missionaries. Only these are authorized and qualified by God Himself to preach the Gospel on the mission fields. Believers have a calling with respect to missions. Of course they do. An important and necessary calling belongs to every Christian. Every believer must pray for the mission work of the church. Believers must pray that God will send forth laborers for the harvest is great and the laborers are few (Matt. 9:37, 38). Believers are

called to support financially the mission work of the church. They must assist the church and its missionaries in every way possible. This calling is important, so important that without the prayerful support of the members of God's church mission work cannot be done. But the work itself, the preaching of the Word by which means Christ gathers His elect out of the world, can only be done by the church through its missionaries. There is another highly significant and necessary aspect to the believers' calling. They must witness by word of mouth and walk of life to the truth of the Gospel. God uses this witness to bring His own under the preaching of the Word that they might hear Christ, believe in Him, call upon His Name, and be saved. This, according to the Heidelberg Catechism, belongs to the necessity of the Christian doing good works. Why must we do good works? The last reason mentioned by the Catechism is "that, by our godly conversation, others may be gained to Christ" (L.D. XXXII). Believers are chosen in Christ in order to show forth God's praises and glory (Eph. 1:12; I Peter 2:9-12). Believing wives are called to be in subjection to their unbelieving husbands that these may be won by the godly conversation of the wives (I Peter 3:1). Believers must be prepared always to give an answer to everyone who asks a reason of the hope that is in them (I Peter 3:15). Where, by the grace of God through the faithful preaching of the Word, believers are faithful to this calling mission work flourishes. But the work itself, the preaching of the Word by which means God in Christ gathers His elect, can be done only by those lawfully called of God through the church.

That this is true means also that mission work is not the work of "mission societies," or what are called in our day "para-church organizations." These societies which flourished in the 19th century and persist today arose out of two historical situations: Pietism and, later, Fundamentalism. They were organized especially in European countries with state-controlled churches. Groups within the state churches attempted to do what the churches were not doing, viz., carry out the mission mandate. They were an attempt to escape the political (colonial) influences of the state churches and an attempt to be faithful to the commission of Christ to preach the Gospel to the nations. However pure the motivation of those who organized these societies may have been, mission work is not the work of associations which stand outside of and alongside of the church. It is the task of the church to preach the Gospel to every nation.

No other institution than the church of Jesus Christ may assume the responsibility to preach the Gospel. The church ordains those called by Christ to preach the Gospel. These missionary preachers



are the ambassadors of the Lord Jesus Christ (II Cor. 5:20). Theirs is the task to preach (*keerussein*, herald) and to witness (*marturein*, Acts 1:6-8) to the ends of the earth.

Does this mean that all that a missionary may do is preach? The answer is yes! This does not mean, however, that all that a missionary may do is preach in a formal worship setting. This will be the positive fruit of his preaching if the Lord so wills. The missionary's task is to declare both publicly and from house to house the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20, 21). Whether he be addressing one individual or a large crowd the sole task of the missionary is to expound the Holy Scriptures.

Mission work is God's work. It is a work which God has assigned to His church. It is accomplished by means of the "foolishness of preaching" (I Cor. 1:21). This is God's will. Mission work, therefore, belongs to the very essence of the task of the church. One cannot conceive of the church apart from missions. A church which does not engage in mission work is disobedient to her Lord and is not worthy of the name, church. One cannot conceive of mission work apart from preaching. A mission where the Word is not preached is no mission. May God give us grace to be faithful to this work in the confidence that it pleases "God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1:21).

## IN HIS FEAR

# God is a Covenant God

*Rev. Ronald Hanko*

In previous articles we have been examining the Ten Commandments from this viewpoint, that in the Commandments God reveals Himself to His people in all His glory. The Commandments, therefore, are not mere arbitrary precepts for our life, but a ten-fold (and therefore complete) lesson in God's perfections and in our calling to be perfect as *He is perfect* (Matt. 5:48). This is also the great reason why the Ten Commandments, as a summary of God's whole law, are of abiding significance for us, so that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one small letter of the law to fail (Luke 16:17).

