

The **STANDARD BEARER**

— A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE —

. . . it ought to be clear that the various themes of the sovereignty of God run throughout the Psalms like golden threads. They are everywhere. If you were to pull out these threads by cutting out the doctrine of God's sovereignty, you would unravel the entire *Psalter*.

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THE STANDARD BEARER

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MEDITATION

James D. Slopsema

Supporting the Weak

I have shown you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.
Acts 20:35

When the saints suffer there is often no one in the church who will help. Thus, for example, the poor in the church must often turn to the world for help because the church does not care for her own poor. The brother who has fallen into sin is often avoided and shunned rather than led to repentance

in a spirit of concern and love. Often the widows in the church are neglected and excluded socially.

This ought not be in the church of Jesus Christ. For the world to turn its back on those in need is one thing. You expect that. The world is evil and knows not how to love in the true sense. But in the

church among the saints it is different. In the church you find those who are redeemed in Christ's blood, who are new creatures in Christ Jesus. Certainly in the church you ought not find cold indifference to those who suffer! But the sad fact of the matter is that this is often the case.

It is to this situation that the words of the apostle Paul to the elders of Ephesus are addressed. The Apostle is returning to Jerusalem at the conclusion of his third missionary journey. He knows that bonds await him in Jerusalem. Hence, he stops in Miletus and summons the elders of the church of Ephesus to him to bid them farewell. They will see his face no more. How sad is this farewell. The Apostle reminds the elders of his labors in Ephesus. He charges them to be faithful in their labors as shepherds of the flock of Christ. And then he charges them to support the weak. Even as he had shown them by his own example earlier, they must labor to support the weak. And to encourage them in this difficult task they must remember the words of Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

This admonition is directed to the elders of Ephesus for their work in the church. This admonition however is not limited simply to the elders or officebearers in the church. This is a calling for all in the church. Laboring we ought to support the weak, remembering the words of Jesus that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

A SOLEMN CALLING

The weak are those who are without strength, whether that be financial strength, physical strength, spiritual strength, or emotional strength. They are further identified by Paul, as he quotes the words of Jesus, as those who can not give but only receive. That is to be weak indeed!

All of us at one time or another will fall into this category of the weak. Some of us may be numbered among the weak for long periods of time; others may be weak for only a short time. But God in His good providence brings each of us sooner or later to the position where we desperately need help, where we must receive the help of others and can give nothing in return.

For some this may be financial weakness — poverty. This appears to be uppermost in Paul's mind when he speaks of the weak. In the preceding verses Paul reminds the elders of Ephesus how that while laboring in Ephesus he labored with his own hands as a tentmaker to provide not only for his own needs but also for the needs of those with him. These latter probably refer to his fellow laborers in

the gospel who had no means of financial support. It may also refer to various poor in Ephesus. And so when Paul here speaks of the weak he no doubt has in mind first those who are financially without strength, those who financially can do nothing but receive. How often haven't the saints found themselves in this weakness?

Just as often however the saints of God find themselves weak in other ways. Sometimes they find that they are without strength spiritually, so that for a time sin controls their lives and they stray far from the path of righteousness. At other times they may find themselves without physical strength. Sickness and disease can take away all our strength so that we must rely entirely upon others. So too can old age do this to us. Then there is the widow who has lost her husband, the orphan who has lost his parents, the saint upon whom God places crushing burdens that can no more be carried, the saint who suffers chronic depression. There is no end of ways in which the saints can become weak, so weak that they cannot give but only receive.

Laboring we ought to support the weak.

To support the weak means to help them, to provide for them in their need.

As already pointed out, the saints who become weak often find that they are not supported by their fellow saints. The widows are often neglected, the elderly and chronically ill are seldom visited, the poor must go to the world for help, the erring brother is shunned and avoided, the depressed are not encouraged but rather criticized and avoided....

There are reasons for this. Note carefully, we did not say *excuses*.

The first reason why the weak are not supported is that it requires work to support the weak. Says the Apostle, "Laboring ye ought to support the weak." To support the weak is a labor. It requires hard, difficult work. It requires a great deal of time and energy. And many in the church are simply not willing to exert such an effort necessary to help their fellow saints in need.

In the second place, however, the weak are often neglected because they can give nothing in return. The weak are those who can only receive. And again there are too many in the church who are not willing to give of their time and money and energy if there is not an immediate, tangible return. If they give, they expect something in return.

However, the Word of God is quite clear: "Laboring ye ought to support the weak." The idea is that it is necessary to support the weak. It is necessary because God commands it. The support of the weak is implied in the very law of God. The

great command of the law is that we love God and love our neighbor as ourself. Certainly the love of the neighbor requires that we support him when he becomes weak.

This obligation of love is especially on us, the redeemed of God.

To be sure, this obligation is on all men. Even the world has an obligation before God to help the neighbor who is weak. However, the world is corrupt and depraved and is not able to accomplish this as the law of God requires.

But among the saints it is different. We have been redeemed in the blood of Christ. In Christ God has come to us in our great weakness and in love supported us. In love He has helped us even to the point of saving our wretched souls from hell. And He has given us a new life according to which we are able to love both God and the neighbor. Certainly, therefore, we, the redeemed of God, ought to help those that are weak.

A WONDERFUL ENCOURAGEMENT

We are encouraged to support the weak by the words of Jesus, our Savior, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

You will look in vain in the Gospels for these words of Jesus. Paul is not quoting the Gospel accounts. Evidently this is a saying of Jesus that, although never appearing in the Gospel accounts, was nevertheless recognized by the early church as a very significant saying and thus repeated often by her members.

Now the Apostle reminds us of this saying. Helping the weak is often a wearisome labor. Remember, therefore, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Jesus Himself taught us this.

The meaning of these words is, first, that it is blessed to receive. Yes, if it is more blessed to give than to receive, it certainly is blessed to receive. The weak are truly blessed when their fellow saints support them and help them in their needs. The widow is blessed when the saints remember her in her need. So too are the sick and infirm, the elderly, the poor, the erring brother, the depressed and downtrodden all blessed when their fellow saints take the time to help and support them. They are blessed first because their immediate needs are met. Within the church there are all the gifts necessary to meet the needs of those who are weak and without strength. What a blessing for the weak when their fellow saints step forward and together labor to support them. But more blessed still is the fact that through the labors of their fellow saints the weak experience the mercies of Christ.

Let the weak never in pride shun the help and support of their fellow saints.

But according to the words of Jesus it is still more blessed to give than to receive.

There are many in the church who do not believe this. They believe it is blessed only to receive. Consequently they give only when they know they will get something tangible in return. And so they seldom, if ever, help the weak.

However, the words of Jesus are true. It is blessed to give. It is by far more blessed to give than to receive. For those who give even when there is nothing to receive do in fact receive. They may receive nothing from those whom they help. And they probably won't receive anything from their fellow saints, probably not even the recognition that they have given of themselves. But they will receive something from the hand of God. For nothing goes unnoticed by God. He handsomely rewards those who support the weak in the name of Christ. And this reward more than compensates for all the weary labors extended to help the weak. In fact, it is a reward that makes them even more blessed than those whom they have helped. What is this reward? It is approval of God Himself. It is the sweet bliss of God's fellowship and companionship. To appreciate the blessedness of this reward one must be born again in Jesus Christ. The natural man hears this and scoffs. But to the born again heart the fellowship of God is sweet and precious indeed. With such a reward God the Father blesses all those who labor to support the weak. This reward they possess now in principle, and one day in eternity will possess fully.

A NECESSARY EXAMPLE

To assist the saints of Ephesus in carrying out this all important calling Paul calls the attention of the elders to his own example. During the three years he spent among them he had shown them by his own example how laboring they ought to support the weak.

This had been necessary, for the saints of Ephesus were only babes in the faith. They had to be taught not only by word but also by example to support the weak.

That same example is also necessary today in the church. Those who are mature in the faith must teach those who are less mature to support the weak. This instruction must be given by both word and example. Certainly this is the calling of the elders and officebearers in the church with respect to the whole congregation. And it is also the calling of the parents with respect to their children.

When this is done so that the strong truly support the weak, then the church is truly blessed. The weak are blessed in that they have received from their fellow saints. But the strong are also blessed because they have given.

Editor's Notes

The Presbyterian Reformer. This is the name of a new quarterly magazine being published by our sister church in Northern Ireland, the Bible Presbyterian Church of Larne. The magazine is, of course, published primarily for home consumption in Northern Ireland and other parts of the U.K. In an introductory note it states: "It is a humble contribution to the written ministry of the church with the intent of reviving and sustaining a healthy interest in Biblical Presbyterianism. The objective is to educate, inform, encourage and inspire those of the Lord's people who truly seek to conform in all their ways to the Word of God." The magazine is distributed free. How can you obtain a copy and subscribe? The Contact Committee, I have been informed, is sending a supply to every Protestant Reformed congregation and is arranging for an agent in each congregation to be in charge of distribution and subscriptions. This is a good means to become better acquainted with our sister church.

* * * * *

Origins. This is the name of a very interesting magazine which is published twice yearly by the Archives department of Calvin College Library. As the name suggests, it deals with the early history of

our mother church, the Christian Reformed Church. In the various issues which I have read (and we subscribe at the seminary), there have been many first-person accounts concerning the early days of the establishment of the CRC both in the U.S. and Canada, going way back to colonial times. From this point of view, of course, the magazine is concerned with our early origins, too. Mr. Herbert J. Brinks, Curator of Archives at Calvin's Heritage Hall, has informed me that he will honor requests from *Standard Bearer* subscribers with a complimentary issue of this historical journal. If you are interested in such a sample, write to: Origins, Heritage Hall, Calvin College and Seminary, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. Mention that you are a *Standard Bearer* subscriber.

