

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Whether ministers have taken over the vast majority of (pastoral) work because they, with a sense of their own importance and expertise, have taken it from elders, or whether the work has been pushed on them by elders who do not want to do the work given them by Christ, the fact remains that the congregation suffers. It suffers because...

See "The Calling of Elders" — page 295

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

## Our Sincere Conversion

Rev. C. Hanko

*Ques. 88. Of how many parts does the true conversion of man consist?*

*Ans. Of two parts; of the mortification of the old man, and the quickening of the new man.*

*Ques. 89. What is the mortification of the old man?*

*Ans. It is the sincere sorrow of heart that we have provoked God by our sins; and more and more to hate and flee from them.*

*Ques. 90. What is the quickening of the new man?*

*Ans. It is a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works. Heid. Catechism, Lord's Day 33.*



Behold, he prayeth!

This was said of Saul, who later was known as Paul the apostle, but who at this moment was stricken with blindness in Damascus after he had seen Christ on the way.

You can be sure that Saul, the Pharisee, had piously mouthed many prayers during his life time. Even shortly before this he had thought that he was doing God a service by trying to wipe out the Christians. Undoubtedly he had been very satisfied with himself as he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, and as he watched the stoning of Stephen.

Yet now Christ from heaven informs Ananias that Saul is on his knees for the first time praying a divinely acceptable prayer. This was the wonder of grace wrought by the Spirit in one who would become the apostle to the gentiles!

What a wonder!

When our fathers at Dordt spoke of this first work of grace in the heart of the sinner who is dead in trespasses and sins they wrestled to find words to describe it. Human language hardly suffices as they stammer: "But when God accomplishes his good pleasure in the elect . . . he . . . powerfully illuminates their minds by his Holy Spirit, pervades the inmost recesses of the man: he opens the closed, and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised, infuses new qualities into the will, which though heretofore dead, he quickens; from being evil, disobedient and refractory, he renders it good, obedient, and pliable." And later: "It is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation, or to the resurrection from the dead" (Canons of Dordt, III, IV, 11, 12).

As we read this we are reminded that the fathers did not clearly distinguish between regeneration and conversion, but used the terms interchangeably. Scripture speaks of both regeneration and conversion. It speaks of regeneration as the very first work of the Holy Spirit in the dead sinner, who cannot see, hear, speak, or feel, any more than a corpse in the cemetery is able to do any of these.

Nowhere does Scripture ever present an attractive picture of the sinner lost in sin and misery. Sometimes we are compared to a lifeless corpse that can only be resurrected by the almighty power of the living God. Sometimes we find our likeness in the demoniacs of Jesus' day, driven by the irresistible power from within, which constantly works to destroy us. Only He that is mightier than Satan can storm his fortress and destroy him. Again, Jesus compares us to the blind, the deaf, the

maimed, yes, and even to a leper. Jesus touched a leper while He cleansed him. Touched the man with his ugly, putrid sores! Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows! Regeneration is God's almighty power that implants new life, the life of Christ, in us, whereby children who bear the image of the devil are transformed into sons and daughters of the living God through faith in Jesus Christ. Amazing wonder! Boundless grace! For such a wretch as I!

Upon this regeneration conversion must follow. Just as when Jesus stood by the tomb of Lazarus power went forth from Him into that dead body, creating new life and enabling Lazarus to hear when Jesus called his name, to stir, to arise, and to come forth from the grave, so also Christ brings to consciousness the new life He has implanted in us. Just as birth follows conception, or as a seed sown into the soil sprouts forth into a plant that bears fruit, so also the first work of God's grace in us results in a conscious life, evidenced in our conversion.

By the indwelling Spirit we are become new creatures, ingrafted into Christ, living the life of Christ according to the new man. Our heart is renewed. Also our mind is renewed, from which issue evidences of that new life in our desires, thoughts, words, actions, and deeds. A radical change takes place in our lives. Sin no more has dominion. Grace abounds. Our pride is broken, so that we humble ourselves in dust and ashes before our God. That which we formerly delighted in now causes deep sorrow, sorrow that we have transgressed God's commands and offended Him with our sins. In deepest shame we beg for mercy. Scripture uses two different words to describe this work of God in us. The one refers to an inner change, a turning about of the mind. The other refers to a resultant turning about in our outward life.

Before our conversion we walked in darkness, our backs turned against God, our faces directed toward hell. We were hell-bound enemies of God, willing slaves of sin, delighting in the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. We craved sin, and sought it wherever we might find it. Daily we sank deeper into the mire of corruption, assuring ourselves that this momentary fling would have no lasting consequences. Yet sin, like an octopus, kept wrapping its powerful tentacles about us. Fools that we were! But God, who is rich in mercy, because of that great love wherewith He loved us even in the sacrifice of His dear Son for our sins, raised us up from the dead, and gave us grace to hear the voice of Jesus calling us out of darkness into His marvelous light! We are turned about, now with our backs toward the realm of



darkness, our faces uplifted toward God and heaven, our eye of faith fixed upon the hope of everlasting communion with God in glory. The Spirit of Christ is now the power within us unto salvation!

Even as a tree is known by its fruits, so we begin to bring forth fruits unto eternal life! As we read of Saul, Behold, he prayeth!

A new life in a body of sin.

Although our first reaction may be that the power of sin is completely broken, so that now we can live sinless lives on the mountain tops of faith, always rejoicing, thanking and praising God, we soon discover that the battle has just begun! To our chagrin we are soon faced with the reality that, as our fathers expressed it, the most holy have but a small beginning of the new obedience in this life!

We are our own worst enemy! There is the new man in Christ, but there also still remains the old man of sin. This new man is I, the reborn saint in Christ. Yet it may never escape us that the old man is also I myself. Sin is not an evil force outside of me, some power over which I have no control, something foreign to me. No! I am evil, born in sin! Evil desires arise within me, often inadvertently. These are my desires. Evil thoughts within me are a part of my sinful self. Evil words, spoken so glibly, are my words. My eye is lured to sin, my ear reaches out to hear it. It is I who is sinning. It is the old man with all his character faults. Yet even while I sin my conscience condemns me. The new man in Christ hates sin and wants no part of it. Not as if I live in a sort of dualism, with two wills, two conflicting desires, two persons in one body. Thank God that this is not the case! Rather, the pure thoughts that issue forth from my renewed heart are always contaminated by the sin that wars in my members. At the same time the new man condemns the evil that is still present in me. Therefore, on the one hand, I cry out, "O wretched man that I am!" On the other hand, I can say: I thank God through Jesus Christ, my Lord! I will the good, even though sin is always present in me. And that will, by God's grace, always triumphs!

There is, besides the initial conversion, also a dai-

ly conversion, or growth in sanctification. Scripture describes this as a putting off of the old man and a putting on of the new man. Sometimes this is referred to as a crucifying of the old man, stressing how painful it is to give up our old habits, to condemn our character faults, to humble ourselves in shame and confess our guilt before God and before those whom we have offended. Our Catechism refers to this as a sincere sorrow for sin, hating it, and fleeing from it.

This sincere sorrow stands in sharp contrast to a sorrow that is not sincere. The world also experiences a certain sorrow for wrongdoing. We think of Cain, of Esau, and of Ahab. One can be filled with remorse, even with deep remorse that ends in suicide, as was the case with Judas. This remorse arises from sinful pride — to think that this happens to *me*! It is a strong sense of shame at being exposed. It is often accompanied by anger, bitterness against others, mainly because we hate the horrible consequences of our wrongdoing. That kind of sorrow, Scripture says, can only work death. It is soon forgotten, and the sinner finds himself in another evil. The sincere sorrow is the world of God in us, the awareness that we have sinned against the Most High God! The remorse of the wicked works death; the repentant sorrow of God's child bears a lasting fruit unto life eternal.

Accompanying the putting off of the old man is the putting on of the new man in Christ.

This consists, according to the Heidelberg, of a sincere joy of heart in God through Jesus Christ.

How different this is from the hollow laughter, the joy of the world. Their humor is often blasphemy, mockery of all that is holy, finding pleasure in the misery of others, enjoying the filth of the gutter, and all the while trying to drown the grief that gnaws at their vitals.

The joy of the believer is genuine, a sincere expression of an inner peace with God, and an exuberant thankfulness with all the saints as the beginning of the eternal, heavenly joy!

By grace we are able to walk in those good works, which God has before ordained for each of us, that we should walk in them! (Eph. 2:10)

*The Standard Bearer makes a  
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## EDITORIAL

# Preaching: On the Wane?

*Prof. H.C. Hoeksema*

A recent edition of *The Grand Rapids Press* carried in its "Religion" section a report concerning an address at Calvin Seminary by Haddon W. Robinson, president of Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary, on the subject of preaching. The title of this report was "Preaching: A Lost Art?" and the sub-title, "Good Sermons Demand Work, Teacher Says." The report was of interest to me because Dr. Robinson's address dealt with a very real problem in American pulpits in general. Preaching of the Word is largely a lost art today.

It is not my intention, however, to comment on Dr. Robinson's address as such. A brief press report would furnish insufficient material for such comment. Besides, that is not my purpose.

My intention is rather to use some of Dr. Robinson's reported remarks as an occasion and backdrop for a few comments of my own concerning preaching in our own Protestant Reformed pulpits. I hasten to add that I have not been going about incognito eavesdropping on the preaching in our churches. Other than the preaching of my own pastor or that of an occasional guest minister or now and then a broadcast sermon, I very rarely hear any of our ministers. Once in a while, however, I hear criticisms of preaching in our churches. Sometimes the criticism is of a rather general nature, such as, "Our younger ministers don't preach like our veteran ministers, like the 'old-timers.'" Sometimes the criticism is more specific, and I am asked for advice as to what can be done to bring about improvement in a given instance. Criticism may center on the alleged fact that the preaching is too superficial, too shallow, or that it is too general, not specific enough, not sharp, not sufficiently antithetical. When asked for such advice, I try to steer the individual in the right direction with respect to his complaints. My present remarks, therefore, are not to be understood as directed at any individual. They are rather intended to spur all of us, preachers and elders and congregations at

large, to consider whether preaching is on the wane in any of our churches, and, if so, to do something about it. Hence, "Whom the shoe fits, let him put it on."

