

A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine

THE STANDARD BEARER

To whom must the truth be committed? The text answers: "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." These are faithful men. They are men full of faith. Men who are therefore trustworthy and reliable. Faithful men are men upon whom the churches can depend. They are men whom the churches believe to be men of faith and men who possess the ability to teach others. They are men upon whom the church can depend to do the work of the ministry faithfully.

See: Convocation Address, p. 38

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Meditation James D. Slopsema

Catching The Little Foxes In The Vineyard

James D. Slopsema is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.

*Take us the foxes, the little
foxes, that spoil the vines: for our
vines have tender grapes.*
Song of Solomon 2:15

It is the spring time of the year.
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of the singing of birds is
come, the fig tree puts forth her
green figs, and the vines with the
tender grape give forth a good
smell.

Solomon's concern is for his vine-
yards that are in blossom. Little
tender grapes are beginning to form
on the branches. But, oh, those little
foxes. Little foxes are scurrying
through the vineyards. So easily
these little foxes damage the vines
so they do not produce the fruit they
should.

Solomon gives charge to the
workers in his vineyards: "Take us
(catch for us) the foxes, the little

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foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes."

Solomon appears here as a type of Christ, Who is very much concerned about the vineyard of His church. For many little foxes find their way also into God's spiritual vineyard. And, oh, how those little foxes can spoil the vines so they do not produce the spiritual fruit the Lord desires. Jesus, therefore, commands those who work in the vineyard: "Catch the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for the vines have tender grapes."

* * * * *

God has created the earthly to be picture of the heavenly.

With great care God formed the sheep that they might resemble His beloved people. The shepherd He created to resemble the spiritual Leader of His people. He ordained marriage to reflect the spiritual union between Himself and the church. In like manner He created the lily of the valley, the rose of Sharon, the balm of Gilead, the vine and its branches, the olive tree and much, much more, to mirror in a most wonderful way the realities of the spiritual realm.

The earthly creation is full of parables proclaiming God's great work of grace in Jesus Christ.

Included in these parables is the parable of the vineyard. With great care God fashioned the vine and the vineyard to be a picture of His Church. Consequently, we also find that time after time the church is compared in the Bible to a vineyard.

There are several ways in which the vineyard very aptly resembles the church.

First, the planting of the vineyard very closely resembles the work of God to "plant" His church.

In the planting of a vineyard there was much work done in preparation, long before so much as one vine was planted. Care was given to find the right location. Grapes flourish only in loose soil and on the slopes where there is good drainage. Once a suitable field was found, all the large rocks (of which there were plenty) were removed. These were used to build a fence around the field and perhaps even a tower.

Then the soil was tilled by hand with a hoe to remove the weeds and thorns.

Finally, the vineyard was planted. The choicest vines were selected. These were planted with great care and spaced the right distance apart to give ample room for the branches to grow and run out.

All this serves as an earthly picture of the work of God to plant His church.

The vines are the various members of the church. These God has chosen with great care from all eternity. Certainly the vines God has chosen to plant into the vineyard of His church are not selected on the same basis as the husbandman selects them. The husbandman would select only the choicest vines for his vineyard. The vines God has chosen, however, are of themselves no better than other vines the Lord has rejected. Nevertheless, God has chosen them and determined to accomplish a glorious purpose through them.

With great care God plants these vines into Christ. Even as the husbandman plants his choicest vines into the rich soil that they may take root and bear fruit, so God plants His precious vines into Christ. He does this by working faith in their hearts and lives. By faith the vines of God are made spiritually one with Christ so that they dig their spiritual roots into Christ and receive from Him His life. All this results in the most wonderful spiritual fruits of righteousness and godliness.

There is more to the parable of the vineyard.

There is also the care of the vineyard.

In caring for the vineyard the husbandman would take great pains to keep the ground free of weeds and thorns that would hinder the growth of the vines. Carefully he would prune the vines of dead wood so that the vines would bring forth the maximum amount of fruit.