In the way of understanding what God reveals of Himself in each Commandment, the people of God are equipped to confess His Name and show forth His glory not only in word but also in deed. Thus, in worshiping Him alone, as the First Commandment requires, and refusing to trust in or love anything or anyone else beside Him, they confess in word and deed that He is the only true God and that there is none like Him. By heeding the Second Commandment and worshiping Him without any images or representations, and only as He has commanded in His Word, they show that He is a Spirit, the God Whose glory is so great that no man has seen Him or can see Him at any time. In using His

Name, according to the Third Commandment, with careful reverence, and by forsaking and condemning all swearing, cursing, and blasphemy, they acknowledge everywhere that He is a holy God, separate from all evil, as the light from the darkness. Their obedience, then, is not only submission to the sovereign will of God, but the means by which they begin to fulfil the whole purpose of their existence as a redeemed and sanctified people, in showing forth God's praises (Is. 43:21).

It is, perhaps, especially important that we see God's self-revelation in the Fourth Commandment, the Commandment concerning the Sabbath. Also in the keeping of the Sabbath, as required by the Fourth Commandment, there is the opportunity and privilege of honoring and glorifying God. This must be emphasized at such a time as this in which we live, when the Sabbath is almost universally forgotten and despised, even among Christians. It is the failure to see God's self-revelation in the Fourth Commandment that stands as the reason why some still keep the seventh-day Sabbath of the Old Testament and not the first-day Sabbath of the New. It is also the reason why others, who would never think of blaspheming God's Name, or of holding other gods beside Him, do fail entirely in the matter of Sabbath observance.



Such disregard of the Sabbath is not only a great evil, but also a great loss among Christians, since the revelation that God gives of Himself in the Fourth Commandment is of special value and joy for God's people. The Commandment itself indicates this, for it is one of only two commandments in the law which is expressed positively rather than negatively. Instead of merely saying, "Thou shalt not . . .," the Fourth Commandment tells us to *remember* the Sabbath, and in connection with the Sabbath to remember something about God Himself and His glory, which is of incalculable value for us.

That which we must remember about God in our observance of the Fourth Commandment is the beautiful truth that He is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God, and, along with this, the truth that as a covenant God He is the God of rest in Whom alone we find rest for our weary souls.

That the Sabbath is indeed a revelation of God's covenant is clear from such passages as Leviticus 26:2, Nehemiah 9:14, and Isaiah 56:1, but especially from Exodus 31:13-17 where God calls the Sabbath a sign of the covenant between Himself and His people forever. And, as a sign of the covenant, the Sabbath is also a sign that God is the God Who sanctifies His people, thus causing them to rest from all their own sinful works (Ex. 31:13, Heb. 4:10).

In order to understand our Sabbath duties, therefore, we must know what it means that God is a covenant God. Above all we must know from Scripture that the essence of the covenant is friendship or fellowship with God. This is usually expressed in Scripture in terms of God's dwelling with and being the God of His people and taking them into His own life (Gen. 17:7, Ps. 25:14, II Cor. 6:16, James 2:23, Rev. 21:3, etc.). But we must also understand that God is a covenant God in Himself. He does not need us either to be a covenant-making or a covenant-keeping God. The fellowship of the covenant is first of all a fellowship that He has with Himself; and the covenant is always "My covenant," not only because it has its origin and security in Him, but because it is the covenant of His own life in Himself and with Himself.

It is the doctrine of the Trinity which helps us to understand this. In the tri-personality of God, that He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is the possibility of fellowship within His own divine Being. In the unity of the three Persons in God we find the very essence of the fellowship that God, as a covenant God, has with Himself. All His life in Himself is of the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit, a life of perfect friendship (cf. Prov. 8:30, Jn. 1:18, I Cor. 2:10, Rom. 8:27).

That He is a covenant God means also that He is a God of rest, for in the fellowship that He has with Himself as the Three-Personed God He has perfect rest. That He "rests" means that there is no toil, struggle, or strife in God, but perfect harmony, perfect peace, and perfect joy (Ex. 31:17, Prov. 8:30, Matt. 3:17, Jn. 1:18), and because He has perfect rest, He also has perfect fellowship in Himself.