One more introductory remark. I do not put much stock in the general comment which is sometimes made, that our younger ministers do not preach like the "old-timers." Why not? First of all, there is the obvious fact that our younger ministers are not "old-timers," and therefore cannot be expected to preach as such. Secondly, and in close connection with this, do not forget that our "old-timers" did not always preach as they do now; they were also novices once upon a time. I can personally recall the days when many of them were students who occasionally ascended the pulpit of First Church and were "nervous as a cat," as well as obviously lacking in experience. Every one of them would testify that he does not preach now as he did when he first entered the ministry. Thirdly, again in close connection with the preceding, we must not forget that there is a certain seasoning process which takes place in the life of a minister. To that seasoning process belong in general all the experiences of being in the ministry for a time, but also the experiences of participating in the "wars." It makes a tremendous difference whether a minister is just fresh from seminary, for example, or whether he has lived through and participated in a struggle such as that through which our churches passed in 1953 or in the immediate post-1924 years. In other words, we should keep things in perspective.

### *Preaching Must Have Priority*

"Pastors today have to be so many things to so many people that they don't have the time left to put into sermon preparation." Again: "Churches say they want a good preacher, but then they won't give him the time to prepare properly." And again: "People want their preacher to be relevant, but how can he be when he spends his week making



hospital visits, counseling couples, making plans for the new church and writing out the checks." These are comments of Dr. Robinson reported by *The Press*.

All of these comments have one thought in common — without regard now to the validity of some of the alleged reasons why ministers don't have the time to prepare sermons properly — namely: preaching must have the priority in the work of the minister. He is called to be a Minister of the Word of God. This can only mean that by far the greater part of his time and energy must be devoted to his preaching and catechetical instruction. And this, in turn, can only mean that by far the greater part of his time and energy must be spent in his study in preparation for preaching and, in part, for his instructional work.

This is his calling! Yes, for this purpose the congregation has called him. But even more, this is his calling by God!

Neither minister nor consistory nor congregation may ever forget this. The minister is not called primarily to do all kinds of "pastoral" work. He may not use his preoccupation with pastoral work as an alibi for poor sermons and poor sermon preparation. He may probably be considered a "nice man" and a "sympathetic pastor" when he spends fifty per cent of his time visiting the sheep and counseling, etc., but it is far more of a compliment and a testimony that he is faithful to his calling if he hears an occasional complaint that "pastor spends too much time in his study."

Why?

The answer is that no minister can prepare good sermons without spending hours and hours of study. The heart of good preaching is sound and thorough exegesis of the Scriptures. But this takes time. It takes careful study. But it is the only way to "relevant" preaching. For "relevant" preaching is preaching of the *Word of God*! It is an insult to that precious Word and an insult to his Sender when a preacher does anything less than his *best* in every sermon to deliver to God's people His Word and to unfold to them the riches of that Word every time he stands at the pulpit!

The minister himself must understand this. If he is unwilling to devote that kind of time and effort to his ministry, he should get out. He should understand, too, that it is only in the way of such diligent labor and burning of "midnight oil" that he will ever grow and develop as a minister and become one of those "seasoned veterans."

As we have indicated in an earlier editorial some months ago, the elders play an important part in this regard. They do this, first of all, because theirs

is the calling to exercise oversight of the preaching and of the preacher. If they detect that the preaching is not up to par, it is their calling to take the pastor in hand and to remind him of his calling and insist that there be improvement. If they observe that the minister does not have his priorities straight and that he is not devoting sufficient time to this most important aspect of his calling as minister, it is their duty to call his attention to this and to admonish him. But, in the second place, the elders have the duty to take care of much of the pastoral labor which only too often is left to the minister. I will not enlarge on this subject here. I call your attention to the fact that there is a very significant article on the work of the elders from the pen of Prof. Hanko in this issue. Be sure to read it.

#### *Don't Blame The Seminary*

The report of Dr. Robinson's address also stated the following: "Many lay people figure the seminaries focus on preaching. Not so. People who teach in seminaries have an academic background." It goes on to state: "So, many of these teachers don't really hold preaching in high regard. In these Bible schools, preaching is the Cinderella that never gets to go to the ball."

Now whatever may be the truth of this in the other seminaries — and in my opinion Robinson makes some rather sweeping statements — I assert without reservation that this is not true of our Theological School.

In the first place, it is not true that our professors have an academic background in distinction from a pulpit background. All of our professors came out of the churches after having served in the pulpit ministry for several years. The Constitution of our seminary deems this important: for it stipulates that in electing professors preference shall be given to those who have served in the pastoral ministry. And your current professors themselves deem this to be important. That is also the chief reason, by the way, why it is important that the churches give our professors opportunities to preach. It is important, yea, necessary, that the professors keep in touch in a practical way with the pulpit ministry.

In the second place, there is a very strong emphasis at our seminary on the training of *preachers*. All our students receive two semesters of instruction (instruction which includes practical exercises and experience) in Homiletics, the science of the art of preaching. And in connection with this course the central importance of preaching is strongly emphasized. Further, in our curriculum every student receives three years of practice preaching. This involves the preparation and delivery of two sermons per semester, or a total of twelve practice preaching sermons. Each of these sermons is carefully and



thoroughly criticized in class; and then the student is required to submit a revision, having taken into account the criticism of his fellow students and of the faculty.

In the third place, the entire curriculum of our seminary is geared to the preparation of preachers. Preaching is considered central. This is the reason why, for example, there are no fewer than eight semesters of exegesis, not counting those courses which are preparatory to exegesis. If the minister is to preach, he must learn to be an exegete: otherwise he will never be a capable preacher. This is why even the teaching of Dogmatics is geared to the future task of the preacher to teach sound doctrine, to proclaim all the riches of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

The preaching of the Word is and must remain central in our churches; and for that reason preparation for preaching is and must remain central in the life of the Minister of the Word of God; and for that reason preaching and training for preaching is and must remain central in the curriculum and in-

struction of our seminary.

May God give all our ministers grace to be faithful to this calling and to count themselves expendable in the work of the ministry!

### Correction

In the article on the trip by Rev. Engelsma and Prof. Hanks to North Ireland a mistake was made which should be corrected. In that article it was said that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church was organized under the leadership of W.J. Grier who, with others, left the Free Presbyterian Church in the late Forties. This is incorrect. The Evangelical Presbyterian Church was organized under the leadership of Rev. James Hunter in 1927 with the assistance of Rev. Grier. Both men left the Irish Presbyterian Church at that time. Rev. Norman Green, in whose church in Omagh Prof. Hanks preached, left the Free Presbyterian Church in the early Eighties and joined the Evangelical Presbyterian Church somewhat later. We apologize for this mistake.

## FEATURE

# The Calling of Elders

*Prof. H. Hanks*

(This article is the substance of a speech presented to the Officebearers' Conference held in Southeast Church on January 8, 1985. It is prepared for printing at the request of the Consistory of Southeast Church which sponsored the meeting.)

Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in the tradition of the Calvin Reformation have a form of church government known as Presbyterianism. The name derives from the Greek word, *presbyter*, which means "elder." The term refers therefore to the fact that the government of the church of Christ is the responsibility of elders. It was the conviction of John Calvin (as well as those who are the spiritual heirs of his reformatory work) that rule by elders in the church of Jesus Christ is Biblical.

It is clear from I Timothy 5:17 that Scripture dis-

tinguishes between two kinds of elders. Paul writes to Timothy: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." Three things are evident from this passage: 1) to elders belongs the rule of the church; 2) ministers who labor in the word and doctrine are also elders; 3) a distinction must nevertheless be made between elders who rule and elders who, in addition to ruling, labor in the Word and doctrine. Hence, some churches speak of two kinds of elders: ruling elders and teaching elders, the latter referring to the ministers or pastors. I am primarily concerned in this speech with ruling elders, and only incidentally with teaching elders.

The office of ruling elder is gradually being lost



in the church. It is not easy to know the reasons for this. No doubt one reason is the placing of men into this office who lack the qualifications for the office as set forth by Paul in I Timothy 3:1-7. That such men are frequently placed into office is obvious. Why they are put into office is not always evident. Sometimes it is difficult if not impossible to find qualified men. Sometimes qualified men refuse for one reason or another to serve. Sometimes Consistories themselves do not exercise care in the preparation of a nomination, and they put men on nomination, not because they have the Biblical qualifications, but because they are men of wealth, influence, prestige; or because they ought to be given a chance to serve; or because they ought to be made to feel at home since they are new in the congregation. When unqualified men who lack Scripture's qualifications for office are nevertheless ordained to that office the result is that the office of ruling elder goes into eclipse.

Another reason why the office of ruling elder suffers in our day is the growing practice of entrusting the care of the congregation to "specialists," rather than to the elders whom Christ appoints. Many believe that the needs of people in the congregation with special problems cannot be dealt with by untrained ruling elders; these needs are to be handled by specialists of one sort or another. The unmarried must be cared for by those who have made special studies of the needs of the unmarried and their problems, and perhaps written a doctrinal thesis on the subject. The mentally troubled must be cared for by psychiatrists or psychologists. Men trained in counseling must be hired to deal with people who need counseling. Experts in rehabilitation must deal with those who are drunkards or drug addicts. Para-ecclesiastical organizations are formed to deal with problems which cannot be handled by ruling elders who lack the necessary expertise to make the work effective.