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About Anonymous Letters. From time to time one who is an editor or occupies some other public position, receives unsigned mail. Be it known to all and sundry that my personal policy with respect to all my mail is that I first look for a signature. If letters or cards are not signed, they are consigned *without being read* to the wastebasket. Reason? If they are not signed, they are not worth reading.

EDITORIAL

Herman C. Hanko

As to "The Mind of Common Grace"

At the conclusion of my previous editorial on this subject, I called attention to the fact that to a certain extent Dr. Vander Goot's analysis of the Christian Reformed position with respect to higher criticism is a breath of fresh air. This is true, I said, because of his reference to the "Mind of Common Grace" and because of his making a connection between

higher criticism and common grace and between the Janssen Case of 1922 and the Common Grace decisions of 1924. Dr. Vander Goot's position seems to be that especially the promotion of higher criticism in the Christian Reformed Church is due to the dominance of the "Mind of Common Grace."

Last time I stated that there are several aspects of Dr. Vander Goot's address which deserve a more detailed analysis. With this analysis I now proceed.

In the first place, I cannot understand the reference to an immigrant mentality which is repeatedly mentioned in this connection. Vander Goot makes this immigrant mentality a motivation. "As immigrants, we continue to crave acceptance by and participation in the mainline culture that surrounds us." And again, "The Mind of Common Grace . . . out of the desperate immigrant desire to be accepted. . . ." Now, for one thing, it seems to me that in the course of several generations since 1847, or even since 1900, it is time to stop this continued reference to our being immigrants. Or, put in different words, all Americans (except, perhaps, the American Indians) are immigrants; and we Dutchmen are only a part of the stew in the melting-pot called America. Besides, it seems to me rather difficult to ascribe the dominance of the Mind of Common Grace to being immigrants. If this is true, then how do you explain developments in the Netherlands, where the so-called Mind of Common Grace has dominated the churches to an ever greater extent than in our country? Surely, there was no immigrant mentality in the Netherlands! And yet it was there that the theory of common grace had its father and its greatest champion, Abraham Kuyper.

In the second place, it is a mistake to confine the so-called Mind of Common Grace to "the top," to "the CRC leadership," to "the establishment." For one thing, it seems to me that even at "the top" there is very little conscious and explicit reasoning from "common grace," though the influence of the theory is admittedly present. But more than this, the influence of the theory of common grace has permeated the entire denomination and virtually every aspect of its life, while there is little or nothing left of a "Mind of the Antithesis" any longer. It would not be difficult to demonstrate this. Nor is this difficult to understand. For if the students for the ministry and also those students, for example, who are trained to be teachers in the schools throughout the denomination come under the influence of this "Mind of Common Grace" at "the top," what else can be expected but that the whole denomination must come under the dominance of that mind?

In the third place, I could wish that Dr. Vander Goot had explained what he understands by the term "mind" and by his references to the "mind of common grace" and the "mind of the antithesis."

Does he mean by "mind" the same thing as Dr. Henry Stob means in his essays on this subject? Does he mean that various "minds" can and should co-exist in the church? Does he mean that one or another mind *should* eventually dominate, or that none should dominate? These things are not clearly defined in his address. Yet, as we shall see presently, he apparently thinks it possible that the "Mind of Common Grace" and the "Mind of the Antithesis" can somehow co-exist.

In the fourth place, while there was indeed a clear connection between the Janssen Case and the Common Grace Case, between 1922 and 1924, both historically and as to principle, it is hardly correct to say that the "Mind of the Antithesis" won a battle over higher criticism in the CRC in 1922. It is indeed true that the "Mind of Common Grace" — if such you would call it — gained the victory over the "Mind of the Antithesis" (better stated: over the two outstanding champions of the antithesis, Danhof and Hoeksema) in 1924. But it is hardly correct to say that the "Mind of the Antithesis" triumphed in the Janssen Case in 1922. Why not? For the simple reason that the issue of common grace versus the antithesis was not allowed to become an issue in 1922. Dr. Janssen tried to make common grace an issue in his articles in *The Banner* in answer to the Rev. Herman Hoeksema after the Synod of 1920, when the four professors failed in their attempt to have Janssen condemned. And it is certainly correct to say that the underlying principle of Dr. Janssen's position was that of common grace. But the fact remains that in the Janssen Case the issue of higher criticism was decided without the underlying issue of common grace so much as entering in. In other words, the case was decided without deciding the issue. The late Herman Hoeksema wrote rather extensively on this subject in his *History of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America* some fifty years ago. Permit me to quote a few enlightening paragraphs:

In the light of subsequent history it is a patent fact that the alignment of the pro- and con- factions in the Janssen case was not purely determined by its deepest underlying principle, but rather by secondary and superficial considerations of agreement and disagreement.

The fact that the four professors (Berkhof, Volbeda, Heyns, and Ten Hoor, HCH) could unite with the pro-Janssen faction in their action against the three ministers that were deposed in 1924-25, plainly reveals that, apart from superficial differences, there was a fundamental agreement in principle. There was in the Janssen controversy an underlying principle which, had it not been violently and intentionally forced to the background, would have paralyzed every effort of the four professors to combat Doctor Janssen's views and would have aligned them from

the beginning with the pro-Janssen faction against the Reverends H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema.

This underlying principle is the theory of common grace!

On this fundamental principle all agreed, except the Reverends H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema!

It is deplorable that Doctor Janssen in his defense tried to prove that also the four professors and others of his leading opponents denied the theory of common grace. For, in the first place, this was untrue (except, perhaps, in the case of Doctor Volbeda). But in the second place, it would have been more fruitful for a proper discussion had he proceeded from the *correct assumption that his opponents, except the Reverends H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema, do accept the theory of common grace*, (emphasis added) and that, therefore, they must also in deepest principle agree with him in regard to his views on revelation, inspiration, canonicity, the miracles and related subjects, even though, due to a lack of consistency on their part, they differed with him in ultimate conclusions.

In the light of subsequent history it was evidently a mistake on the part of the Reverends H. Danhof and H. Hoeksema, that they cooperated with the four professors in the Janssen controversy, rather than to oppose his views separately and from their own standpoint; that, for practical reasons, they allowed the deepest principles involved to be pushed into the background and the controversy to be confined to surface questions and differences.

Elsewhere in the same discussion, the Rev. Hoeksema calls attention to two significant facts which are related to the above: 1) Prof. Louis Berkhof was the chief author of the Three Points in 1924. 2) After 1922 the pro- and con- Janssen factions united not only in opposition to the Revs. Danhof and Hoeksema, but in permanent peace

and positive cooperation. While all the supporters of the deposed Dr. Janssen remained within the fold of the CRC and some were even appointed to professorships in the Seminary, there was no more controversy.

Finally, I must call attention to the fact that Dr. Vander Goot appears to me to revert to the impossible position which the Synod of 1924 attempted, namely, to maintain both common grace and the antithesis. After adopting the Three Points, the Synod of 1924 adopted a "Testimony," in which it attempted to maintain the spiritual, ethical antithesis — a testimony which, by the way, was never sent to the churches, but only published in the Acts. Dr. Vander Goot seems to take the same inconsistent position. For he does not advise separation; nor does he advise trying to reverse the Three Points or to obliterate the "Mind of Common Grace" in the CRC. His proposed solution to the dominance of the "Mind of Common Grace" is "to think in terms of alternative institutions." And he believes that this will be the trend of the future in the CRC. But his great failure — and the failure of the Reformed Fellowship to this date — is that he fails to see that the inevitable result of the doctrine of common grace is the obliteration of the distinction between the church and the world, between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial, between righteousness and unrighteousness. The "Mind of Common Grace" and the "Mind of the Antithesis" are diametrical opposites. They cannot co-exist! And the attempt to have them co-exist will inevitably result in the dominance of the "Mind of Common Grace" and in synthesis, rather than antithesis.

TRANSLATED TREASURES

A Pamphlet Concerning the Reformation of the Church

Dr. A. Kuyper

(In the last paragraph Kuyper has argued against all wrong passivity by explaining in some detail the words of Zechariah 4:6: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." In discussing this passage he has underscored the importance of active participation in the work of church

reformation although in complete dependence upon the work of God.)

61. Concerning Reformation In Distinction From Revolution.

Even when one introduces the work of reformation in a cautious though energetic way, objections are raised against what he does. One who is concerned for church reformation does not shrink back either from a break with the existing organization, or from a break with the existing federation of churches, or finally even from a break with the existing congregation. But the charge is often made by his opponents that such work must not be done because every break of that kind is a violation of the legal order and of the lawful progress of matters, and on that ground must be condemned as revolution.

This same reproach is thrown time and again at those who engage in church reformation in different kinds of ways.

Because it is our calling to enlighten with fear and trembling the children of God in this land concerning the work of reformation, we consider ourselves bound to investigate this objection. We pray that God the Lord will holily keep His people from revolution in the evil sense, and our guilt will be heavy if we through recklessness and influence entice the Lord's people down such sinful paths. We wish therefore, through a calm distinction, to make clear to our opponents why they are wrong when they lay before us so serious a charge and why they, if they do not wish to sully their own souls in their relationship to their brethren, ought to be done once for all with its charge.