We learn this first in Genesis 1 and 2 where we read for the first time of God's rest. We ought to read the first three verses of chapter 2 with chapter 1. That His works were "very good" means that there was harmony and order and perfection in all that He has made, reflecting the harmony of His own life as Father, Son, and Spirit, and the orderly perfection of His own Triune Being. And that He *found* His own works good (Gen. 1:31), and blessed them (Gen. 1:22, 28), and rejoiced in them (Ps. 104:30, 31), is simply another way of saying "God rested."

It is that covenant of fellowship and rest that God reveals to us. He causes us to "rest" from all our sins through the work of His beloved Son (Matt. 11:28-30, Rom. 5:1), and thus establishes a new basis for covenant fellowship and friendship with us. Through Christ, the Rest-giver, He takes us into His own life (II Pet. 1:4), dwells with us and in us (II Cor. 6:16, Col. 2:9, 10), and has fellowship with us (I Jn. 1:3).

He revealed that covenant of fellowship and rest first of all to our father Adam, and to us through him, but only to show by way of contrast how much better is the rest that we have in Christ and how much closer is the fellowship that we have with God in Him. In Christ we have a deeper appreciation for the rest that we have in God's fellowship, for we enter into that rest out of sin and death, through the miracle of the incarnation and dying of God's own Son. Thus Isaiah reminds us, "His rest shall be glorious" (11:10).

It is through the gift of the Sabbath especially that we are able to enjoy that rest and that fellowship of God's covenant now. The Sabbath of the covenant is still the great sign between God and His people of the rest and refreshment that they have in His fellowship and friendship. The very word "Sabbath" means "rest," and so long as God in Christ gives rest to His people, the Sabbath will be the sign of that rest. It is, therefore, a sign of God's covenant forever. That is why the glory of the saints in heaven can still be called a Sabbath, as it is in our Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day XXXVIII, 103). That glory is the "rest" which still remains for the people of God (Heb. 4:9). There they are forever blessed, for there, as the Spirit Himself says, they



may rest from their labors (Rev. 14:13). There every day shall be a day to walk with God and to see Him face to face in the face of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 13:12, II Cor. 4:6). Then the promise of the covenant shall be fulfilled perfectly, and God will dwell with His people, and they shall be His people, and He Himself shall be with them, and be their God in His own tabernacle, which is the glorified body of our Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 2:19-21, Rev. 21:22) with Whom we are one bone and one flesh.

Now, however, God gives us one day out of every seven to enjoy these blessings. On that day, through the preaching of the Gospel, we hear the voice of Jesus calling, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." On that day more than any other we are in the Spirit (Rev. 1:10) to enjoy through the Spirit the life of God Himself as He reveals to us His glory. On that day, we may set aside, with God's approval, the weary labors of our life in the world, which came originally as part of the curse and which so often draw us away from God (Gen. 3:17-19). On that day also, in the communion of Christ and His people, we cease from our evil works and yield ourselves to the Lord.

In a certain sense we do this all the days of our life, but, nonetheless, especially on that one day that God in His mercy has given to us. It is, therefore, no accident that the risen Christ, Who rose from the dead to prove that we have rest and peace and fellowship with God (Rom. 4:25), arose on one

specific day, and also appeared to His church for the first time in person, as He continues to appear through His Word on that day. Nor is it mere coincidence that the Spirit was poured out for the first time to give salvation and joy to God's people on that day also. Just as God chose one day in the Old Testament, the seventh, to reveal Himself as the God of rest in His works of creation and preparation for salvation, so also He chooses one day in the New Testament, the first, to reveal Himself as the God of rest in His works of redemption.

That day is a day for remembering that we were slaves in the house of bondage, and that the Lord brought us out through a mighty hand and a stretched out arm, to dwell with Him and be His people forever. It is a day to praise Him as our Saviour and Friend. *Therefore* the Lord has commanded us to keep the Sabbath, and not to lay heavy burdens on us (Deut. 5:15). With joy we respond to His Commandment and sing:

A thousand other days can yield  
No gladness like one day with Thee;  
Tho' only at Thy door I wait  
No tents of sin give joy so great.