Sometimes "ministers" with expertise in various fields are hired to do this work, and the "staff" of many congregations becomes very large. Sometimes the pastor himself receives special training to deal with these matters and such work becomes his specialty. All the problems of the congregation are cared for by others than ruling elders. If the pastor happens to be an expert in these various fields, he also becomes the dominant figure in the Consistory. He is the one who does the work in the congregation, and the Consistory under his expert guidance acts as little more than a rubber stamp on matters brought before it. And, as the complexity of the whole situation increases, ruling elders are no more those entrusted with the rule of the church, but form "Boards of Directors" whose responsibility it is to take care of the temporal matters of the

church — the pastor's salary, the building programs, etc.

The situation described above is not equally bad in all Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. But the trend is here and the result of the trend is that work which rightfully belongs to the ruling elders is more and more considered to be the responsibility of the trained pastors or other expert staff members. Large amounts of time during the week are therefore spent by the pastor in what we often refer to as "pastoral work," and almost no time remains for the minister to be in his study to prepare for preaching and catechetical instruction, to study, read, develop, grow spiritually, and work for the development of the riches of the truth of God's Word. The spiritual life of the congregation is hardly known to the elders; the problems of God's people are guarded by pastoral confidentiality; and the work of ruling elders is limited to meeting in the Consistory room a couple of times a month and taking care of routine work of the church. In this way the office of ruling elders is minimized and finally lost, and the congregation suffers in one way or another. The "expert" minister does all the work, while the sermons preached are not worth the paper they are written on.

\* \* \* \* \*

If we consult what others in the past have said concerning the work of ruling elders, it may come as something of a shock to us to learn how much of the work of the congregation is assigned to the men who hold this office. And we do well to examine some of this material.

The Biblical point of departure is Acts 20:28 where Paul admonishes the elders of the church of Ephesus: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God." Scripture here gives the work of oversight in the church, including feeding the flock, not to the ministers and pastors, but to the body of elders — of which body the minister is one member.

These ideas have been developed in our "minor confessions." Our Church Order (the one used in the Protestant Reformed Churches) defines the duty of elders in Article 23: elders are told that they must visit the families of the congregation in order particularly to comfort and instruct the members. While the reference here is to what we call family visitation, it must be remembered: 1) that the article requires such visits to be made far more often than once a year — as is common among us; 2) the purpose of such visits is specifically to comfort and instruct the members. In connection with this last point, it is obvious that the Church Order has in mind the comfort and instruction of the members



*in connection with their daily walk in life with all its problems and troubles.*

The Formula of Subscription which all elders are required to sign binds elders by a solemn vow to exert themselves to keep the church free from error. This responsibility rests not only upon the preacher, but upon the whole body of elders.

The Form for the Ordination of Elders and Deacons speaks at length of the work of elders. The Form calls elders "ministers" who are helpers to the pastors, as Levites were helpers to the priests in the Old Testament. Elders are instructed to take the oversight of the church, which oversight includes: 1) diligently to look, whether everyone properly deports himself in his confession and conversation; 2) to admonish those who behave disorderly, where the reference is not to official discipline calls, but to daily oversight in the congregation; 3) to serve all Christians with advice and consolation. Further, they are to admonish and caution everyone against his ruin and to see to it that Godliness is maintained in the church.

That the work of elders is indeed as broad as described in our Form is evident from many sources. Already the Convention of Wezel (1586), one of the earliest assemblies of the Reformed Churches in the Lowlands, had this to say about elders:

The Elders shall faithfully investigate whether they (the Church members) manifest themselves uprightly in walk and conduct, in the duties of godliness, in the faithful instruction of their households in the matter of family prayers, (morning and evening prayers) and such like matters; they shall admonish them to these duties with consideration, but also in all seriousness and according to conditions and circumstances; they shall admonish them to steadfastness, or strengthen them to patience, or spur them on to a serious minded fear of God; such as need comfort and admonition they shall comfort and admonish, and if need be they shall report a matter to their fellow Elders, who together with them are appointed to exercise discipline; and besides these matters they shall correct that which can be corrected according to the gravity of the sin committed; nor shall they neglect, each one in his own district, to encourage them to send their children to catechism.

In their Commentary on the Church Order (old edition) Van Dellen and Monsma sum up what has been said by Church Order authorities throughout the history of the Reformed Churches. We quote excerpts from pp. 106-111.

Without a doubt, the individual elders may and must do a great deal of pastoral work upon their own initiative.

By all means, let our Elders diligently call upon the sick, the erring, the unfaithful, the mourning, etc.

They refer again to the Convention of Wezel which ruled that elders should visit every home every week. And they even go so far as to say that family visitation is not, in the first place, the work of the ministers.

Does home-visitation also belong to the task of the Ministers? Not in the first place. In the first place it belongs to the office of those that are called to be overseers, the Elders. Consequently, it is not even mentioned in Article 16, which indicates the task of Ministers. But inasfar as Ministers are teaching-Elders, (cf. Form of Installation), and in so far Elders, the work of Elders, (government, discipline, etc.), also falls to them, though not primarily.

Van Dellen and Monsma do not object to ministers doing pastoral work, of course; but they place this in proper perspective:

As much as their primary duties allow, Ministers should do personal work through home-visitation, visiting of the sick, the afflicted, and the aged, calling on delinquents, etc. All this may be included under what Article 16 terms "to watch over the Congregation." Moreover, effective ministerial work also requires close contact with the Congregation through personal work. But again, primarily, Ministers must preach and teach. And that, if they are to do it correctly and effectively, will require nearly all their time. And primarily home-visitation, etc., is the work of the regular Elders.

With this we agree. Ministers should not isolate themselves from their congregations and live only in the ivory tower of their own studies, surrounded by their books, making abstract sermons which never touch the lives of the people of God. And surely to avoid this danger, they must know their sheep whom they are called to feed. But the danger is very real that we have reversed the order of priorities of which Van Dellen and Monsma speak. The primary work of ministers is to preach and teach, and this requires nearly all their time. What is left can be used for pastoral work. We have turned it around. The minister is busy all week visiting sick and shut-ins, counseling and admonishing; and the little time he can squeeze out of a hectic schedule he spends in his study preparing to



preach and teach. As often as not, the result is half-baked sermons, instruction without preparation, or a practice of "turning over the pile" to preach sermons made long ago and far away.

In an interesting book entitled "The Ruling Elder," Samuel Miller makes clear that the Presbyterian tradition gives the same emphasis to the work of elders:

The Church Session (Consistory) is charged with maintaining the spiritual government of the congregation; for which purpose they have the power to inquire into the knowledge and Christian conduct of the members of the Church; . . . to admonish, to rebuke, to suspend, or exclude from the sacraments, those who are found to deserve censure; to concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation . . . (p. 3).

It is their duty to have an eye of inspection and care over all the members of the congregation; and, for this purpose, to cultivate a universal and intimate acquaintance, as far as may be, with every family in the flock of which they are made "overseers." They are bound to watch over the children and youth, and especially baptized children, with paternal vigilance, recognizing and affectionately addressing them on all proper occasions; giving them, and their parents in reference to them, seasonable counsel . . . . It is their duty to attend to the case of those who are serious and disposed to inquire concerning their eternal interest — to converse with them, and, from time to time, to give information concerning them to the Pastor. It is their duty to take notice of, and admonish in private, those who appear to be growing careless or falling into habits in any respect criminal, suspicious or unpromising. It is their duty to visit and pray with the sick, as far as their circumstances admit, and to request the attendance of the Pastor on the sick, and the dying, when it may be seasonable or desired . . . (p. 6).

It is the duty of Ruling Elders, also, to visit the members of the Church and their families — *with* the Pastor, if he requests it, *without* him, if he does not — to converse with them; to instruct the ignorant; to confirm the wavering; to caution the unwary; to reclaim the wandering; to encourage the timid; and to excite and animate all classes to a faithful and exemplary discharge of duty . . . (p. 6).

From all this it is clear that the office of elder is much broader in scope than is generally recognized today. All agree that what today goes under the name of "pastoral work" belongs in large measure to the office of ruling elder. To perform this work all agree that the elders must visit regularly all the families of the congregation. This is not what we call "family visitation" done once a year. Nor is the reference to decisions of the Consistory appointing a committee to visit certain people in the congregation. The idea is rather that each elder, on his own, has the responsibility of visiting regularly those families in the congregation particularly assigned to his "oversight." (Usually this is done by dividing the congregation into districts, with two elders responsible for each district.) He must visit the families, not because something is wrong in the families, not because problems have risen which need to be dealt with (although this must also be done by the elders); but that he may know the people of the congregation, the sheep of Christ; that he may instruct and warn, comfort and encourage, speak with children and young people, "oversee" the spiritual life of families, etc. The emphasis falls not so much on "dealing with problems," but rather on oversight which, if properly done, will avoid untold problems, or at least acquaint elders with them before they have gotten entirely out of hand. The picture is of elders concerned with the spiritual well-being of the saints and doing all that is necessary to help God's people in the difficult ways in which the Lord leads them, and to assist them to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

Whether ministers have taken over the vast majority of this work because they, with a sense of their own importance and expertise, have taken it from elders, or whether the work has been pushed on them by elders who do not want to do the work given them by Christ, the fact remains that the congregation suffers. It suffers because elders are not doing that which Christ calls them to do and Christ is not, in that measure, in the congregation; it suffers because ministers have no time for study and reflection, for reading and meditating, for preparation for preaching and teaching.

\* \* \* \* \*

While most if not all who busy themselves with the work of the church would agree with all this, certain objections are bound to be brought. It is well to anticipate some of them here and answer them.

Almost all the objections center in one form or another in the fact that elders feel themselves unqualified to do the work which their office requires. There are several things which ought to be said



about this. In the first place, it is absolutely essential that Consistories take great care in forming nominations for elders that those put on nomination may indeed have the qualifications mentioned in the first verses of I Timothy 3. This will take care of the matter of qualification.