To this end it ought first of all to be observed that there can be mention made of revolution both in the good sense and in the bad sense, and that by no means may all revolution be lumped together.

In order to see this distinction clearly, it ought to stand on the foreground that a man is never so honorable that he has a right in himself to lay upon a fellow man the obligation to obedience.

Every man is sinful and because of this has forfeited all claim to personal respect.

The father is of as little worth as the child and there is in the father as a person no simple reason or cause why the child should obey him.

Every king is equally as sinful as the least of his subjects and also in his person there is no single reason or cause why his subjects should be subject to him.

And so also in the church of Christ each person, who serves as bishop, member of synod, member of classical administration, or whatever, is equally as sinful and worthless as every other member of the church, and there is in his person neither

reason nor cause why the members of the church should grant authority and honor to him.

If I look on man as only man, considered apart from God, then the child is exactly like his father and there is no trace of sin in it if an unloving son refuses obedience to his father.

In the same way a king is by nature no more worthy than a beggar and there is no evil or sin present if that beggar refuses obedience to his king.

In the same way a member of the consistory or Synod is not a hair better than a common member of the congregation, and there is no trace of sin to be found if a common member of the congregation lets the members of the consistory jabber and pays no attention to them.

This point of departure is worth considering.

He who will not concede this is either a Pelagian, or he does not know the deep corruption of sin.

What then is the root of the obligation to obedience?

Answer: finally and only the fact that God the Lord entrusts something of His majesty to these persons.

The precept is always true: absolute obedience to God as an obligation because He is your Creator, your Upholder, your Owner, your Redeemer. Never obedience to man.

Obedience to man is thus only possible in so long as and in so far as it is ordered and commanded me in the truth of God the Lord that I shall owe to a man rightful obedience in the name of God.

In what lies the essence of revolution? Its sin and horror?

In this that it resists man and refuses to obey man and considers king and beggar alike as man?

By all means, No.

No, the sin, the transgression, the horror of revolution is completely to be found in these two entirely different things: 1) that one refuses to pay the duty of obedience, which he owes to God, to the person of a man who occupies an office; and, 2) that he dares to state the proposition: authority is given to an office bearer not by God but by me and my fellow citizens.

The horrible sin is embedded in this that it is an insult to God's majesty and a feeling of that majesty for one's self.

Two sins at the same time: denying the divinity of the living God and deifying one's self.

* * * * *

If our accusers mean now that they can point out this kind of revolution in our proposal for reforma-

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tion which is carried out to the point of a break with the church, we give beforehand our thanks to them for their brotherly faithfulness.

On the other hand, if they cannot do this and if they cannot prove further their charge of "revolution," then, even though our advice includes breaking if need be with the existing legal conditions, we ought to be allowed to throw this accusation far from us. After all, David also broke with the existing legal conditions when he gathered bands and set himself up against King Saul. Christ also broke with the existing legal conditions when He took small ropes and made a scourge and drove the money changers from the temple. Also the apostles broke with the existing legal conditions when they did away with the ceremonial service and placed the Church of Christ alongside of the synagogue. Also the Waldensians broke with the existing legal conditions when they established their free churches alongside and over against the Romish hierarchy. Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin also broke with the existing legal conditions when they sent their letter of separation to their ecclesiastical rulers. Our fathers also broke with the existing legal conditions when they sent the Beggars to Briel and fought for the freedom of this land from Spain. Also our churches broke with the existing legal conditions when they, in the sixteenth century, broke the church connection with Rome in Amsterdam and elsewhere. Also William III broke with the existing legal conditions when he ascended the throne of the Stuarts in England and when William the Silent rose up as governor against Philip his king. Also our heroes, who freed us in 1813 and presently fought at Waterloo, broke with the existing legal conditions because in a legal sense Napoleon was their lawful sovereign.

If each child of God judges with us that David, Christ, the apostles, the Waldensians, our Reformers, our fathers, our princes of Orange, did not sin in this but that much rather they brought about a break with the existing conditions and acquitted

themselves of their duty of obedience to God, then it is clear that a break with the existing conditions in itself and without saying anything more cannot be sin but can be rather a discharge of duty.¹

What now is the basis of this?

Undoubtedly this, whether such a break with the existing conditions takes place exclusively out of obedience to God.

If David had not had Samuel's revelation, he ought not to have risen against Saul. If Jesus had not acted by virtue of fellowship with the Father, He would have possessed no authority in the temple. If the apostles had not known that they acted out of obedience to God's Word, they might not have withstood the Sanhedrin. And so also if our Reformers and free Beggars had not known that their infractions of Rome's and Spain's lawfully ordered authority grew out of the urgency to obey God rather than men, their break would have been a horrible guilt for them.

Even the Legalist says this, and in England as well as in Germany there are always voices raised to condemn the Reformation as rebellion.

And, mark you well, our Legalists also must finally come to this point.

Judging us by what they call revolutionary action, they pass a similar judgment on our Reformers and fathers.

But, if they shrink back from this as something which God gave, then they must also reconsider their thoughtless and premature judgment of us and must say: Revolution is not the fact itself that one breaks with the existing conditions, but he is a revolutionary who risks that break out of motives other than to obey God rather than man.

¹It seems as if Kuyper is stretching the point here a bit when he compares Christ's cleansing of the temple with the work of William the Silent and the armies at Waterloo. His discussion at this point brings up the important question of a right of a Christian to rebel against constituted authority.

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THE DAY OF SHADOWS

John A. Heys

A God of Great Kindness

When God called Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn the inhabitants that in forty days Nineveh would be destroyed because of its sin, Jonah's problem was that he could not see how this would fit in with God's covenant promise to His church as given to Abraham, and with the coming kingdom of the promised Messiah. His sin was that he exalted himself above God, and tried to flee from His presence, so that Nineveh would be destroyed, because he was not there to give them the warning, and so call them to repentance. Jonah was not an unbeliever who was brought to conversion by a storm at sea wherein his life was in danger. Had he not told the sailors on that ship that he feared God "which made the sea and the dry land"? And that word fear in the Old Testament Scriptures is used to express the activity of believing. It means to stand in awe of someone or something, to have reverence for, or profound respect for a person. Indeed, Jonah was a believer at the time when God called him to go to Nineveh.

This believer sinned — as all believers do throughout their earthly pilgrimage, because they still have the old man of sin with them until they die — but he was also taught a very important and necessary lesson. As we saw last time, he learned in a frightful, terrifying way that he could not flee from God's presence, and that it was such a great sin to try to frustrate Him in His intent to give Nineveh a warning. Huge waves and billows of storm beat upon the ship in which he had been soundly asleep. And God made it even more pointed to Jonah, when He guided the lots that were cast, so that Jonah was singled out from among all these sinners on board the ship. God pointed His finger, as it were, directly at Jonah as

the sinner who deserved the billows and waves of His holy wrath. He then moved Jonah to tell the mariners that God was visiting his iniquity, and that they would have to throw him overboard to obtain a calm sea. He told them that he must die, if they are to live.

Now we ought to see that here Jonah is a type of Christ, and to what degree he is such a type of Christ. Throwing Jonah overboard to save the life of the Gentile mariners was a type of Christ being thrown into the billows of God's wrath — which caused Him to cry out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" — of hellish agony for our sins. Jonah being thrown overboard for the lives of many sailors is also a picture of the one Christ dying for the sins of many. However, there are some striking and important differences to be noted. It is true that Jesus Himself tells the faultfinding Jews that as Jonah was three days and three nights in the fish's belly, so He would be three days and three nights in His grave. (See Matthew 12:20.) It is also true that because of the sin of one man, Adam, the waves and billows of God's wrath fell upon the whole human race and upon our present earth, even as all on board this ship were in a desperate strait because of one man's, namely, Jonah's, sin. But a striking difference here is that Jesus had no sin of His own; and it was not because of anything that He did that God's wrath fell upon the whole human race. Nor did Christ ever fall into deep sleep while He tabernacled amongst us and worked for our salvation. He slept very little; and at times spent the whole night in prayer for us. Jonah fled because he wanted to see Nineveh destroyed. Jesus came to deliver us from destruction; and our salvation was on His mind every conscious moment. He did not try to flee from that work, but steadily walked forward to finish it. Yea, instead of being the one Who brought those billows and waves of

God's holy wrath against us, of Him it was stated by God Himself more than once that He is the one in Whom He was well pleased. Another difference, as pointed out last time, is that He offered up Himself for us, in fact allowed those who came to capture Him to do so, after showing them that He could walk away from them, if that were God's will. Jonah, on the other hand, only suggested that they cast him overboard to save their own lives. And this he did only after they asked him what they should do, and after God had pointed His finger directly at Jonah in those lots that were cast.

One thing must be said about Jonah, namely, that he was willing to die for the safety of these sailors — and perhaps for other passengers on the ship. He not only suggested that they throw him overboard, but he put up absolutely no resistance when a bit later they did do so. And God gave him the grace to be willing to die so that these men might continue to live. He did not yet see that even as he had pity on these Gentiles, he must have pity on the Ninevites, and help them if he can. This he must yet learn; and step by step he will learn because our God is a God of great kindness to all His elect children, among whom Jonah, in spite of all his sins, and because of sovereign grace, was numbered. But note that he told them to throw him overboard only after they asked him what to do.