So also does God care for the spiritual vineyard of the church. Through the preaching of the word and the sacraments, through Christian discipline and many other

means, He provides for the spiritual growth of the vines. All this is with a view to gathering fruits of righteousness from His vineyard.

* * * * *

Solomon's concern is for the little foxes that so quickly spoil the vineyard.

It is the spring of the year. The vineyards are in blossom. The tender grapes are just beginning to form.

And what a problem those little foxes are!

In the spring of the year the little foxes love to live and play in the shade of the new foliage. How cute they are. And how harmless they appear at first. But what a menace they prove to be. They dig into the ground; they gnaw at the roots and at the branches. The damage they do is inestimable. This is especially true in the spring of the year when the vineyard is in bloom and the grapes are yet tender. Many a crop has been spoiled already in the spring of the year because of these little foxes.

There are also many little foxes running loose in the spiritual vineyard of the church.

These foxes are all that would spoil and damage the church so that she does not bring forth the spiritual fruits she ought. God has planted His vineyard and cares for it that He may receive its spiritual fruits. The Devil, however, and all the powers of darkness seek to destroy this vineyard of God. In God's good providence they are not able to accomplish this evil purpose. But God in His providence does allow the powers of darkness to do a great deal of damage in His vineyard. They are able to spoil the vineyard of God so that the vines are not as fruitful as they ought to be. The little foxes are all those things that the powers of darkness use to damage the spiritual vineyard of God so that she does not yield proper fruit.

There are the little foxes of false doctrines. There are the little foxes of movies and television. Running through God's vineyard are the little foxes of worldly music and dancing. In this corner of the vineyard there is the little fox of frequenting the bars. Over there is the little fox of

staying home from church on the sabbath day for the sake of earthly pleasure. There are literally thousands of little foxes that find their way into the spiritual vineyard of God.

And our reaction may be that they are really quite innocent. What harm could really come from these things?

But don't forget, we are dealing here with little foxes. By the time these little foxes are finished with their fun and frolicking, many a vine in God's vineyard has been spoiled so that it does not bring forth proper spiritual fruits.

* * * * *

Solomon gives command to the workers in his vineyards to catch the foxes.

To prevent the damage done by the little foxes, trenches and walls were constructed around the vineyard. This was designed not only to keep out the animals but also strangers from the vineyard. Often a

tower was also built in the vineyard and a watch set to guard against any intruders.

To the watchmen and the workers in his vineyards Solomon gives the instruction: "Catch the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes."

So also does our Lord Jesus Christ, typified by Solomon, call us to catch the spiritual foxes that would damage the church.

The church is of extreme importance to our Lord. He loves the church. For the sake of the church He even gave His life. As the Savior of the church, His desire is that the church render fruits in abundance to His Father in heaven.

And so the call comes from the Lord: "Catch the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for the vines have tender grapes." This is a call to every member of the church: to cast out of the church and out of their own lives all that would hinder

the spiritual fruits God expects from them in Jesus Christ. It is a call to turn away from every false doctrine and cling to the truth of Scripture. It is a call to control the television in your home or get rid of it. It is a call to avoid the godless music of this world and to fill your soul with music that edifies. It is a call to avoid the fellowship of the world but seek the fellowship of the saints. . . .

Oh, how hard these little foxes are to catch! They are so clever and quick. It is only by the grace of God that we can catch these little foxes and cast them out of our lives. This grace comes only through much prayer and a daily use of God's holy Word.

Catch the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines.

And bring forth spiritual fruits of thankfulness, in rich abundance, to the glory of God the Father, Who has given us His glorious salvation in Jesus Christ. □

Editorials

Editor's Notes Seminary Convocation, 1987 As To Evolution At Dordt College (1)

Included in this issue are two articles connected with the annual meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association. The address by the Rev. Steven Key, pastor of our Southeast Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, is one of them. The other is the Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board, James Van Overloop. Some of our regular departments will be displaced in this issue, because of the special articles carried.