In the second place, it is sometimes objected that qualified men who are willing to serve are difficult, if not impossible, to find. If this is indeed true then it is not only a great shame on the church of Christ, but we can look for dark and grim days ahead. The welfare of the church depends upon her elders who rule in the name of Christ.

But it must never be forgotten that one reason why congregations lack qualified men is because the important verse with which Paul begins his discussion of the qualifications of officebearers is forgotten: "He who desireth the office of a bishop, desireth a good thing." This is emphatic. Before the apostle discusses the subject of qualifications, he makes this statement about desiring the office of bishop. The whole matter of qualifications therefore presupposes men who desire the office. There must be men in the congregation who desire the office of bishop — not out of a sense of their own importance; not to push themselves forward into positions of prominence; but in eager desire to serve in the church of Christ. And, desiring the office of bishop, they must, before they are ever put on nomination, prepare themselves for this work. Preparation is part of "desiring" the office. Why do we expect would-be ministers, not only to desire the office of minister but to engage actively in the pursuit of that calling by committing themselves to the work and preparing themselves for it — while we frown in dismay on others who do the same in preparation for the office of ruling elder?

In the third place, many complain of a lack of time on the part of elders to do all the work that needs to be done. Not a lack of qualification keeps them from the work, but a lack of time. And undoubtedly there is truth to this when many elders must care for their families, work full time to support their families and do other work in the kingdom. But here, too, several things must be said. If a lack of time on the part of elders to do the work leads to a lack of time on the part of ministers to work in their studies, the situation has to be corrected, no matter what. Further, it is not unreasonable in our day when most men retire at 65 and look for a part-time job, to find men who have served before, who are eminently qualified for the office, who are *elders* in the truest sense of the word, to give themselves full-time to the work. Dr. A. Kuyper, in his pamphlet, *Concerning the Reformation of the Church*, even speaks of the fact that

congregations, if there is too much work, ought to appoint full-time elders who are paid by the congregation to do the work.

But finally, I cannot accept this excuse about lack of qualification. It arises from the mistaken notion that the problems in the congregation can be dealt with only by specialists and trained counselors of one sort or another. This I do not believe. All the solutions to all the problems in the life of the people of God are to be found in the Word of God. Elders are called to bring that Word, and they are just as qualified to do this as ministers, presupposing that they give themselves to the study of the Word and to prayer. They need not be experts in counseling, take courses in alcohol rehabilitation, become experts in youth work. All they have to do is bring God's Word (and that, thank God, is enough). To that calling they are appointed by Christ; that and that alone is the strength and authority of their office; in performing that work Christ has promised to bless the congregation. Elders must believe that, armed with the Word of Christ, they have the only weapon they need to defeat all the powers of sin. In fact, in some respects, elders are more qualified than ministers to do this. Ministers, after all, are in a congregation for a little while and then they leave to minister elsewhere. Elders are in the same congregation for many years, and some may have been born and raised in the congregation in which they serve. They know that congregation much better than any minister ever can, and can bring God's Word to God's people in their needs with an understanding which ministers cannot attain in short periods of service.

We must see to it that everything is done to provide the church with qualified elders. We close with a quote from Miller:

Were the foregoing views of the nature and duties of the Elder's office generally adopted, duly appreciated, and faithfully carried out into practice, what a mighty change would be effected in our Zion! With what a different estimate of the obligations and responsibilities which rest upon them would the candidates for this office enter on their sacred work! And with what different feelings would the mass of the people, and especially all who love the cause of Christ, regard these spiritual counsellors and guides in their daily walks, and particularly in their friendly and official visits! This is a change most devoutly to be desired. The interests of the Church are more involved in the prevalence of just opinions and practice in reference to this office, than almost any



other that can be named. Were every congregation, besides a wise, pious and faithful Pastor, furnished with eight or ten Elders, to cooperate with him in all his parochial labors, on the plan which has been sketched: men of wisdom, faith, prayer, and Christian activity; men willing to deny and exert themselves for the welfare of Zion; men alive to the importance of everything that relates to the orthodoxy, purity, order and spirituality of the Church, and ever on the watch for opportunities of doing good; men,

in a word, willing to "take the oversight" of the flock in the Lord, and to labor without ceasing for the promotion of its best interest. Were every Church furnished with a body of SUCH ELDERS, can anyone doubt that knowledge, order, piety, and growth in grace, as well as in numbers, would be as common in our Churches as the reverse is now the prevailing state of things, in consequence of the want of fidelity on the part of those who are *nominally* the overseers and guides of the flock? (pp. 11, 12).

## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

# Revelation — Christ's Victorious Return (concluded)

*Rev. J. Kortering*

13. The pouring out of the seven vials (bowls), (Rev. 15:1-16:21). The seven angels who have the seven last plagues are introduced (15:1). Before they come forth, the saints who are victorious are pictured as standing upon a sea of glass which is mingled with fire. They are singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, praising God and acknowledging that all glory is His. And the nations have come to worship Him (15:2-4). The temple is opened and the seven angels having the seven last plagues come forth (15:5, 6). One of the four beasts gives to the seven angels the seven golden vials, full of the wrath of God. The temple is full of smoke and no man is worthy to enter the temple till the seven plagues are fulfilled (15:7, 8). A great voice tells the angel to pour out the vial (16:1). The first angel pours the vial on the earth. A grievous sore fell on all the men who had the mark of the beast and on those who worshiped the image (16:2). The second angel poured the next vial upon the sea; and it became as blood, and every living soul in the sea died (16:2). The third vial is poured upon the rivers and fountains of water and they became blood. An angel declares that God is righteous in destroying the wicked for they have shed the blood of the

saints. Another soul out of the altar acknowledges God's justice in His judgments (16:4-7). The fourth angel pours his vial upon the sun and men are scorched with fire. They in turn blaspheme God and repented not (16:8, 9). The fifth angel poured his vial upon the seat of the beast (place of rule); and his kingdom became filled with darkness and they suffered great pain for which they blasphemed the God of heaven (16:10, 11). The sixth vial is poured upon the great river Euphrates and the waters are dried up so that the kings of the east can come. He sees three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon. These are false prophets who work miracles and cause the kings of the earth to gather in the battle of the great day. This is called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon (16:12-14, 16). An interjection is expressed: "Behold Christ comes as a thief, and blessed are they who watch and keep their garments clean" (16:15). The seventh vial is poured in the air. A voice sounds from the temple, "It is done." Thunder, lightning, earthquakes, and hailstones destroy the earth. Babylon is divided into three parts under the fierceness of God's wrath. The ungodly respond with even more blasphemy (16:17-21).



14. The mystery and fall of Babylon the great (Rev. 17:1-18:24). The angel invites John to come and see the judgment of the great whore with whom the kings and people have committed fornication (17:1, 2). The Spirit carried John into the wilderness and he saw a woman arrayed in scarlet, riding upon a scarlet beast, holding in her hand a cup filled with the filthiness of her fornication (17:3, 4). She has the name, "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" (17:5). She is drunk with the blood of the saints (martyrs), and all who follow her are the ungodly whose names are not in the book of life (17:6-8). The beast represents kings that have reigned, and some must yet reign who make war with the Lamb but are overcome by the King of kings (17:9-14). The whore that rides the beast represents the false prophets who influence people with evil (17:15). In the end the nations shall turn against her and make the whore desolate (17:16-18). An angel descends from heaven and announces the fall of Babylon, for the measure of her iniquity is full (18:1-3). A call is given to the people of God to come out from Babylon, for God will reward her evil with the cup of wrath in the measure she committed abominations (18:4-8). The kings of the earth bewail her destruction, "Alas, Babylon is fallen." The merchants who dealt in all manner of delicacies and were made rich by her, weep. "In one hour, so great riches is come to nought." The sailors weep when they see the smoke of Babylon rise heavenward. They cast dust on their heads and cry out in desolation (18:9-19). The faithful people are exhorted to rejoice over Babylon's fall (18:20). An angel casts a great millstone into the sea and once again the harpers, musicians, and craftsmen are silenced. There is no business or pleasure, for God has come in justice to destroy Babylon (18:21-24).

15. Christ comes to judgment over all people (19:1-20:15). The saints in heaven introduce the next vision with a hallelujah chorus. They rejoice in that the great whore is judged and the blood of the saints avenged. They are joined by the twenty-four elders and four beasts, even the great throng of angels singing, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth" (19:1-6). We now learn that the joyful song introduces the marriage of the Lamb with His bride, the church. The bride is adorned in fine linen, white and clean. John must write: "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." He bows before the angel, but is admonished, he is to worship God (19:7-10). Christ is pictured as a judge, riding upon a white horse, with eyes of flaming fire and whose name is, "Word of God." The heavenly armies follow Him on white horses (19:11-14). The name on his vesture and

thigh is "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword (19:15, 16). An angel calls to the fowls to come and eat the flesh of kings, of men and horses, for the enemy is defeated (19:17, 18). The opposition from the kings of the earth is defeated once and for all. The beast and false prophet and their followers are cast into the lake of fire (19:19-21). An angel with a key to the bottomless pit binds Satan and casts him into the pit so he cannot deceive the nations for a thousand years (20:1-3). During this time the souls of the martyrs reign with Christ (20:4). This is called the first resurrection. Blessed are they who share in it, for the second death does not touch them (20:5, 6). After the thousand years, Satan is loosed in order that he may deceive the nations, Gog and Magog, to bring them in battle against the camp of the saints (20:7-9). God intervenes and casts all these enemies into the lake of fire which according to a later verse is called the second death. Christ sits on the great white throne and judges all creatures. Even the sea, death, and hell give up the dead for this purpose (20:10-15).