With Jonah we too are ready to confess that we sinned against God, when all the evidence points so clearly at us, even while we tenaciously hold on to other sins. Adam confessed that he ate of the forbidden fruit, even while he is accusing God of giving him a bad wife who led him into this sin. Eve admits that she sinned, even while accusing God of creating a serpent that tempted her. And a God of great kindness still continued to bring to them the first gospel promise of salvation. Were it not for the fact that we have a God of mercy and grace and of great kindness, there would be no salvation for us.

We know so much more than Jonah did at that moment when the ship was ready to break in pieces. And our judgment of him is often harsher than it should be. We may not minimize and defend or excuse his sin. But consider once that he did not know what we now know, namely, that God was going to prepare a fish to save his life. Jonah could look forward only to certain death at God's hands, with His billows and waves exacting his life! Jonah could not entertain in his thoughts any idea about now going back to Nineveh and doing what he had been ordered to do. He could not even think of the Ninevites. He could only think of facing Jehovah, the God against Whom he had rebelled. He has more to learn, but he is in no position to be taught all this yet. He has learned to see his sin, and that he should die, and so save these Gentile mariners.

He sees clearly that he must be separated from them, so that God's punishment for his sin does not fall on them.

Here, indeed, is that mercy and grace and great kindness of God of which Jonah spoke later on in Jonah 4:2, and to which we referred in a previous article in the treatment of this book of Jonah. He said, "... I knew that Thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil." It takes grace for the sinner to confess his sins. And how slow to anger God was in all His dealings with this rebellious prophet! That terrible storm expressed the terrible wrath of God against sin. What kindness, and what slowness to anger then for God to hold that ship together in such a storm! The high waves pounded against its sides. The waves lifted it up, and then caused it to come crashing down with an awful jarring effect! But it did not break the ship to pieces while Jonah slept in his sinful stupor. Instead God's mercy and grace brought him to confession of his sin, and that willingness to be cast overboard for the lives of the rest on board that ship.

What grace and mercy, what slowness to anger and great kindness also that this prophet who refused to preach to Gentiles in Nineveh is given an unsought, unexpected audience and opportunity to preach to other Gentiles, and present to them the one true God. He who fled from a preaching engagement has a preaching engagement created for him among men, who, because of the situation, were eager to listen to him. The storm must have been the most violent that these mariners had ever experienced. So fearful were they that they were ready to question this sleeper and listen to what he had to say. And we can only wonder whether it dawned on Jonah that now he was preaching to Gentiles who were outside the promised land. What did he think when these Gentiles began to pray to the God Whom he had presented, and told them he feared?

As far as the mariners were concerned they were afraid of committing murder by casting Jonah overboard. However, failing to bring the ship to land — which could possibly have been in sight on the horizon — they pray that they might not perish in that storm, after Jonah was thrown overboard, because they were shedding innocent blood. They were afraid that they might be wrong in committing a prophet of Jehovah to the waves and billows, and that they were believing his words only because they were concerned about their own lives, and not his.

Their prayer was heard. And no sooner had they cast Jonah into the sea, than an amazing calm descended upon the waters. Thereby God assured them that they had not cast an innocent man into

the sea. And now they "feared the Lord greatly," that is, their respect for Him, their awe before Him as the God of heaven, grew tremendously. This resulted in offering a sacrifice to Him right there on board the ship, and in making a vow to trust in Him as their God.

Were they sincere? Had the great kindness of our God converted them from heathendom to faith in the only true God? We are not told anything along this line. With the little knowledge that they received from Jonah's brief sermon to them, they did not have enough knowledge to believe in God as the one Who saves them from their sins. After all even Judas Iscariot, after betraying Christ, and before he hanged himself and added to his sins, confessed that he had betrayed innocent blood. Yet these men feared God greatly, sacrificed to Him and made a vow unto Him after they learned of

salvation through the "death" of Jonah. Their vow could have been to go as soon as they could to Jerusalem to learn more about Him.

At any rate, God, Who moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform, got glory for Himself and praise from the lips of those who only hours before had worshiped their idol with prayers. And here we have a picture of what the God of great kindness realizes in us, and will perfect in the new Jerusalem, when our voyage on the sea of life with all its waves and billows is ended, and we are on the calm sea of the new creation. Then we shall, because of that great kindness which sent His Son into the billows and waves of hellish torment, which our sins called for, render sacrifices of praise, and confess Him not only to be our God, but our Saviour in His only begotten Son.

ALL AROUND US

Robert D. Decker

Seminaries and Your Grandchildren's Pastor Toward a Redeemed Language

Seminaries and Your Grandchildren's Pastor

This is the title of William S. Barker's editorial in the January 22, 1986 issue of *The Presbyterian Journal*. In this editorial Barker makes some points well worth pondering. Writes Mr. Barker:

But the challenge for the church is how to keep our seminaries sound — not only doctrinally, but spiritually and practically. For the historical trend has generally been for the educational institutions to fall away from fidelity to the Lord. And then as the products of the seminaries fill the pulpits, the seminaries become the usual source of apostasy in the church.

Barker is O so right! This has happened repeatedly also in the history of Presbyterian and Reformed churches. Witness the decline of mainline Presby-

terianism as a direct result of the apostasy rampant at Princeton Theological Seminary in the 1920's and 30's. The same phenomenon occurred in the Netherlands in the 19th century and, again, after the Second World War. Let us never say it cannot happen in our Protestant Reformed Seminary and Churches. That danger is real and ever present.

What is the answer to this problem? Barker has some worthwhile suggestions:

I would suggest that the answer to this problem lies not so much in charters, doctrinal statements, pledges, and organizational structures. Valuable as these may be, they cannot guarantee the ongoing soundness of an institution. The main safeguard lies in keeping the seminary in close contact with the life of the church. It is his church which, Jesus said, he would build, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

This means that the seminary professors must be churchmen and the students must be active in the life

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of the church while studying. It is most encouraging to see that the sound seminaries are orienting their instruction increasingly to the practical demands of preaching the gospel and ministering pastorally to the needs of people in contemporary society.

But close contact between seminary and church means also that the church must be involved with the seminaries in the preparation of future ministers. How long has it been since you have heard a sermon on Jesus' words of Matthew 9:37-38. "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field?"

Have you been praying that prayer? Churches that make such prayer a priority see more of their young people called into Christian service. Does your church have a seminarian as a pastoral assistant, at least during the summer? Not only will such an arrangement provide the practical experience that a candidate for the ministry needs, but it can also bring a fresh perspective to the church, stimulus to your young people, and genuine assistance to your pastor.

As one who has pastored two of our Protestant Reformed churches and who has completed twelve years of teaching in our seminary I can attest to the truth of what Mr. Barker writes. Recognizing the need for students to gain practical experience, the Theological School Committee and faculty added, with Synod's approval, a fourth year to the seminary curriculum. This gives the students more opportunity to explore under faculty guidance some of the more practical aspects of the calling and duties of the minister of the gospel. It also affords the student more time to be engaged in some of the actual work of the ministry. All of our students preach rather frequently in the pulpits of the churches of the Grand Rapids area. All too are engaged in teaching catechism classes. Some are leaders of Bible study societies in local churches. Many of our students spend their summers and, in some instances, Christmas and Spring breaks, in preaching and teaching and caring for congregations without pastors. In the recent past one of the classes in Missions worked on one of the home mission fields of our churches. This is all to the good of both students and churches. These opportunities and perhaps more ought to be made available to the students in future years as well.

We must remember too that Jesus' word, "the fields are white with harvest, but the laborers are few," is as true today as when our Lord spoke them. Always God's people must be praying that the Lord will send out laborers. Might it not also be the case that the reason why we have so few students in the seminary at present is precisely because we are not fervently praying this prayer? We ought at least consider this possibility.

It has been said so often that it has almost

become a tired old cliché, but it remains true: "as the seminary goes, so go the churches." If false doctrine is taught in the seminary it will inevitably filter down into the pulpits and classrooms of the churches. The seminary, therefore, needs the fervent prayers and support of the people in the pew. Professors must indeed be churchmen. Professors must not live in isolation from the life of the churches. "Seminary hill" on Ivanrest Avenue must never become an ivory tower. Professors who do not preach or have no opportunity or little opportunity to preach and teach in the congregations must not be expected to teach others how to preach. Professors who do not have some part in "shepherding the flock of God" must not be expected to teach others how to shepherd God's flock. Some of the greatest teachers in the seminaries of the church were preachers. Our own Herman Hoeksema never gave up his pulpit. George M. Ophoff pastored a church until the mid-forties and most Sundays found him in the pulpit of one of the area churches. J. Gresham Machan, though gravely ill, kept a preaching and lecture assignment during a Christmas break and died in Bismarck, North Dakota. These men and others like them were churchmen. They were excellent teachers in large part because they were involved in the life of the church.

Toward a Redeemed Language

Charles Turner, also writing in the *Presbyterian Journal* (January 29, 1986), makes a point we need to take to heart:

If we desire to communicate that which is true, we should watch our words and phrases. We can't afford diction that is weak, disabled, ineffective. We don't want the message we send to go limp in the mind of the hearer. If our words and phrases are to prosper, we must prune from our terminology the slack expressions that dull and obscure.

This is especially important for those of us who desire to communicate the good news of Jesus Christ. Our every utterance reflects our Lord in one way or another — or is a reflection upon him . . . our most serious and most common pitfall in this area is our tendency to be nonchalant about meanings.