(Psalter No. 229:5)

We wait at the door because the morning of the eternal Sabbath has not yet dawned. But even while waiting at the door, we take hold of God's covenant of grace by calling the Sabbath a delight (Is. 56:1, 6).

## GUEST ARTICLE

# Judgment of Aholibah

R.G. Moore

In Ezekiel chapter twenty-three we find two names of women given to the two nations in Canaan. According to this word of God, Aholah represents Samaria or the ten tribes of the north, and Aholibah represents Judah. The prophecy concerning Aholah and Aholibah contains for us today much needed instruction, as well as a warning which should serve to bring us to repentance and watchfulness.

The prophecy of Ezekiel in this chapter pictures the church of his day as women. And this is not un-

usual in the Scriptures. The church is often pictured as the bride of God or of His Son Jesus Christ. The bond of union in marriage reflects the most precious and intimate union between God and His people in Christ, by His covenant which He establishes with them. The true church-elect in covenant love is joined in most blessed union of covenant fellowship and friendship with the living God through Jesus Christ.

However, the women pictured in this prophecy are whores or harlots. An harlot in this case is an



unfaithful adulteress, who places her affection in someone other than the one to whom she has been wedded. She has made herself to be appealing to other men, in order to satisfy her flesh with them.

Hence, this prophecy pictures the spiritual decline and decadence of Israel (all 12 tribes) at the time of this prophecy. The day was a day of great apostasy, of spiritual adultery and whoredom. Thus the Word of God declares coming judgment, and it sounds a warning to God's elect.

Now understand that the names of the two harlots are applied to Samaria and Judah. The church of that day is so pictured! This is not said of Egypt, Ethiopia, Edom, Zidon, nor any other country, but of Israel!

Aholah is the name given to Samaria. It refers, of course, to the spiritual adultery of the ten tribes of the north, which were led into this adultery already by Jeroboam at the time of the division. At this time already he established places of worship of his own choosing in Bethel and Dan. This was designed to keep the people of Israel in his control, but at the same time it kept them from the mercy seat of the temple. This was done while pretending to serve God through the means of the golden calves.

These ten tribes are given the name Aholah to show this deep-seated sin, which was rooted in the division. For Aholah means literally, "she has her own tabernacle." This serious sin had led Israel into judgment, and at the time of this prophecy she was already carried off into captivity by the judgment of God.

On the other hand, Aholibah, the name given to Judah, means, "my tabernacle is in her." It was in Judah that God had set His tabernacle. There He had established the worship according to His word. There He had set His priests and gave command concerning right sacrifice. There was the altar with its mercy seat, that caused God's people to look forward to Christ as their Savior. There, indeed, God led His elect in the days of types and shadows to look for the promised seed. All things pointed to the Anointed One, to Christ, Who according to the covenant promise of God in the way of sovereign grace would deliver His people from sin and destruction. And there, God called His people to serve Him faithfully, promising blessings without measure.

But not only in Aholah, which had established her own tabernacle according to the whims of mere man, but also in Aholibah — in Judah — the people had left the ways of Jehovah to go awhoring after the ways and the idols of darkness, so that the Holy God announces the coming judgment of Judah.

Now, we are able to see the parallel to our own

day, and let us see together the similarities by applying that which is taught in this prophecy to our day. We may legitimately liken Samaria of old to the larger portion of the so-called church world today. This "church world" has long ago forsaken the true God and the TRUTH of God for the ways and idols of the world of darkness. She has given herself over to the vain philosophy of man, to his science, to his free-willism, etc.

Rather than hear the Word of God to do it, this portion of the so-called church has set up her own tabernacle. She has denied the infallibly inspired Scriptures to be the only standard for life and faith. Thus she has followed the ways of Aholah, following strange winds of doctrine, and has adopted outright modernism in order to allure the world to her. And for the large part she has grown popular in the world. She has great edifices for worship, but in general has become the slave of anti-christ.

The fruit, also today, is that she is filled with all the problems of her whoredoms. There is no true peace within her. She is filled with great immorality and the social diseases of the world round about her. "She is delivered into the hands of her lovers." She has come into judgment, and the fact is that God removes His candlestick from her, and no longer is there blessing in her midst. She is become captive to the world of darkness, sin, and destruction.