16. The new Jerusalem and the final state of glory (21:1-22:5). The heavens and earth pass away and are replaced with a new one (21:1). Upon that new earth, John saw the new Jerusalem coming as a bride adorned for her husband. The tabernacle of God is with men and God shall wipe away all tears (21:2-4). Christ declares that He makes all things new (21:5-8). An angel introduces the bride of the Lamb. She is presented as the New Jerusalem, with twelve gates, twelve foundations, and streets of gold. There is no need for the sun, for the Lord God is the light. The gates are open for there is no opposition; the wicked are cast into the lake of fire (21:9-27). The river of life flows from the throne of God and waters the tree of life whose fruit is for the inhabitants and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. All the inhabitants of heaven see the face of the Lamb. God illuminates them and they reign with Christ for ever and ever (22:1-5).

17. Conclusion of the book (22:6-21). The angel assures John that the words of the vision are faithful and true and contain the things that must shortly come to pass (22:6). Christ assures the reader that He is coming quickly. Blessed are they that keep the sayings of this book. John must not worship the angel, but worship God and make known the contents of the book because the end is at hand and the spiritual character of mankind is determined for eternity (22:7-11). Again Christ says, "I come quickly, I am alpha and omega. Blessed are they that do my commandments. They have the right to the tree of life. Without are dogs and liars" (22:12-17). The personal testimony is given that the words of the prophecy of this book are true. A



warning is given that no one add or subtract anything from it lest they forfeit their place in the holy city (22:18, 19). The closing words are, "I come quickly. Even so come, Lord Jesus." The apostolic blessing closes the book (22:20, 21).

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Why is the sub-title, "Christ's victorious return," an appropriate description of the content of this book?
2. Consider the reasons why we believe the apostle John wrote this book.
3. The Revelation is full of symbolism (most cannot possibly be interpreted literally). As you reflect upon this book, make a list of the outstanding symbols of the book (e.g., numbers, colors, images, visions) and next to them make a brief note as to their meaning.
4. The Revelation does not give us a time-table for the return of Christ. How should we interpret this book as far as learning how close we are to the end of the world is concerned?
5. Make a list of the terrible warnings and judgments

that are prophesied upon the wicked. Next to this list, make another list of the promises and comfort that are prophesied for the people of God.

6. Reflect upon the letters to the seven churches. How do these letters apply to the congregation of which you are a member? Do some of the warnings in these letters apply in a special way to your church?
7. Show from the Revelation that creation (nature) is subject to both the curse of God and the blessing of God.
8. The truth of the antithesis emphasizes that the church is in the world, but not of the world. Refer to passages from Revelation that teach this very clearly. What is the importance of this truth as the end of the world draws near?
9. Make a list of the visions that you believe speak to you in a special way. What is their meaning and why are they precious to you?
10. According to our flesh, there are many things that we learn in Revelation that make us afraid. List some of them. Next to them, quote a passage from this book that offsets this fear.

## MISSION NEWS

# A Report of the Mission Work in Northwest Chicago

*Pastor Ron Van Overloop*

February, 1985

Greetings in the name of Ebenezer, for Jehovah hath helped us (I Samuel 7:12). In the confidence of Ebenezer do we labor in the cause of the truth and for the establishment of permanent beacons of the brilliant truth of the glory of God and the salvation of sinners.

For already six months the church extension work of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church in the northwestern suburbs of Chicago has been united with a missionary of the Gospel who can give himself to full-time labors. Prior to that, South Holland Church with the diligent efforts of

her pastor had been developing the work unto this goal for almost a year and a half. Five families (with six children) and one individual welcomed the missionary pastor and his family, and have served as the core group. South Holland's congregation and counsel continue to show strong support by their frequent presence at the worship services and their prayers for God's blessing upon the work. This support is greatly appreciated, for the distance which separates South Holland and the work in the Northwest suburbs is about 50 miles.

The labors are within three suburbs to the west and north of O'Hare International Airport, the



world's busiest. The missionary's family, along with three of the families, live on the western side of Elk Grove Village. The two other families live in Des Plaines. And the location of our worship services is in Bensenville. They are held in a rented Episcopal Church. An earnest and warm welcome is extended to all to visit us and our worship services. We are using St. Bede's Church, which is located on Highway 83, one mile north of its junction with I-290. Because we are renting we hold our worship services at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. Lord's Day mornings are used for two catechism classes, which are held in the missionary pastor's study.

The six months of labor have served to acquaint the missionary with the field. There has developed a good cooperation between the missionary and the men of the core group, so that the labors are a united effort. Thus the work is not that of one man, nor merely those of the calling and sending church and denominational Mission Committee. This creates the best of situations for the foundation of a potential congregation, if the Lord wills. All involved in the labors of the proclamation of the precious Gospel are very conscious of Ebenezer. Without the blessing of the Lord all human efforts are vain, but by His grace mighty works can be accomplished.

A part of the work is the broadcasting of the radio program, "A Reformed Witness," on WCFL (1000-AM) (a 50,000 watt, clear channel radio station) on Sunday mornings at 11:45. This proves to be both interesting and difficult work. It is difficult

because it is almost impossible to know the listening audience. This makes for a deeper consciousness of dependence upon the Lord and for earnestness in prayers that He will bless His church through these efforts. Efforts have been and are being made to advertise extensively the broadcast, as well as the worship services, in a variety of newspapers. Favorable responses have been received already (some even from Wisconsin), and these are used of the Lord to encourage the continued efforts.

Along with the worship services and the radio work, there are other efforts to extend our witness. A mid-week meeting is held at the church building. This has been a continuation of a study of the great Reformational truths treated in the Canons of Dordrecht. Two other studies have recently begun and are looked at as God-given opportunities to proclaim His truth unto the strengthening and salvation of His people. There is a Ladies' Bible Study held on Thursday mornings, which serves as an excellent way to bring in neighbors. Also the missionary has been asked to lead an informal, lunch-hour Study of the book of Mark for fifteen to twenty premed students at Loyola School of Medicine. God is to be thanked for providing these opportunities.

For all of the work your prayers are coveted that the glorious Gospel of the Sovereign and Gracious God will be boldly proclaimed, and that His grace will enable the great responsibilities to be met (II Thessalonians 3:1). It is difficult to be patient and zealous at the same time. Pray that the laborers may be patient and remain zealous, waiting for the Lord to bless the seeds which are sown.

## **GUIDED INTO ALL TRUTH**

# **The Reformation and the Source of Scripture's Authority**

*Rev. T. Miersma*

In the return of the Reformation to the truth of God's Word and the controversies with Rome, a central issue was the question of Scripture's authority. Both Rome and the reformers were agreed that Scripture was the Word of God, infallible and inerrant, possessing authority. The issue,

however, was what kind of authority did Scripture possess? What was the nature of that authority? And how was that authority to be understood and interpreted? These questions were all interrelated and are worth some careful attention. The first question which must be answered in this connec-



tion is this: what is the source of that authority? On this point the reformers and Rome disagreed. Both acknowledged that the Scriptures were of God; that itself was not the issue. But how and in what way was this understood to be true?

The church of Rome maintained the position that Scripture derived its authority as the Word of God from the church. There were several elements involved in this position, and they find their center in Rome's need to maintain the authority of the church hierarchy, particularly the supreme authority of the papacy. To understand this we must see that the entire system of Rome was founded upon the principle of maintaining a system of *external grace*, *physically* bestowed by the sacraments, through a *visible* priesthood. The Romish system is founded upon the idea that grace is physically conferred. Thus, for example, Rome teaches that the water of baptism is not merely a sign and seal of grace, but that the water of baptism itself, the physical washing with water, actually washes away original sin. Likewise, they taught and teach that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper actually confers grace by the physical eating and drinking of the literal body of Christ.

This latter idea of the Lord's Supper, transubstantiation, was combined with the idea that the administration of the Lord's Supper, the mass, was itself a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ, though in an unbloody manner, and therefore required a visible priesthood. Moreover, as all who partook of the Lord's Supper must, according to this view, be partakers of Christ by eating with the mouth, Rome also identified the church as the body of Christ, *exclusively* with the church institute in its visible form. All who were baptized were then objects of grace and were included in the church. To maintain such an idea they set aside the Biblical ideas of election and reprobation and the distinction between church visible and invisible, reducing the church to the visible institute. This meant also that all of salvation was conceived of in conditional and external terms. Sorrow for sin was reduced to outward acts of penance, holiness to outward acts of obedience and devotion by means of repeated prayers, pilgrimages, fastings, and such like. To be religious or spiritual, one entered the sacrament of marriage, while to advance to an even higher plane than that of the ordinary layman, one became a priest, monk, or nun and lived a life separate from the world. Works and participation in the sacraments became the means to merit and obtain grace, and without them one could fall from grace and be lost. It is in this context that the idea of purgatory also became necessary as a place in which, after death, one would pay the temporal penalty for sin, and as the place in which sanctification would be completed.

With such a system, the idea of indulgences also made sense, namely that as a means to escape purgatory, one could buy grace with money, and thus receive the forgiveness of sins and enter heaven. The church made a lucrative business out of both the sacraments and indulgences.

To prop up this system a distinction was made between the people and the clergy, in which the clergy were seen as the dispensers of grace and the embodiment of the church institute. The pope stood at the head as the visible head of the church through the hierarchy, personally manifesting Christ's headship over the church. The authority of God in Christ over His church did not reside therefore first of all in the Word of God, but in the clergy with the pope as the supreme authority; and the working of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth was restricted to the clergy alone.

When, therefore, the forerunners of the Reformation began to teach the principle of the church as the gathering of the elect, a spiritual body, to distinguish it from the church as visible and institute, the entire foundation of the Romish church was shaken. Likewise when Luther and the other reformers taught justification by faith and salvation by grace alone without works and began to attack the system of indulgences, they were in fact laying an ax to the root of the whole Romish system. When they began to assert the authority of the Word of God over the church and to stress the priesthood of believers, the entire foundation of the papacy was attacked and undermined.