Carelessness with our language can result in carelessness with the faith. If we deal loosely in the periphery, we'll hardly notice when we stumble and deal loosely at the center . . . While it's saddening to realize that fuzzy thinking engenders fuzzy language, it's downright scary to realize that fuzzy language perpetuates its fuzziness in the mind of the speaker and guarantees it in the mind of the hearer. At what point does fuzziness become distortion? At what point does blur become error? Distortion can mislead, and error can do worse than that. So, for the Christian

who wishes to be both evangelical and orthodox, the matter is not merely academic.

A couple of examples serve to bring it down to where we live and converse. The use of the term 'sharing' as a substitute for 'witnessing' is so widespread that both words have lost vitality. According to its root connections, 'to share' means 'to cut and divide.' If even a hint of that connotation lingers in the current evangelical usage, wrong is done to the idea of bearing witness to the reality of the Risen Christ. The danger, however, appears to be in the other direction, toward an innocuous concept of personal ministry. Also regrettable is the prevalent use of 'quiet time' as the equation for 'private worship' or any form of one person devotional practice. Any mystic of any Eastern religion has a 'quiet time' and knows the general benefits therein, and advocates a like discipline . . . If we Christians must have jargon, it should at least have enough edge to it to separate that which is Christian from that which is not.

These examples seem quite harmless, and, com-

pared to heresy, indeed they are. But they are harmless in the way that bows without arrows are harmless. They do not accomplish their missions. They — and all the lame phrases they represent — are excess baggage . . . My remarks are not meant to beg for a campaign opposing such terms already in use. They are too deeply ingrained, the project would call for an effort beyond human ability. The tongue, as we all know, is balky, as difficult to purify as it is to tame. The less-than-excellent phrases will go in God's own time. They will go when the chaff goes. My point is that we should begin to require of ourselves a clarity of expression in all things, and especially in matters pertaining to the faith. We would do well to think of the mission of our words, and to avoid in the future, as much as possible, the clutter of the merely catchy. We can't clean up our language behind us, but we can make an attempt to do better on the road ahead. I hereby remind myself, and ask all Christians, to be selective from now on and cull out weak language before it becomes habit . . .

To this we simply say, AMEN!

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

Jason L. Kortering

Exodus — God's Dealing with His Nation (2)

We continue with our outline of the book of Exodus.

5. Preparation for and the deliverance from Egypt (4:29-13:16). Moses and Aaron inform the congregation the deliverance is near (4:29-31). They also go to Pharaoh and demand, in the name of the Lord, that he free Israel to worship in the wilderness. Pharaoh reveals his hardness of heart not only by refusing to allow this, but he increases Israel's burden by insisting that the people get their own straw for bricks (5:1-19). Israel expresses their disappointment in this turn of events (5:20-23). God reveals His covenant promise to Moses and through him to Israel: He is their God and He will deliver

them. Israel had difficulty in believing this. Moses questions whether it can ever happen, but God assures him it will (6:1-13). A listing of the heads of the families of Reuben, Levi (including Amram and Jocabed, Moses' parents, and Aaron's wife and children), and Simeon is given (6:14-30). Moses and Aaron are instructed to appear before Pharaoh to demand the release of Israel, but God warns them that Pharaoh will refuse. God will bring a heavy hand on Egypt. At this point, Moses is 80 years old and Aaron 83 years old (7:1-7). Upon God's instruction, Moses performs a miracle before Pharaoh, the rod became a serpent. Pharaoh's magicians could imitate it (7:8-13). The ten plagues follow. Water turned into blood (7:14-25); frogs out of the river (8:1-15); lice which the magicians of Pharaoh couldn't imitate (8:16-19); swarms of flies but not

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over Goshen (8:20-32); a terrible disease (murrain) on all the livestock of Egypt exterminating them all (9:1-7); boils on man and beast (9:8-12); hail, with the added notation, "for this cause have I raised thee up for to show in thee my power that my name be declared throughout the earth," explaining God's power over Pharaoh. For a time Pharaoh asked for respite, but he still hardened his heart (9:13-35). Then follows the threat of locusts. Pharaoh's servants beg him to let Israel go. He consents to have the men go. The locusts came and left (10:1-20). Thick darkness came. Pharaoh agreed to let the people go, but they must leave their cattle behind (10:21-29). Israel is instructed to borrow jewels of gold and silver from their neighbors in anticipation of the last plague, the firstborn of Egypt's men and beast will be killed (11:1-10). Special instructions are given to begin the Jewish year with the present month. On the 10th day of this month, the passover is to be observed. This includes the killing of a male lamb which has no blemish, roasting it whole, taking the blood and striking the door posts, eating the meat entirely, and being ready to march (12:1-14). Details are also given for the eating of unleavened bread, seven days, from the 14th to the 21st of the month, begun by a holy convocation (12:15-28). The firstborn of Egypt are killed by the angel of death. Israel finally leaves laden with the treasures of Egypt (12:29-36). The congregation of 600,000 men besides women and children with much cattle left Ramases and headed toward Succoth after a stay of 430 years in Egypt. Mention is made of the Passover being a feast for Israel alone — any stranger wanting to participate had to be circumcised (12:37-51). Instruction was given for the sanctifying of the firstborn of man and beast and instructing the generation to come of its importance (13:1-16).

6. The wilderness journey from Egypt to Mt. Horeb (13:17-18:27). God led Israel to Canaan by the roundabout way of the wilderness and Red Sea. They carried the bones of Joseph with them. The pillar of fire and cloud went before them (13:17-22). God tested Israel by deliberately leading them into a trap by the sea. He told Moses ahead of time that the purpose was to get honor upon Pharaoh one more time. Sure enough, Pharaoh saw they were trapped and pursued after them with 600 choice chariots and captains. Israel saw them coming and cried to Jehovah. Moses was instructed to lift up his rod, and the cloud went between Israel and the Egyptians. During the night a strong wind made a dry path through the sea and Israel crossed in safety. The Egyptians tried to follow, but were drowned in the sea (14:1-31). Moses and Miriam, his sister, led Israel in singing a song of praise (15:1-19). At the wilderness of Shur, they en-

countered bitter water at Marah, which became sweet when Moses cast a tree into it. Moses explained to the people that God would care for them, and that they should not murmur (15:20-27). In the wilderness of Sin the people murmured for food. God provided manna in the morning and the flesh of birds in the evening. Instructions were given for the proper eating of this food (16:1-36). The people murmured for water at Rephidim. God instructed Moses to strike the rock and water gushed forth (17:1-7). They were attacked by the Amalekites, but while Moses' hands were held up, God gave the victory to Israel (17:8-16). As God had said, the congregation came to Mt. Horeb. There Jethro, his father in law, came with Zipporah and their two sons to meet Moses. Moses related to them all that the Lord had done in Egypt, whereupon Jethro offered sacrifices to Jehovah (18:1-12). When Jethro observed that Moses judged all the people by himself, he advised him to appoint others for the task, to free himself from the great burden of dealing with so many people. Moses judged only the difficult cases (18:13-27).

7. The ten commandments given at Mt. Sinai (19:1-20:20). It took Israel three months to arrive at Mt. Sinai (Mt. Horeb). God assured them that as He had cared for them in the desert, He would continue to be their God if they would obey His word (19:1-9). Instructions were given to set bounds around the holy mount, so no man or beast would come near. The people must sanctify themselves. On the third day God came down upon the mount with thunder, lightning, earthquake, and the sound of the trumpet. God called Moses up to the top of the mount and told him to get down once again and be sure the people would not come near the mount (19:10-25). The ten commandments were spoken by God from the mount (20:1-20).

8. Various laws given at Mt. Sinai (20:21-23:33). Moses was told to warn the people not to have gods of gold, but worship Jehovah through the use of altars made of earth or fieldstones (20:21-26). Specific laws were given for the treatment of male servants (21:1-6), for treatment of female servants (21:7-11), for murder (21:12-15), for stealing (21:16). Death was ordered for cursing a parent (21:17). The people of Israel were told what to do when injury came by smiting (21:18-32), when the neighbors' ox was injured or killed (21:33-36), when livestock was stolen (22:1-4), when damage was done to vineyards or grain (22:5, 6), when dealing with thievery and damaged property (22:7-15), fornication (22:16, 17), witchcraft (22:18), bestiality (22:19), idolatry (22:20), with strangers, widows, and poor (22:21-27). They were instructed concerning proper treatment of rulers and firstborn (22:28-31), false reporting (23:1-3), enemies' property and the poor

stranger (23:4-9), the sabbatical year for land (23:10-13), three feasts to be kept — unleavened bread, firstfruits, and engathering (23:14-19). The Angel of Jehovah promised to care for them if they obey God (23:20-33).

9. The ratification of the covenant by Israel (24:1-18). At first Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abiram with 70 elders waited a distance from the mount while Moses worshiped alone. Then he came to the people and instructed them in the laws of the Lord. He read the book of the covenant to the people and they expressed agreement. They were all sprinkled with blood (24:1-8). Soon Moses and the other men went into the presence of Jehovah and returned (24:9-11). Moses went alone to obtain the tables of the law, being gone for 40 days and nights (24:12-18).