On the other hand we may liken Aholibah or Judah to the church that has up till our day kept a measure of the truth in her midst. Yet she too, as Aholah, is on the verge of judgment. In this class we would include the more orthodox reformation churches — Presbyterian, Lutheran, Calvinistic, Reformed churches. But as Judah in the days of old, so also this group of churches is becoming ripe for judgment. And this for the same reason, she follows her apostate sister in her spiritual whoredom.

The word recorded in I Timothy 4:1-3 is fast coming to pass: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron . . . ." The same is true of II Timothy 3:1-6. The basic doctrines of God's Word are being denied. The infallibility of the Scriptures is being set aside, and consequently the moral life of her members is degenerating. Witness the decisions on divorce and remarriage, on homosexuality within the sphere of the church, etc. We also see this departure with respect to the calling of God to obedience. The taking of women into office is but one example of placing man's word before God's. The result is that worldliness is found instead of spirituality more and more, within



her midst. And one finds the antithesis being replaced by synthesis.

Judgment shall also be her portion, in whose midst God had set His tabernacle. Her name is not sufficient to deliver her from judgment. This, therefore, must serve as a warning for God's elect and the faithful remnant that they may not be swept along in the lewdness of the age. May it bring us as Protestant Reformed Churches to repentance of any ways in which we have departed. And may we be warned that we be sober, and watchful in prayer.

Unto this end, let us pay a little closer attention to the sin of Judah that is rebuked in this prophecy. The 37th through the 39th verses set forth the sin: "That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with idols have they committed adultery, and have caused their sons, whom they bare unto Me, to pass for them through the fire to devour them. Moreover this they have done unto Me: they have defiled My sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned My sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into My sanctuary to profane it; and lo, thus they have done in the midst of My house."

It is evident from the above passage that the adultery and lewdness of this chapter is essentially a reference to spiritual departure from God, His Word and way. Judah began to serve idols — rolled blocks of wood — formed according to man's imagination. Their word replaced the word of God. And as always is the case with apostasy, they led their children to follow the way of their darkened minds to follow the path of sin.

The result is that they forgot God and cast Him behind their back. Verse 35 says, "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because thou hast forgotten Me, and cast Me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms." The inevitable result of departure from the truth is that God is forgotten and put out of one's life.

This did not mean that they left off the outward service of God. In the verses quoted above it is obvious that Judah continued to make a pretense of serving God. They kept the ceremonies and the sabbaths to a limited sense. But such compromising service is an abomination to God. Therefore, judgment must come! Judah must bear the fruit of her apostasy and is given over to her lovers. Their portion becomes her's.

Hence she is given over to the world whose life she has chosen. Her life becomes worldly and her comfort shall be so limited — worldly. How awful! The world perishes, and all who put their trust therein likewise so perish. In that time Judah also

actually walked in natural adultery and lewdness, it characterized her. And her portion became likewise empty and vain. The fruit is an utter lack of spiritual peace, and the holy judgment of God's wrath!

The question arises then, if this was true of Judah can it also be true of us? Are we too beginning so to walk in the whoredoms of Aholah and Aholibah? In the first place, we must understand that we are not immune to such error and sin. The fact that Jehovah has established His tabernacle in our midst is not automatic assurance that it shall remain. Not in us as an instituted church. Judgment came upon Judah as she was carried off into captivity, and the Jews as a nation with the coming of Christ ceased to be the instituted church of God. The name Protestant Reformed is not enough. We too could become adulterous and be judged.

Therefore, we of needs face the question: Are we going awhoring after idols, and are we casting Jehovah behind our back? Are we attempting to follow the ways of the world, and at the same time say we are serving God? Are we casting our children into the devouring fires of Satan? At the outset we may answer, "No, we love the truth."