Therein also lay the division between Rome and the reformers over the source of Scripture's authority. Rome taught that ultimate authority resided in the clergy and the hierarchy. This authority, they maintained, was received from Christ by Peter and passed along by apostolic succession to those who, following Peter, occupied the office of bishop in Rome. It is in this succession of persons and in the *visible* headship of Christ in the papacy that true divine authority was to be found. Along with this they maintained certain ideas concerning Scripture. First, they maintained that Scripture received its authority from the church, that is the clergy, since the clergy, as successors of the apostles, preceded the Scriptures in origin. The church was established first, they said, then Scripture was given to the church. The church's authority therefore was first and above that of Scripture. Secondly, it was the church which had the right to determine and had determined which books were to be received as Scripture. Scripture therefore possessed its authority because the church gave it that authority when it gathered and collected the books which make up the New Testament. More-



over, it was the church institute which had preserved the Word of God through the centuries by copying it, translating it, and declaring its interpretation and meaning. According to Rome, therefore, Scripture received its authority as the Word of God from the church. This in effect made the Scriptures dependent upon the church and not the church upon the Scriptures.

This position could not stand, for it was contrary to Scripture itself. Scripture plainly teaches that Christ is the only head of the church. The apostles were but instruments by which Christ gave His Word, and it was upon the authority of that Word of Christ, and by the guidance of His Spirit that the foundation of the church was laid. The Word of God set down in Scripture is not a different Word of God from that given by Christ and preached by the apostles, but the same Word. Nor does Scripture teach an apostolic succession of the authority and office of the apostles or of Peter. The church is not built upon their authority, but upon their doctrine, set down in the Word of God. Rome had based its claim for the position of Peter upon the word of Christ, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock will I build my church" (Matthew 16:18). But this theory also the reformers demolished as an unscriptural perversion of the passage. In the context of Matthew 16:18, it is not Peter, but Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," which is the rock upon which Christ would build His church (Matthew 16:16). Moreover, the reformers saw that Scripture taught a priesthood of believers and an anointing of all believers with the Spirit. Thus the work of the Spirit could not be limited to only a few but was to be found in the whole church.

Concerning the church's authority to determine which books belonged to the Word of God and formed the New Testament, the reformers repudiated the idea that this was done upon the church's authority, and ascribed it rather to the working of the Spirit in the church, whose testimony in the hearts of God's people led the church to recognize His Word and also to preserve and keep it. Thus

Luther writes in his address to the German nobility,

The second wall is even more tottering and weak; the claim, namely, that they alone are masters of the Scriptures; although they learn nothing from them during their entire life, they assume authority, and juggle before us impudent words, saying that the Pope cannot err in matters of faith, whether he be evil or good . . . They cannot quote a single letter to confirm that it is for the Pope alone to interpret the Scriptures or to confirm the interpretation of them; they have assumed the authority of their own selves . . .

Likewise Zwingli, the German Swiss reformer, in his Sixty-Seven Articles of 1523 writes in the first of them, "All who say that the Gospel is invalid without the confirmation of the Church err and slander God."

Over against the error of Rome the reformers set two principles as the basis of the source of Scripture's authority. First, that the Scriptures as given by God through the inspiration of the Spirit of Christ as the Spirit of truth, themselves bear objective testimony to the fact that they are the authoritative Word of God and of divine and not human origin. This is Scripture's own claim (II Peter 1:19ff.). Scripture therefore has its authority objectively of itself. Secondly, Scripture also presses this claim upon the hearts of God's people by the internal working of the Spirit. Thus the Holy Spirit Himself testifies in our hearts subjectively that they are of God. It is this same truth also which we as reformed people confess in Articles III, V, and VII of the Belgic Confession of Faith, and particularly in Article V. While the truth that the church receives that Word as the Word of God is not to be ignored, it is the objective testimony of the Scriptures and the inner testimony of the Spirit which leads us to confess their authority. That authority therefore finds its source in God alone, Who gives His Word to His church, and the church has no authority apart from it, but is in subjection to that Word.

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thoughtful gift for the sick or shut-in.  
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## CONTRIBUTION

# Report on Reformed Education in Ulster

February 8, 1985

Readers of *The Standard Bearer* will be interested in information about the work being done on behalf of Reformed education in Northern Ireland. They will recall that the Covenant Christian School in Northern Ireland made an urgent request, last summer, for help in the form of a Protestant Reformed teacher for the 1984-1985 school year. In answer to this request, Mr. Deane Wassink and his family went to Northern Ireland, so that Mr. Wassink could teach.

Our people responded generously to our request for money for the partial support of Mr. and Mrs. Wassink. We believe that we now have enough to take care of the expenses involved in the Wassinks' going to Ulster. We are thankful that the Lord moved so many to contribute liberally towards this work.

With the dedicated help of his wife, Mr. Wassink has been serving the cause of Reformed education faithfully and well, in Northern Ireland. He teaches several grades, administers the day-to-day operation of the school, and promotes the cause of Reformed, Christian education as he has opportunity.

The parents and other supporters of the school deeply appreciate Mr. Wassink's coming and labor on their behalf, as well as the gracious help of those in the U.S. who have made this possible by their prayers and gifts. We have just received a letter (dated 30 January, 1985) from the Covenant Christian School Society, through its Secretary, which reads, in part:

... the extreme thankfulness we feel here for your kindness in all that you have done for us, by giving both your time and money to help send and support Deane over here. Without Deane it would have been impossible to have had our second year as a school. So thank you very much indeed on behalf of all the Society members for keeping our school going for another year.

Starting a Christian school in a place where there is no tradition of Christian Education, and where there simply is no other parent-controlled Reformed Christian School has not been an easy thing. Not only do we have to contend with attacks from an aggressively secular and humanistic non-Christian world around us, but we also have to deal with the attacks of dear Christians who do not understand or who strongly disagree with what we are trying to do . . . .

Please, pass on our thanks to all those who have become our fellow labourers through their giving. We are indeed grateful to them and trust that the Lord will rest His blessing upon their kindness.

In accordance with the original plan, Mr. Wassink will finish his year's commitment to the school this summer and then return home. We have learned that the Wassinks are scheduled to arrive in the States on June 15, the Lord willing.

There is still time to write the Wassinks, who will be encouraged by correspondence from us. The work is not easy. Their address is:

Mr. and Mrs. Deane Wassink  
28 Hillmount Gardens  
Larne, County Antrim  
Northern Ireland BT40 1TF

We intend to keep in contact with the school through the Rev. George Hutton; and if we think that further help of the school is called for, we will bring this to the attention of our people.

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Committee for Reformed  
Education in Ulster,  
Jack Lenting, Chairman



## IN HIS FEAR

# God Is Love (1)

*Rev. Ronald Hanko*

In searching for the underlying truth of each of the Ten Commandments, we find in the Sixth Commandment an application of the great truth that God is Love. In a certain sense, of course, this truth underlies all the Commandments, as Jesus teaches in Matthew 22:37-40, thereby reminding us that the Commandments are not a hodge-podge of unconnected precepts, but one Law, teaching the one way of obedience which glorifies the One True God. Nevertheless, in the Sixth Commandment God teaches us in a special way that He is Love, and gives us a unique opportunity to confess Him as a God of love in our relation to others. We see this when we remember that the other Commandments of the Second Table of the law tell us to love the neighbor as far as his position of authority, his marriage, his possessions, and his reputation are concerned. This Commandment goes beyond all the others of the Second Table in teaching us to love our neighbors as ourselves when it demands that we love the neighbor personally, in respect to his life and well-being. If we love *him* there will be no difficulty in respecting his marriage, position, possessions, and reputation. Therefore, just as we show the highest possible love for the neighbor through obedience to the Sixth Commandment, so we show through that same obedience, and in the highest possible way, that God Himself is Love.

That God's love is the principle of the Sixth Commandment is evident first of all from the fact that the Word of God equates hatred and murder (I Jn. 3:15), while demanding of us the opposite of hatred, that is, love for the neighbor (I Jn. 3:11, 15, 4:7). The demand that we love one another is, then, the positive requirement of the Sixth Commandment, and in I John this demand is rooted and grounded in the truth that God is Love (4:8, 16). It is through our obedience to the Sixth Commandment that we show our faith in that God of Love and honor Him with deeds as well as words.

We must also know, therefore, what Scripture means when it tells us that God is Love; otherwise we will not be able to understand what the Sixth Commandment requires. It is very popular to speak of the love of God, but the failure to understand what that means is the reason why so few really know their calling toward their neighbor in respect to the Sixth Commandment.

The closest we have to a definition of love in Scripture is Colossians 3:14, where love is called the "bond of perfectness." That is love in its deepest reality. That love is not the same as mere natural affection, though we sometimes speak of natural affection as "love." The natural affection of parents for children, of children for parents, and of men for one another is part of all our earthly relationships because we are created of one blood (Acts 17:26). Scripture never confuses this with love in its highest sense, and even uses an entirely different word when speaking of that natural affection (a Greek word from which we get such words as Philadelphia, philter, philanderer, philanthropy, etc.). Nor does the Sixth Commandment demand that natural affection; it does not have to, since that comes "naturally" for us, though it too is corrupted and spoiled by sin. The love which the Sixth Commandment demands is the love of God, the bond of perfectness.

That God is Love means first of all, then, that God has love in Himself. In other words, He loves Himself first of all and above all. That love of God for Himself is in Him a bond of perfectness. It is the bond which binds the three perfect Persons of the Holy Trinity together in the perfection of the One God. Just as imperfection separates and divides (Is. 59:2), so perfection draws together and unites (Jn. 17:21-23). God's love is His own infinite perfection seeking itself and making Him, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, One God. This is the reason why John



speaks of the Trinity in his First Epistle. The doctrine of the Trinity there is not an incidental matter, separated from the main point of the Epistle, but the foundation of all that the Epistle says about love, and the great explanation of the truth that God is Love.