10. Details given on the tabernacle and its ritual (25:1-31:17). The people were instructed to bring gifts for use in constructing the tabernacle (25:1-9). Details for the ark were given, including the mercy seat (25:10-22), the table of shewbread (25:23-30), the golden candlesticks (25:31-40). The tabernacle was to be constructed with various curtains (26:1-14) and dividers of wood (26:15-30), a veil of linen, hung with specific directions (26:31-37). Next we read of the altar of burnt offering (27:1-8), and of various details of the outer courts (27:9-19). Olive oil was to be used for the burning lamps tended by the family of Aaron (27:20, 21). Details are given of the priest's office as filled by Aaron and his sons; the garments to be worn; the ephod and all its parts, including the urim and thummim to be used for the judgment (28:1-35); the plate and mitre, with specific wording (28:36-43). The ministry of the priests was to begin with a ceremony of consecration (29:1-37), followed by daily offerings in the

tabernacle which would assure God's presence (29:38-46). Instructions were given on the altar of incense and how it was to be used (30:1-10). Each soul in Israel was to be ransomed through the half shekel (30:11-16). Mention was made of the laver for the washing of the priests in the service of the Lord (30:17-21). The use of ointments and spices by the priests is spelled out (30:22-38). Bezaleel and Aholiab were given specific instructions to build the tabernacle of the Lord (31:1-11). The laws for the sabbath follow (31:12-17).

11. The covenant is broken by the worship of the golden calf, and God renews His covenant (31:18-35:3). God gave Moses the two tables written by His own finger (31:18). Account is given how the people grew impatient with the absence of Moses. They asked Aaron to build a god for them, for they didn't know what happened to Moses. He instructed them to break off their jewelry and he fashioned a golden calf. He told them, "these be your gods O Israel, that brought you out of Egypt." He also built an altar and proclaimed a feast day on the morrow. The people came with their sacrifices and began eating and drinking (32:1-6). Jehovah saw it and ordered Moses to go down the mount, and He told Moses He would destroy the people. Moses interceded and asked Jehovah to remember His covenant. The Lord assured him He would (32:7-14). Moses appeared before the people and he broke the tables of the law in anger. He heard the singing and saw the people naked before him. He asked Aaron why he did it and Aaron excused himself by blaming the people. Moses called, who is on the Lord's side. The Levites responded and he ordered them to kill those still dancing. Three thousand were killed. He charged the people to consecrate themselves before the Lord (32:15-29).

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

Ronald L. Cammenga

Criticism — Taking It

All of us need to be sensitive and open to criticism. None of us is above criticism. We ought to be willing to receive the criticism of others. We

have much to learn and can profit immeasurably from the loving criticism of friends in Christ. Last time we discussed giving criticism. In this article

we want to focus on taking criticism.

The Bible has much to say about our taking criticism, especially in the form of correction and reproof. Solomon speaks of the importance of this in many places in the Book of Proverbs. The people of God must be open to criticism. In Proverbs 13:18 he says that "... he that regardeth reproof shall be honored." And again in Proverbs 15:5, "... he that regardeth reproof is prudent." Time and again Solomon warns against the folly of refusing to accept legitimate criticism. He writes in Proverbs 10:17, "He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof erreth." In Proverbs 12:1 he says, "Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge: but he that hateth reproof is brutish." In Proverbs 15:10 we read, "Correction is grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: and he that hateth reproof shall die." And in Proverbs 15:31, 32 we are told, "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding."

We must be open to criticism. It is the fool that refuses to accept any criticism.

It is not our nature, however, to take criticism. Most often, rather than to hear our critic out, we reject him and his criticism out of hand. We don't even give him a hearing, but cut him short for daring to take it upon himself to criticize us. We resent the criticism, and often strike back at the one who brings the criticism. Strangely enough, it is often the case that those who are the most outspoken negative critics of others have little capacity to receive criticism themselves. Immediately they go on the defensive, giving excuses and involved explanations, or simply curtly reject the criticism of others without giving it any honest consideration whatsoever.

This is simply pride! It is a proud man who cannot take criticism from his fellow church member. It is a proud husband who cannot take criticism from his wife. It is a proud Christian school teacher who cannot take criticism from a school board member or concerned parent. It is a proud minister who cannot take criticism from his fellow office-bearers or from a concerned member of the congregation.

If we are going to take criticism, we must be humble people. That humility is the humility that recognizes that we all have weaknesses and sins. None of us is perfect. And as long as we have these weaknesses and sins, as long as we are not perfect, we are open to constructive criticism.

We ought to ask ourselves this question: Am I

humble enough to take criticism? Am I humble enough to take the criticism of my wife, or of a loving fellow church member? Are we Christian school teachers humble enough to take the criticism of colleagues or concerned parents? Are we ministers humble enough to take the criticism of those who are genuinely interested in our welfare and effectiveness in the ministry? Are we as churches humble enough to take the criticism of others?

There has only ever been one man who was above criticism, who had no weaknesses, no faults, no sin — that was our Lord Jesus Christ. As long as you and I are in this life, we will have a need of and should therefore be open to criticism.

In fact, this is why God has given us a wife or a husband. This is why God has given us our colleagues, our fellow church members, our fellow officebearers. He has placed these people alongside of us for our constructive criticism. They are there to admonish us, to reprove us for weaknesses and sins, to correct us when we err.

If we are going to take the criticism of others, we are going to have to follow certain basic steps.

First, hear your critic out. Let him finish his criticism. Don't interrupt him. Don't cut him short. Indicate that you are sincerely interested in hearing everything that might be on his mind concerning your shortcomings or whatever he feels makes you worthy of criticism.

Secondly, be clear on the evidence upon which the criticism is based. What are the grounds for the criticism? What is there to support the criticism and to indicate that the criticism is valid criticism? Attempt to understand the reason for the criticism.

Thirdly, be sure you understand the real point of the criticism. It is possible that the expressed criticism doesn't deal with the real problem, but only with a symptom of the problem or a surface issue connected to a much deeper underlying problem. Help the critic himself to understand clearly the focus of his criticism.

In the fourth place, discuss with your critic the best means to correct the wrong, make amends for the error and prevent its happening again in the future, strengthen the weakness. How best can this problem be overcome so that it does not become an even bigger problem?

In the fifth place, assure your critic that you will give serious and honest consideration to his criticism. You will evaluate his criticism. You will discuss it with others. You will bring the matter to God in prayer.

It may very well be the case that after you evaluate the criticism, you come to the conclusion

that your critic is right. His criticism is a valid criticism. The wrong or weakness is a definite area in your life or work where you have fallen short, and where there is a need for improvement. Pray for God's grace to make this kind of honest evaluation of yourself. And pray for God's grace to implement corrective measures in light of the criticism.

It may also be the case that, after honest, prayerful consideration of a certain criticism, we come to the conclusion that the criticism is not a valid criticism, that we do not deserve the criticism, that there are no proper grounds on which the criticism is based. That we must be open to criticism doesn't mean that we must take ALL criticism. That we must receive valid criticism doesn't mean that we must bend to EVERY critic. If we believe before God and in our own conscience that we have done right, if we believe that our position is the right position, we must stand. We must be strong enough to reject wrong and invalid criticism.

Even then, we must do this in the right way. We ought to tell our critic that we cannot accept his

criticism. We ought to tell him the reasons why we cannot accept his criticism. And we ought to do what we can to bring him to understand our position. He may still not agree with you; you may have to part with a definite difference of opinion. Then you must leave the matter to the Lord and to His judgment.

Constructive criticism is healthy. Often it is the case that we are just too involved with ourselves and too biased about ourselves to make honest judgments about ourselves and our behavior. It's extremely difficult to be as objective and penetrating as we ought to be in self-examination. We need the loving criticism of others.

The proper giving and taking of criticism serves a good function in the body of Jesus Christ. As much as evil criticism can tear down the unity of the church, so valid, constructive criticism can serve as an effective means to build up the unity of the church. God has called us to unity. By properly giving and taking criticism, we express our unity before God and reveal our unity before men.

IN HIS FEAR

Barrett L. Gritters

Understanding Church Discipline (3)

(In the past 2 articles we have seen the Confessional and Biblical basis for church discipline of unrepentant sinners. The step of silent censure and the first two public announcements have been treated. Now we proceed to the third.)

The Third Announcement.

After the second announcement of discipline has been made to the congregation, the elders continue to work with the unrepentant sinner. It is difficult to continue labor when there is no positive fruit, but the call is still to work with the sinner.

The length of time between the second and third announcements must be made by the elders in-

involved, and will be determined by the individual circumstances in each case. And, although work must be persistent and unceasing, dragging feet before the third announcement is not necessary. This is true because there has already been months and months of work done, and an obviously callous attitude toward the elders only reveals the need to proceed. The only reason the third step might be postponed would be signs from the sinner that he is being softened by the words of Christ's admonition. Then all steps should be taken to work with diligence and prayer.

But if there is no repentance yet, the third announcement is made to the congregation. This announcement only reinforces to the congregation that the consistory is doing all that it can with the

brother or sister. The work has not softened, but rather hardened the sinner in his sin.

That means that this announcement is to inform the congregation that a date has been set for excommunication. If no repentance is found before that date, the last measure that the church can take will be taken — exclusion "from the fellowship of the church." When the congregation hears this announcement, they have opportunity to present to the consistory an appeal why the member under discipline should not be excommunicated.

If this does not happen, the congregation gives its "tacit approval" to the work and decisions of the consistory. The extreme remedy can be exercised.

The Extreme Remedy: Excommunication

Notice that the form calls excommunication a *remedy*. The purpose even here is the repentance of the sinner. None in the church wants a brother cut off from the church. All want his repentance and return to the fellowship of the church. This is our constant prayer to our Father.