But, is this evidenced in our lives? Is the Sabbath to us what it should be? Is the preaching of Christ that which rules all of our thinking and activity? Do we find our worship on the Lord's day to be the center of our life? Do we yet love to hear the doctrines of old expounded faithfully? Do we desire the antithetical proclamation of God's Word? Do we fill the chairs around our Bible study groups? Are we well-prepared to defend the faith? Do the Scriptures have a visible and active place in our homes?

Do we train our children in the ways that they should go? Or do we send our mothers to work, that we might have the idols of the world, and thus sacrifice our children to the devouring fires of darkness? Does our TV viewing reflect our Christian confession? Are we becoming more worldly-minded in our use of and the seeking of leisure time? Do we not have growing problems of infidelity in our midst? Does it shock us and cause us holy indignation when we face adultery, drug addiction, fornication, and hit-and-miss church attendance in our midst? Do we question why these things are so? Or are we becoming hardened to the inroads of the world in our lives?

I believe that we all must confess that the world with its idols has made deep inroads in our lives. Christ says to us in this prophecy, Beware! Repent of your sin, lest ye become as Aholibah! For God will not be mocked!

(continued on page 71)



# News From Our Churches

October 15, 1984

"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). Byron Center Church was privileged, on October 14, with the public confession of faith of Lori Holstege. Lori, as many of you know, is a twenty-two year old deaf-mute. Rev. Gritters preached Romans 10:10 on "Confession of Faith." Two years ago Mrs. Hoeksema began working with Lori, teaching her Bible history and the Heidelberg Catechism. At the same time, Rev. Gritters supplied condensed sermons for Lori each sabbath day. Lori stood up with Mrs. Hoeksema, who pointed to each question on a paper prepared for Lori to read, while Rev. Gritters read them to the congregation. With her mouth, Lori made confession of her faith. May God be praised for His mighty deed.

Rev. and Mrs. Bruinsma and family were planning on leaving for Jamaica October 16. However, Rev. Bruinsma was scheduled for hernia surgery today. When the Bruinsmas leave for Jamaica, D.V., their new address will be: Ferris Heights, Cave P.O., Westmoreland, Jamaica.

The Jamaican Mission Committee will be setting up a correspondence schedule for the families of First Church, Grand Rapids, to write Rev. and Mrs. Bruinsma. The committee feels this is an excellent way for members of the congregation to become involved with the labors, and will also be much appreciated by the Bruinsmas. This should also encourage others of us from other churches to write to the Bruinsmas while they are in Jamaica.

At the request of the Mission Committee the consistory of First Church, Holland, is sending their pastor and family to Wellington, New Zealand to labor there for 6-9 months. Rev. R. Miersma will be leaving for New Zealand on October 22. He will be laboring in the North Palmerston area with the group of believers our churches have been helping in the past years. We pray that the Lord may bless this work of missions and that the congregation of Holland Church will also be blessed by the Lord as they make this sacrifice.

Prof. Hanko and Rev. Engelsma will be leaving for Northern Ireland for a lecture tour, on October 18. They will be speaking at the Bible Presbyterian Church for seven consecutive evenings. They intend also to contact other churches in Ireland and Scotland who have corresponded in the past with our churches.

Rev. Cammenga preached his farewell sermon in Hull Protestant Reformed Church on October 7. He was installed October 14 in Loveland Church with Rev. Kamps officiating.

The results of the tests of Rev. Houck's son, Jeremy, showed that his kidneys are healthy, yet, for some reason, they do not always function properly. This problem is being treated with medication. If this is not successful, he may have to go on dialysis sometime in the future.

On October 6, First Church held a tree-cutting party at their new property on Michigan Street. Work has now begun, since the congregation approved the building plans and the borrowing of the amount of money they will need to complete their new building.

Southeast Church's Evangelism Society is putting Rev. Haak's sermons on the radio every Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on WMAX, 1480 AM.

I found this interesting paragraph in South Holland's bulletin: "The Council plans to make nominations for office bearers at its meeting this week. In accordance with Article 22 of our Church Order the members of the congregation are given the opportunity to direct attention to suitable persons for office either by a letter or by appearing at our meeting."

In regards to education, a special meeting of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed School Society was held October 11. The purpose of the meeting was to approve proposals to start erecting their new school.