This means in turn that God has no need of us to be a God of love. He finds the perfect object of His love in Himself. That He does reveal His love to us, therefore, is only grace. This revelation of love, however, is always a revelation of the love of God, the love which is a bond of perfectness. The love which God reveals to us is not some vague, indefinable sentiment, but a power by which He binds us to Himself in sweet fellowship (I Jn. 1:3, 4:12). Nor is it only a bond, but a bond of perfectness, for it is also a power by which He makes us perfect (Jn. 17:23, I Jn. 4:7, 10-12), so that we may live in His fellowship. He cannot love us in our imperfection, or He denies Himself as a God of love. To be sure, He revealed His love to us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8), but even then only for Christ's sake Whom He had eternally decreed as the One in Whom we should be perfect (Num. 23:21, Rom. 8:29, 30).

It follows from this that all talk of some kind of general love of God for all mankind is nonsense. His love, as a bond of perfectness, either makes us perfect in saving us, or it is not shown to us at all, thus leaving us strangers and aliens from Him.

It is also in this connection that we must understand what Scripture says about God's hatred for the wicked. When we see clearly that God's love is first of all a love for Himself, rooted in His own perfection, then we find that hatred and love in God are not two mutually exclusive things, but rather two sides of the same coin. In His love for His own perfection He must of necessity hate all that is imperfect and sinful, and separate Himself from it eternally. Also His hatred of the ungodly (Ps. 11:5, 7:11, Mal. 1:3) is but the expression of His own love for Himself. This is what is so often missing in all the pious prating that one hears about God's love; but it is fundamental to a proper understanding not only of God's love, but also of our calling to love our neighbor.

That God is Love also means, finally, that there is no love apart from God. John says this in so many words in I John 4:7, 8; "Love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." Separated from God through sin, man is separated from the source of all love. In sin he lacks the perfection with which he was created, the perfection that is the only foundation for love. Apart from God there is no love of parents for

children or of children for parents, no love between husband and wife, no brotherhood of man. The failure of marriage and the family in today's society, and the failure of society in general to find peace and unity is to be traced not to a lack of education, to unstable social conditions, or to the failure of government, but to the enmity that is in the heart of man against God. Hating God, the source of all love, man cannot but hate his brother also, no matter how close the natural tie may be.

Natural affection cannot produce harmony and unity, for there is no bond in natural affection. Only when natural affection is sanctified by the presence of the love of God does it also become something good and holy, otherwise it too is finally cast aside (Rom. 1:31). Without the love of God men are lovers only of themselves, which is no love, but a perversion that destroys and devours man's life and happiness in the world.

That men are without the love of God in their natural state is the reason, then, why they are "hateful and hating one another" (Tit. 3:3), and the reason that they are without exception condemned by the Sixth Commandment as murderers. Living in hatred, the sinner reveals that his whole nature is the nature of a murderer, his heart the hate-filled heart of a murderer, his tongue the weapon of a vicious killer, and his mind the hate-twisted mind of one who cares nothing for any other beside himself. Though he may refrain from shooting or stabbing his neighbor, he nevertheless murders him constantly with his poisoned tongue and with a mouth full of cursing and bitterness (Rom. 3:14, 15). He murders the neighbor in his mind, when he is full of malice, envy, and inexcusable anger (Matt. 5:22, Tit. 3:3), and even in his outward life when he practices every form of variance, strife, and sedition (Gal. 6:20), all of which are the children of murder.

That wicked and murderous nature is ours also. The Commandment indicates this when it forbids *our* murders, with the words, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" Only by grace are we delivered from that murderous nature; and delivered we must be, for as John reminds us, "Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I Jn. 3:15).

That grace which delivers us is first of all a grace which covers all our murderous thoughts, intents, and deeds in the sight of God. That grace is ours through the perfect obedience of Christ, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (I Pet. 2:23). It is ours also through His suffering and death, by which He crucified and killed our old murderous nature, and slew its enmity both against God and the neighbor (Eph. 2:16). By His Spirit He gives a



new nature, renewed in love after the image and likeness of God Himself, a nature born of God, in which the love of God is shed abroad, and which abides in the light of God's own revelation of Himself as a God of love.

To such redeemed and renewed saints is the Commandment given as a means to keep them in the love of God and to teach them the confession of that love that they must make not only in word, but

also in deed and truth (I Jn. 3:18). That they do, not only by refraining from all forms of murder, but by seeking the well-being and safety of the neighbor with all their strength. Thus the God of all love is honored and praised, and the power and glory of His love revealed, and thus also do they know that they are in God and are able to assure their hearts before Him (I Jn. 2:5, 3:19, 4:13), and thus their joy is full.

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## GUEST ARTICLE

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# 2. Jesus Betrayed

*Rev. Robert C. Harbach*

"But Jesus said unto him, 'Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?'" Luke 22:48

"And while He yet spake, behold, a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him" (v. 47). Literally, Luke writes "Look! a crowd!", and the devil was in them. Jesus had just beaten the devil again in a most crucial battle in Gethsemane, when that human devil (John 6:70), Judas, showed up. Satan in flight, if at all possible, gets in a parting shot. Here his deputy does this for him. Now Judas, like the demonized herd of swine, begins his violent plunge to destruction.

There is no attempt on our Lord's part to win Judas over to righteousness and life. He was already, as the son of perdition (John 17:12), ordained to condemnation (Jude 4). Therefore with this his last contact with Jesus he was instantly seen through, completely silenced, and condemned. Here heaven and hell looked each other in the eye, the latter immediately giving way, vanquished. Judas, the deadly serpent, fastens himself to Jesus, but is flung off with one single gesture of revulsion and rejection. This, plus Jesus' direct and spontaneous advance on the band coming to arrest Him, made Judas' signal of a kiss unnecessary and a bit ridiculous. Also notice that here we have an example of how we must combat the kingdom of darkness. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful

works of darkness (as Peter had), but rather reprove them" (as Jesus did).

I. WHAT. What brought this about? First, recall that the Lord and His disciples were in the home of Simon the leper, in Bethany, at a supper they made for Him, when Mary of Bethany anointed both the head and the feet of Jesus with very precious ointment, while He was eating. At this action of hers Judas was very indignant. The disciples, too, were affected by and infected with this wicked, carnal resentment. But Judas was so terribly provoked and exasperated by what this woman had done and by the Lord's defense of her that, with his Satan-filled heart burning with rage and revenge, he left Bethany, went to Jerusalem and right to the chief priests to betray Jesus into their hands. He could not bear it that Jesus had put him to shame before all the apostles and had shut that mouth of his which had insulted the woman and, especially, Jesus. In his intrigue with the priests, he referred to the Lord as His enemies did, not by mention of His name, but as "that one" or "him." However, when Jesus caught this Iscariot in the despicable act, He called him by name (Luke 22:48) to continue to show His disciples that He had an exact knowledge of Judas' every move (cp. Matt. 26:45)! But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Jesus had purposely exposed the traitor at the last supper, to get rid of him so that He might institute the Lord's Supper, which



is for true believers only. Then Jesus took His disciples aside into the Garden of Gethsemane where in prayer to His Father He experienced that deathly agony of soul. There, too, He warned of the near approach of the traitor. "And while He yet spake" those very words of His imminent betrayal, "Lo!" Take a look through the olive trees of the garden, and through the entrance in the stone wall surrounding the place, see! Judas, one of the twelve, one of the chosen, called and ordained, and with him a huge mob, from the chief priests, scribes, and elders, with swords, clubs, lanterns, torches, and weapons! What a Judas mob!

Now, he had prearranged with the enemy the actual signal of betrayal, the kiss of greeting, which he made the kiss of death. So he immediately rushed over to Jesus with the hypocritical salutation, "O joy! (cp. Matt. 26:49 with 28:9). Rabbi! Rabbi!" Saying this he went to kissing Him repeatedly. Never once did Judas call Jesus *Lord*. The man was like an Arian, not holding the deity of Christ. No one can really say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost (I Cor. 12:3). Jesus immediately thrust the man away with a word never used in addressing a member of the kingdom of God, literally, "*Fellow* (not "*friend*!"), this is why you are here?" (Matt. 26:50, Gk.). Thus Judas knew what he was about; knew his deed was treacherous; knew he had betrayed the innocent blood. "But Jesus said unto him, 'Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?'" Literally, the order of the words is, "Judas, with a kiss the Son of Man do you *betray*?" Judas was the thoroughly trusted treasurer of the apostolate. He had the bag which held the collections donated by ladies' aid which followed the Lord and ministered to His needs. He was a careful, conscientious economist, with just about all the qualifications required in a good treasurer. He distributed to the poor as directed, and, as always, no audit was thought necessary. But one day he, a partner in the company of the apostles, became a turncoat and traitor. It was as though a foot had deserted the body to commit treason against the head. For the word *betray* means treacherously to sell out a friend into the hands of the enemy for judgment, punishment, scourging, torment, condemnation, and death. It was then that the funds in the bag in his hand weighed heavier than ever before with blood money.

II. WHO. "Judas, with a kiss *the Son of Man* do you betray?" (Greek). What this means is that Judas (and all the disciples) knew that Jesus was "the Son of Man" and therefore the Messiah. Only he was bitterly disappointed in learning, finally, that the Messiah, according to the Old Testament Scriptures, and according to Jesus the Messiah's own personal teaching, was not, as everyone had long

thought, an earthly, political king, but a heavenly, spiritual Savior-King.