When the last remedy is used, the Form is read and the sinning member is excommunicated. This form, probably one of the least used of our forms, carries in it a sense of humility that one would never expect in a form that expels from the church of Christ. One would expect a fiery denunciation of the sinner. But what we have is directed solely to the congregation, the majority of which consists of admonitions *to the members* not to presume they cannot fall. (We need to be familiar with our church formulas. After-recess programs in societies could benefit by a study of these forms.)

Not very many, though, are ever excommunicated by the church. Why? Not because the consistory fails in its work; not because there are not very many unrepentant sinners in the church; but because the unrepentants usually ask for their papers from the church before the consistory can finish its work.

Some present a fairly good argument for not granting membership papers to members under discipline who ask for them (see, for example, Daniel Wray, *Biblical Church Discipline*, Banner of Truth: Edinburgh, 1978, page 14). But the Reformed Churches almost always have taken the stand that they may not withhold them. In 1918 the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church took an official position on this matter. It declared: "Synod, considering that the withdrawal from discipline, to which one has freely subjected himself . . . for reasons which cannot stand the test of God's word, is a sin which should not be esteemed lightly . . . and (that) these should not be released hastily; but (considering) also that one's affiliation with the

church as an organization as well as one's continuation in the organized church, should remain to be . . . an act of each one's own personal choice, (therefore Synod) judges that no one can continue to be an object of church discipline if he persists in resigning his membership." Membership in the *institute* of the church for *confessing members* is voluntary. Papers belong to the individual.

There are important implications here, especially for the young members of the church. They hear the announcements about the discipline. They know the sinner who is running in his sin. They understand the seriousness of excommunication and hear the sad discussions of their parents. But when a bulletin announcement merely announces that this same member has asked for and been granted his papers, it almost looks like an easy way out. We may not fool ourselves. Church members must be instructed that he who runs to escape discipline is bound for hell if he continues in that way. The church ought to be just as shocked and numbed by the act of "ducking" discipline as they are by the official pronouncement of excommunication when the form is read. Parents ought to be careful, and consistories cautious, that this seriousness is recognized by the church.

A second important implication is for those who receive the discipline. When confession of faith was made, they made the promise that they would submit to church government if they became delinquent. By asking for membership papers they are not only running from discipline, but breaking a promise made in confession. More seriously, they are leaving the God-given means for repentance and salvation. When they ask for their papers because they want to escape discipline, they leave Christ. It is Christ admonishing them through discipline. Christ calls them to confess and be reconciled with Him. When the elders come with the Word, Christ speaks. Asking for papers, then, even if the excuse is given that another church will be joined, still means that Christ is shunned. And the member who leaves actually "excommunicates" himself. Pray that we all may be able to keep the promise made at confession, to submit to all discipline.

Treatment of excommunicated persons

One very difficult problem raised by excommunication is the manner in which we treat the excommunicated brother, or the brother who has left because of impending excommunication. Though we don't have room to deal with that problem in detail here, there are two points that need to be made.

First, we may not let our own feelings guide us on this point. It is very easy to reason like this:

"You would think differently if it were your son or daughter, father or mother, brother or sister." Or, "How would you feel if you were excommunicated and no one spoke with you?" The point here is that we must be guided by the Scripture alone, or else be mired in all kinds of (understandable) opinions.

Second, then, there are two extremes that must be avoided. The one extreme is treating the excommunicated brother after expulsion from the church no differently than before. Scripture calls us to separate ourselves from the brother. Romans 16:17 instructs us to *avoid* those who have caused divisions and offences in the church. In I Corinthians 5:11 Paul says the saints are *not even to eat* with one in the church who is called a brother but is living in grievous sins. And II Thessalonians 3:15 gives one important reason, from the viewpoint of the brother. "Have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." Were we to continue as if nothing were wrong, the expelled brother would not be reminded of the urgency to repent from the sin that keeps him out. The King of the church calls us to treat him as "an heathen man and a publican" (Matthew 18:17). The disciples had no problem understanding that kind of language. That is, the only contact we may have with these persons, other than necessary contact (for example at work), is this: In the spirit of meekness (Gal. 6:1, 2) admonish them for their sins and call them to true repentance. This is difficult, but Scripturally necessary.

The other extreme is that we treat the brother as one would a leper: do not come close to him; ask him to cry out when he comes near; and turn the other way when he is met on the street. There is just as grave a danger in this extreme as in the other. When a brother or sister is excommunicated, the Form calls all God's people to their duty. In the closing prayer we ask God to "grant . . . that he who is excommunicated may become ashamed of his sins . . . we therefore humbly beseech thee, to kindle in our hearts a pious zeal, that we may labor, with good Christian examples, to bring again this excommunicated person on the right way . . ." This pious zeal and faithful labor is missing in most of our lives. God's people ought to bend every effort to find opportunity for this kind of labor. Calvin says, ". . . though ecclesiastical discipline does not permit us to live familiarly or have intimate contact with excommunicated persons, we ought nevertheless to strive by whatever means we can in order that they may turn to a more virtuous life and may return to the society and unity of the church" (Institutes, IV, XII, 10). When that is missing, hypocrisy and Phariseeism are not far behind.

Pray God for the proper balance in this delicate matter.

So far we have assumed that the sins dealt with by the church were private sins that became the work of the church because of failure to repent. There is a different class of church discipline that is exercised over those whose sins are public. It happens, for example, that crimes are reported through the daily newspaper, a sin is seen by a large part of the church at a public gathering, or by the very nature of the sins themselves they become public. If these sins are not repented of, censure follows in the same manner as outlined above, except that it begins immediately at the second announcement. The knotty problem comes when the public sin is confessed before the consistory. (see the example at the beginning of the first article: Jan. 1, 1986) What to do? Leave it, or announce it publicly?

Reformed churches (until lately) have generally taken the stand that after confession is made to the consistory, it must be announced before the congregation. To this some object.

Let's look at some principles involved to see that a public announcement is necessary.

First, a public act of disobedience diminishes or smears the glory of the holy God. It gives occasion for the enemy to blaspheme and ridicule the church. The glory of God demands that all be informed that confession has been made to the Lord, and that the sinner has found forgiveness at His throne.

The second is implied in the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches, article 75, where it is said that reconciliation of public sins is done "in such a manner as the consistory shall deem conducive to the edification of each church." The purpose of all public announcements is the good of the congregation and of the repentant sinner.

When confession of a public sin is announced publicly, the congregation is informed that the consistory is doing its work, and does not take sin lightly. The consistory is concerned about the erring brother.

Another principle has to do with the publicity of the sin. When a church member commits a sin that is known by most of the congregation, the natural (though sinful) result is talk. Everyone knows. Everyone talks. The result is that the story becomes worse and no one knows the truth. One purpose of the public announcement is to silence this talk. The announcement says, as it were, "The sin has been confessed. The sinner has been forgiven by God. Nothing more need be said by anyone."

And that leads to the principle of *reconciliation*. Unconfessed sin causes a barrier between sinners and God, as well as between sinners and other church members. When confession before God is

made known to the congregation, the barrier is removed. God's people then also forgive and desire

to deal with each other again with intimate fellowship of the saints.
(to be concluded)

GUEST ARTICLE

Steven R. Houch

God's Sovereignty and the Psalms (3)

THE COMFORT OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

From all that we have shown in our previous articles, it ought to be clear that the various themes of the sovereignty of God run throughout the Psalms like golden threads. They are everywhere. If you were to pull out these threads by cutting out the doctrine of God's sovereignty, you would unravel the entire *Psalter*. For there is not one Psalm that does not refer to the sovereignty of God in one way or another. It is impossible to find a single Psalm which ignores this doctrine. The wonder of the book of Psalms, however, is that the great majority of the Psalms do not simply mention the sovereignty of God; they emphasize it! A careful study of the Psalms indicates that ninety percent of them devote at least fifty percent of their content to this doctrine. Think of that! One half of the content of one hundred and thirty-six (136) Psalms deals with the themes of God's sovereignty. Moreover, one third of the Psalms are entirely devoted to these themes. This is amazing! It demonstrates conclusively that the sovereignty of God is the central theme of the book of Psalms. This book **EMPHATICALLY** exalts God as the sovereign God. Therefore, if the Christian is to be faithful to the Lord Who inspired these Psalms, he must not only believe, but he must also emphasize God's sovereignty.

This fact can be further demonstrated by the manner in which the psalmists deal with this doctrine. They do not treat the doctrine of God's sovereignty in a cold, abstract manner. The beauty of this book of praise is that God's sovereignty is in-

deed the **HEART** and **SOUL** of the Psalms. The psalmists love this doctrine. It is precious to them. They find great comfort in the fact that their God controls and works all things for their salvation. They have nothing to fear. Even in the midst of tribulation, the psalmists have peace and contentment. This is the experience of all those who trust the sovereign God. They can say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1). God's people have nothing to fear because the sovereign God is their Savior. He holds the very life of His people in His hands, and no one can touch that life apart from His appointment. For God's sovereign control extends to all of creation. There are no creatures which can take God's people away from their God. Thus Christians sing together, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof" (Ps. 46:1-3).