Hope School has a special group of students. The P.R. Special Education School is meeting in the main building. Although this class of three students and their teacher are not a part of Hope School as far as organization is concerned, they are part of Hope School in their daily activities.

**AHOLIBAH** (continued from page 70)

On the other hand, be comforted, for God is a faithful covenant God. He always keeps unto Himself the elect remnant. He will give grace to be humbled by this Word. He will cleanse His own of their sin in Christ, and He will give His remnant grace to flee their sin. Our prayer is for this sustaining and saving grace, that we may be renewed in our desire to serve Him as faithful servants under His Word.



## Annual Secretary's Report, R.F.P.A.

Another year of printing *The Standard Bearer* has come to an end, and once more our songs of joy and praise ring out. For sixty years now our Covenant God and Father has in His rich mercy given us as Protestant Reformed people the privilege of sounding forth His truth in the printed page. He has not only given this glorious heritage to our grandfathers and fathers, but also to us, their sons and daughters. We have been given a tremendous blessing, but also a great responsibility to remain faithful to His Word. May our prayer be that God will continue to remember us in His gracious kindness until He returns again.

A committee of the Board looked into ways to commemorate this milestone during the past year. We decided that a public lecture would be in order, since it is not because of the faithfulness of us as churches, but the faithfulness of God's grace should be our boast. This address to the praise and glory of our God is to be given by our Editor-in-Chief.

The Board also looked into price quotations given by another printing company asking for our business. After seeing what they had to offer and taking into consideration the good working relationship we have with our present printer, we decided to stay with our current printer.

Because of the age of our Business Manager and the heavy work load placed on him, he requested that he receive help in his labors. Mr. G. (Bud) Bylsma has been giving him a hand when it is mailing time. In this way we also have more than one man who knows exactly what has to be done to get *The Standard Bearer* to you as subscribers.

Our Business Manager reports that in the past year there were 1,950 copies of *The Standard Bearer* printed each printing. Of this total, 1,877 copies are mailed to subscribers, with 787 going outside the west Michigan area, 775 in the west Michigan area, and 165 to foreign subscribers. *The Standard Bearer* keeps 150 copies each time to be made into bound volumes. The increase this year was slight, yet we are thankful that there is still an interest for the Reformed truth not only in our churches but also outside our churches.

The Board has again looked for a place to store all of *The Standard Bearer* materials. First Church is sold, and the time grows nearer when everything

must be moved. We are checking to see if we might store this material with our RFPA books. This would make things much easier for our Business Manager because he takes care of both of them. This would also save him some traveling.

The Board takes this opportunity to thank our Business Manager, who in his own humble way makes sure you receive your issues on time. It may only be a few hollow sounding words, but we thank our God that He has given us men like Mr. Vander Wal who give freely of their time for this cause. May God continue to bless and strengthen him. We also thank Prof. H.C. Hoeksema for his diligent labors in making sure that there is material to be printed in this magazine twice each month, and for his very interesting editorials. We have again enjoyed the three special issues this year.

We are grateful that our ministers see their calling to proclaim and defend the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ in all its purity in this wicked world. That above all distinguishes this magazine from all other magazines in this day and age in which we live. We say this not in pride, but in humility, because it is God, and He alone, Who keeps us faithful.

We thank those on the Board who have done their work well for these last three years and whose terms are now finished. Our prayer is that God will watch over Bud Bylsma, Bill Corson, and Arnold Dykstra in the years to come.

It is the Board's prayer that we as churches may continue to pray for and support this magazine in the years to come. May we hold the truth dear and by God's grace teach it to our children. May we in confidence say with the Psalmist in Psalm 48:14, "For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death."

With you in Christ,  
(w.s.) James Koole, Secretary

### NOTICE!!! PUBLIC LECTURE

The Protestant Reformed Lecture Committee invites you and your friends to the Fall Lecture to be held on November 1, 1984, at 8 P.M., at the East Leonard Christian Reformed Church, 1027 Leonard Ave., N.E. in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Rev. Ronald Van Overloop will speak on the topic: "REFORMATION AND THE PREACHED WORD." Refreshments will be served following the lecture!

The Lecture Committee