The people of the Jews rightly understood that the name *the Son of Man* was a proper designation of their Messiah. For they knew the Scriptures prophesying of Him, as the Psalms, the Book of Daniel, etc. But their problem was, they could see only one side of Messianic truth, being blind to the other side. They knew and believed the Scriptures to teach that the Messiah abideth forever (John 12:34, cp. Ps. 61:6; 89:29; Ps. 110:4). But they could not see applying to Him those passages which prophesied of His vicarious sufferings and death. They had heard out of the law that Messiah abideth forever, but it seems that they had never heard out of the law that the Messiah "shall be cut off" (Dan. 9:26; Isa. 53:8). Hence, they asked, in reference to these mystifying prophecies, "Who is *this* Son of man?" — one who had to die by being lifted up, as they correctly understood Jesus to teach (John 12:34). From this, to them, strange point of view, they could not see how to identify the title "the Son of Man" with the Messiah. But He in due time made that plain enough when later He said, "I am He that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen" (Rev. 1:13, 18).

III. HOW. "Judas, with a kiss . . . do you betray (Me)?" So Joab, greeting Amasa with the customary Middle Eastern kiss, and under the guise of asking about his health, and after picking up an "accidentally" dropped dagger, with it violently emptied out his life (II Sam. 20:9). Judas kissed Jesus much. Lenski expressed it in German, *Er kuesste ihn ab*, he kissed Him off, with the kiss of death. Isn't that the way the apostates have always stood forth, with a kiss? In the late twenties and into the thirties there was continual controversy between Fundamentalism and Liberalism. As reported in *The Presbyterian*, Nov. 6, 1924, p. 12, Rev. Albert C. Dieffenbach, D.D., editor of the Unitarian weekly, *The Christian Register*, said, "I have profound respect for a man who is consistently a Fundamentalist, or a man who is consistently a Roman Catholic, but I have no respect for the attitude of Dr. (Harry Emerson) Fosdick . . . When he goes to Cambridge he speaks in terms of Liberalism and when he comes to New York he says, 'I am an evangelical Christian!'" In one place the man showed aversion to the truth, but in another he seemed to have such profound respect for the truth. A kiss in the one place, a stab in another place! Current infidel books are still to be found written by modern bishops. These begin with a kiss, but within a few more pages there is awful betrayal of the Son of Man. Billy Graham, during his Scottish Crusade of 1955, said in a B.B.C. interview, according to a report in *Faith For the Family*, "I don't call myself a fundamentalist . . .



The old terms *fundamentalism* and *liberalism* are now passe . . . I am not a fundamentalist, I am not a modernist. I am a conservative liberal . . . "Isn't this a sickly dose of self-battered humility, dripping with syrup and honey to conceal the truth stabbed in the back? Isn't that exactly the way it was in 1924, both in Presbyterian and Reformed circles? Are these terms *fundamentalism* and *liberalism*, or *Calvinism* and *Arminianism*, and the age-old battle they represent, really passe? Are the theologies represented by contemporaneous atheists, Barthians, Unitarians, and Romanists as viewed alongside the Reformed, orthodox, Christian Faith, nothing more than a sophisticated blur? Do not the sharp lines of the antithesis ever remain in light versus darkness, Christ versus Belial, and the truth versus the lie?

But Judas repented, didn't he? Yes, but only when he saw that he was condemned. His was a

sorrow (repentance) not to salvation, but one that worked death (II Cor. 7:9-10). He also made a confession, to the hierarchical priesthood which denied him absolution, but not to God. This "confession" robbed Christ's enemies of another false witness, for Judas in remorse testified to Christ's innocence. He threw away the bloody bribe, but never confessed the love of money. His suicide was a throwing of himself on the tender mercies of the Wicked One. The infinite loss to the betrayer was of his office and of his soul. The dubious gain to the betrayer was of a monument to his infamy — "the field of blood"! Shall any of us say, "Well, I am no Judas!" Let us rather look for Judas in every corner of the heart, and be sure we have very far more than a mere profession we keep up because it keeps us up. "Let us hold fast the confession (Gk.) of our faith without wavering" (Heb. 10:23).

## Report of Classis West

March 11, 1985

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met in Randolph, Wisconsin on March 6, 1985. Nine ministers and fourteen elders represented the churches of the West. Elder G. Tolsma (Edmonton) was present for the first time and signed the Formula of Subscription. Rev. G. Lubbers and Rev. R. Van Overloop were present and were given the right to speak. Rev. D. Engelsma led Classis in the opening devotions, explaining and applying Matthew 20:1-16. Rev. M. Kamps presided over this Classis.

Classis judged two appeals brought by members against their Consistories. In the one, a brother appealed the decision of his Consistory on his protest against the Consistory's authorizing ministers preaching in churches outside the denomination. Classis judged this appeal not legally before it, on the ground that the appeal was, in reality, a protest against decisions taken by the Synods of 1977 and 1978. Thus, Classis upheld its decision of March, 1984 on virtually the same appeal.

In the other, a brother appealed the decision of his Consistory on his protest against the Consistory's distribution of a letter asking for financial support of a non-ecclesiastical cause. Classis re-

jected the appeal, sustaining the decision of the Consistory, on the grounds that a Consistory has the right to judge a cause worthy to be supported by God's people and that the appeal confused the particular cause in question with mission work, as the Consistory had clearly pointed out to the appellant.

The Board of Trustees informed Classis that Classis West has now received the entire inheritance willed to Classis by the late Mr. Cecil Vander Molen of our Pella, Iowa congregation. This generous gift amounted to \$181,570.74. Classis has appointed the Council of South Holland to advise Classis on the use of this money.

Five churches — Edgerton, Edmonton, Houston, Isabel, and Pella — asked for subsidy for 1986 in the amount of \$73,855. Lynden requested \$5,500 for 1985, on account of their present, extraordinary circumstances. Classis sent these subsidy requests to Synod, 1985 with Classis' approval.

Classis arranged the following classical appointment schedule, in response to the requests of the three vacant churches:

**Hull:** April 14, 21 - J. Smith; April 28, May 5 - R. Moore; May 12, 19 - D. Engels-



ma; June 2, 9 - G. Lanting.

**Edgerton:** March 31, April 7 - R. Cammenga; April 28, May 5 - D. Kuiper; May 12, 19 - J. Slopsema; June 2, 9 - K. Koole.

**Lynden:** April 21, 28 - T. Miersma.

Hull and Edgerton are instructed to seek pulpit supply from the seminary from June to September.

Results of the elections were the following:

- Assistant Stated Clerk: Rev. J. Slopsema (1987).
- Classical Committee: Elder H. Hoekstra.
- Delegates ad examina:
  - Primus: Rev. D. Engelsma (1988).
  - Secundi: Rev. R. Moore (1988); Rev. R. Cammenga (1987); Rev. M. Kamps (1986).
- Church Visitors: Rev. M. Kamps, Rev. G. Lanting.
- Delegates to Synod:
  - Primi Minister Delegates: D. Engelsma; M. Kamps; G. Lanting; J. Slopsema.
  - Secundi Minister Delegates: R. Cammenga; K. Koole; T. Miersma; R. Moore.

### NOTICE!!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on May 8, 1985 at the Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated in this session must be in the hands of the Stated Clerk at least three weeks prior to the meeting.

John Huiskens  
Stated Clerk

### NOTICE!!!

The Scholarship Fund Committee is taking applications for future teachers/ministers for the 1985-86 school year. If you are interested, please contact Gerald Van Baren, 5101 Beechtree, Hudsonville, MI 49426, for application forms. An essay of 300 words or more is also required on the topic "My part as minister/teacher in God's covenant (Deut. 6:4-7)." Deadline for applications to be received is June 1, 1985.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On March 31, 1985, our parents, MR. AND MRS. GERRIT PIPE celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren thank our Father Who gave them to us. We pray that God will continue to be near them and bless them in the days ahead.

"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." (Psalm 16:5, 6)

Ted and Jane Pipe  
Tim and Lois Pipe  
Bill and Karen Pipe  
15 grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Primi Elder Delegates: R. Brands (Loveland); Wm. Buys (Edgerton); B. Meelker (Redlands); L. Regnerus (South Holland).

Secundi Elder Delegates: E. Bruinsma, Sr. (Loveland); W. Bruinsma (South Holland); T. Hugg (Houston); M. Smits (South Holland).

Classis meets next on September 4, 1985 in Loveland, Colorado, the Lord willing.

Rev. David Engelsma,  
Stated Clerk, Classis West

\* \* \* \* \*

At an all-day officebearers' conference the day before Classis, delegates and visitors discussed the views of "Theonomy" (literally, the Law of God). Pastor Jon Smith gave a paper on "Definition of Theonomy"; and Rev. Ron Cammenga gave a paper on "Theonomy and the Civil Magistrate." Among the issues dealt with were the place of the Law in the New Testament Church; the calling of the State in enforcing the Law; and the fulfillment of the various Old Testament laws by Christ. As usual, the conference proved profitable and was the occasion for good fellowship. D.E.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Priscilla Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan expresses its sincere sympathy to our fellow-members, Mrs. Louis Looyenga, Mrs. Ted Looyenga and Mrs. Stuart Looyenga in the death of their husband and father-in-law, MR. LOUIS LOOYENGA. Our prayer is that God will be their comfort in their sorrow.

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

Mrs. E. Bol, Pres.  
Mrs. E. Peters, Sec'y.

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 13, 1985, the Lord willing, our parents, MR. AND MRS. GIL SCHIMMEL celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. We their children are thankful for the years of love and Christian instruction they have given us. It is our prayer that they may continue to receive God's blessings in the years which lie ahead of them.

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

their children

James and Carol Schimmel  
Dan and Judy Schimmel  
Hank and Deb Vander Waal  
Steven and Ruth Kerkstra  
David and Shelly Schimmel  
Tim Schimmel  
Tom Schimmel  
and 16 grandchildren