The doctrine of God's sovereignty, therefore, gives to the believer a wonderful joy. He is happy because he knows that he is safe in the everlasting arms of God. King David spoke of that joy when he exclaimed, "The King shall joy in thy strength, O Lord; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice" (Ps. 21:1). The great strength of the Lord is the very basis of the Christian's joy. What joy could the children of God have if God was some impotent, weak god who had no sovereign power to save them? None whatsoever! The Christian rejoices

because God is not only willing, but also able to save them. Thus the psalmist prays, "But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee" (Ps. 5:11).

THE PRAISE OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

This joy which the believer experiences naturally produces a gratitude that praises God for His greatness. Thus we find praise throughout the Psalms. In fact, the book of Psalms is a book of praise precisely because its theme is that of God's sovereignty. It is the sovereignty of God that is praised. Because God saves His people and delivers them from their enemies by His sovereign power, believers sing of His greatness. The sovereignty of God and praise are inseparable. The psalmist says, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable" (Ps. 145:3). Because the Lord is great, He is greatly to be praised. God's people are exhorted, "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph" (Ps. 47:1). What could be the reason for such shouts of praise? The answer — "For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness" (Ps. 47:2, 7). Someone who does not believe in the sovereignty of God has no basis whatsoever for praising God.

God reveals Himself and His greatness to His people by means of His works. Throughout the Psalms, therefore, the psalmists praise God for these wondrous works. Because God's sovereignty is exhibited in His works, the psalmist says, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Ps. 139:14). Here the sovereign act of creation is praised. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. The psalmists, however, praise God for all of His mighty acts. In fact, believers from one generation to another are to praise God continually for His sovereign works. "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness" (Ps. 145:4-6).

What is true of God's works in general is especially true of His work of salvation. The believer praises God for all of His works as they relate to his own salvation. He praises Him because He sovereignly works all things for his salvation. Thus the church sings, "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the vic-

tory. The Lord hath made known his salvation He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (Ps. 98:1-3). God's people praise Him because they recognize that their salvation is the result of the mighty right hand and holy arm of the Lord. Salvation is the result of the marvellous things God has done. Moreover, the believer knows that His salvation goes back to the eternal election of God. Therefore he praises God for His sovereign will which has chosen him to salvation. "Praise the Lord; for the Lord is good: sing praises unto his name: for it is pleasant. For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure (Ps. 135:3-4).

THE PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

The doctrine of God's sovereignty is such a wonderful Truth that the saint can not keep it to himself. He bursts forth in praise to God, but he also speaks of God's sovereignty to others. He proclaims the sovereignty of God. The psalmist declares, "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works" (Ps. 105:1-2). God's people make known God's great deeds and His wondrous works. They talk of them one to another. In fact, Christian parents must take care that they tell their children of the sovereign works of God. They must be very faithful in that so that their children can say, "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the time of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hast a favour unto them. Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob" (Ps. 44:1-4).

This Truth is not something that the church "believes" but does not promote and proclaim. True Christians do not hide it. They are not afraid of the doctrine of God's sovereignty. Thus God's people are to declare God's sovereignty even to the heathen. The people of God are admonished, "Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved . . ." (Ps. 96:3, 4, 10). The Christian is to declare God's glorious wonders even to the

unbeliever. The message that is proclaimed to the unconverted is the message of God's sovereignty. The unbeliever must not think that salvation is dependent upon his will. He must be told that "the Lord reigneth" in all the world and especially in salvation. In fact, God's people must make this proclamation a part of their daily life. They must continually show forth God's wonders. For the psalmist says, "Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day" (Ps. 96:2). God's sovereignty is such a central part of the Christian's experience that it must be remembered and talked about on a regular basis.

Surely anyone who bows before the authority of God's Word will recognize that the Christian must not only believe the doctrine of God's sovereignty, but he must also emphasize it. It is the heart and soul of the Psalms and, therefore, must be the heart and soul of the believer's faith. The person who

emphasizes this glorious Truth is *not* one-sided. Rather those who do not emphasize this doctrine are guilty of distorting the Truth of the gospel. The doctrine of God's sovereignty can be found on every page of the Psalms. Yea, on every page of Holy Scripture. It is the believer's comfort and joy, the basis for his thanksgiving and praise of God, and it is the Truth that must be proclaimed in the church and in the world. Indeed, "THE LORD HE IS GOD . . ." (Ps. 100:3). Let that be the heart of your faith so that you can say with the psalmist who closes the entire book of Psalms with the words, "Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of HIS POWER. Praise him for HIS MIGHTY ACTS: praise him according to HIS EXCELLENT GREATNESS . . . Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. PRAISE YE THE LORD" (Ps. 150:1, 2, 6).

News From Our Churches

David Harbach

February 15, 1986

Rev. R. Moore submitted to emergency gall bladder surgery at Sturgeon Hospital in St. Albert at the end of January. He is recovering well at home. He was supposed to have given a lecture to the Society for Protestant Reformed Christian Education the same evening, on the topic, "The Moral Environment of the Christian Day School."

Now that Rev. C. Haak has accepted the call to Lynden Church, Washington, Rev. Veldman will preach in Doon Church, Iowa. Rev. and Mrs. Veldman had planned to stay in Lynden Church until the end of April.

Rev. Kamps was installed in Southwest Church, Michigan, February 13, with Rev. Kortering officiating.

Rev. R. Hanko has taken up his labors in Trinity Church, Houston, Texas.

There will be an Office-Bearer's Conference on Monday and Tuesday, March 3 & 4 at South

Holland Church, Illinois. All present and former office-bearers are invited to attend.

Rev. George Hutton, pastor of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Larne, Northern Ireland, with whose congregation our churches have sister-church relations, is planning, D.V., to be in the Grand Rapids area the week of March 9. The Contact Committee of our churches is sponsoring a public lecture by Rev. Hutton on Friday, March 14, in First Church at 8:00 P.M. Rev. Hutton will be speaking on the differences between Presbyterianism and the Reformed faith. This should prove to be an interesting and enlightening speech.

First Church, Edmonton, Alberta, has begun to hold services in Lacombe, Alberta twice a month on the second and fourth Sundays. Services are held at 7:30 P.M. at the Trinity Lutheran Church. The distance from Edmonton to Lacombe is about the same as the distance from Grand Rapids to Benton Harbor — ninety miles. For those visiting Edmonton, Trinity Lutheran Church is easy to find.

Rev. J. Kortering and his family moved into Grandville Church's new parsonage February 24 &

25. A room downstairs in the basement has been finished for consistory meetings.

Our schools have been looking for teachers to fill empty positions. Loveland School, Colorado, needs a teacher for grades 7-9 and possibly an administrator as well. Heritage School, Michigan, is looking for an extra teacher for grades 3 & 4. And Hull School, Iowa, needs a kindergarten/first grade teacher.

The PTA of Adams Street School, Grand Rapids, Michigan, met on February 6 to hear Prof. Hanko present a tape of a speech by Lawyer David Gibbs entitled, "Conviction or Preference," a defense of Christian Schools. A very profitable discussion period followed the playing of the tape.

Rev. Kortering spoke at Hope School's PTA, February 14, on the church's responsibility in the education of our children.

The Society for Protestant Reformed Special Education in the Grand Rapids area will hold its annual society meeting on March 3, 8:00 P.M. at Hope School. New members are needed to be involved with what we support.

CALL TO ASPIRANTS TO THE MINISTRY

All young men desiring to begin studies for the 1986-87 academic year in the Theological School of the Protestant Reformed Churches should make application at the March 20, 1986 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

Pre-Seminary Students:

A transcript of grades from high school and college (if any), a letter of testimony from the student's pastor or consistory, and a certificate of health from a reputable physician must accompany the application.

Seminary Students:

A testimonial from the student's consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith and upright in walk, a certificate of health from a reputable physician, and high school and college transcripts must accompany the application. All applicants to the seminary department must have completed the equivalent of a four-year college education (125 semester hours) and must meet the course requirements for entrance to the seminary department. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school.

All seminary department applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student can not appear at the March 20th meeting, notification of this fact along with a suggested interview date must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the Theological School Committee, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418.

Jon Huisken, Secretary

THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL OF SOUTH HOLLAND

is celebrating its 25th anniversary

Friday, May 2, 1986

with an all-day Open House, including classroom visitation, and a commemorative banquet and program in the evening.

COME CELEBRATE WITH US!

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Consistory of the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church, on behalf of the congregation, expresses our Christian sympathy to Mrs. Esther Griess, Mr. William Griess and Mr. Paul Griess in the death of their husband and father, MR. ALVIN GRIESS. May the Lord comfort them in their sorrow and sustain them in the days ahead with the promise of His Word that "underneath are the everlasting arms." (Deut. 33:27)

NOTICE!!!

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, who will be in need of financial assistance for the 1986-87 school year, are asked to contact the Student's Aid Committee's Secretary: Larry Meulenberg, 342 Begole S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504 or Phone: (616) 453-8466.

This contact should be made before the next meeting of the committee on March 13.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church expresses sympathy to Mr. Clarence Kuiper and family in the death of his father-in-law, MR. HENRY KOK.

"For this God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." (Psalm 48:14)

Phillip Lotterman, Pres.
Bill DeKraker, Vice Sec'y.

NOTICE!!!

The Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a Kindergarten and 1st grade teacher for the 1986-87 school year. Teachers interested in applying for this position please write to Hull Protestant Reformed Christian School, 218 2nd Street, Hull, Iowa 51239, or phone: Ron Koole (712) 439-1060, or Glenn Kooiker (712) 324-2973.