* * * * *

Speaking of the annual meeting, it must have set a record, or a near-record — for smallness! Not more than about two dozen men were present; and that attendance included Board members. Very disheartening! Especially for the Board, which has the duty of seeing to the publication of our magazine. Sometimes when one looks at the poor attendance and lack of interest in the annual meeting, he begins to ponder the question of survival. I realize that this has been a perennial problem for the Board. But the situation is not a good one. Sometimes one longs for the days of our beginning when the R.F.P.A. membership grew by leaps and bounds. I wish that steps could be taken to change the present trend from smaller and smaller to larger and larger! □

HCH

Seminary Convocation, 1987

Last year, as you may recall, was a highly abnormal year for our Protestant Reformed Seminary. For the first time in the history of our school our student body consisted of one pre-seminary student; and he was very much a part-time student as far as instruction at our school was concerned: he had but one course with us. And while this situation provided an opportunity for Profs. Decker and Hanks to do some post-graduate studies and opportunity for the undersigned to do more writing, it was a very abnormal year for our school and one which none of us would like to repeat for a very long time.

This year things are different!

We have four new pre-seminary enrollees. We have a third year pre-seminarian. And we have a first-year seminary student. Things are much more normal on "seminary hill." For this we are thankful. And as faculty we are especially glad to get back into our normal routine of giving instruction. Meanwhile, Profs. Decker and Hanks are striving to finish the post-graduate studies which they began last year at Calvin Seminary and are busily at work on their theses.

It was a happy occasion, therefore, when once more we had a Seminary Convocation on September 9 at our Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, just down the hill from the Seminary. A capacity audience from the West Michigan area was present, and there seemed to be an air of thankful enthusiasm, manifested in the vigorous psalm-singing of the audience and in the fellowship following the program. To you out-of-towners: we wish you could have been there!

The program, led by the president of the Theological School Committee, the Rev. Jay Kortering, included a couple selections by the Hope Heralds, a male chorus which always seems to do a creditable job. But the main feature was an address by Prof. R. Decker, "Committing the Truth To Faithful Men." By rotation, it was his turn this year to deliver the convocation address; and his address struck the right note for our

new term. This part of the program our readers can share; a transcript of his speech appears elsewhere in this issue.

It was my privilege as Rector to introduce our students to the audience. There are three new pre-seminarians attending our school part-time while they are taking most of their courses this first year in area colleges. They are: Douglas Dykstra, Kenneth Elzinga (both of Hope Church, Walker, Mich.), and Earl Kamps (of Southwest Church). We have arranged our schedule this year so that they can also join us in our weekly chapel sessions. A fourth first-year pre-sem is Allen J. Brummel, of our Edgerton, Minnesota church, who is attending Dordt College for his first year. Our returning pre-sem, now in his third year, is Leonard Holstege (Byron Center Church). And our first-year seminary student is Mitchell Dick (Grandville Church).

We covet your prayers for our seminary during this 1987-88 term.

Meanwhile, the churches should not become lackadaisical with regard to our need of students.

Perhaps you may be inclined to think that now the crisis is past and the need for students has been met. Maybe you even thought, "He's never satisfied! After all, we have new students now, do we not? Besides, there are not so many vacancies among our churches."

First of all, let me remind you of our Lord's word that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers few, and that we must pray the Lord of the harvest for laborers. And while we do not know the details of the future, we must by faith act on the principle of our Lord's word. In the second place, let me point out that the ideal for our school would be a steady and regular annual supply of students, so that in the future we may avoid a hiatus such as we had last year. In the third place, let me point out that there is no possibility of a seminary graduate until the year 1991; that as matters stand now, the next graduate would be in 1993; and that our four new pre-seminarians face eight years of instruction and possible graduation in 1995. I know: we do not know what the future holds. But these are

realistic projections on the basis of our present data.

From what source must these students come?

Out of our own churches!

Young men! Whoever of you read these lines, consider this! Consider seriously and prayerfully whether the Lord calls *you* to prepare for the ministry. Fathers and mothers, talk about these things with your sons, especially your sons of high school age, when soon they will be called upon to make decisions with respect to their future course in life and their possible future education. No, by all means do not try to "push" your son into preparation for the ministry. Our ministry would suffer from that; and, besides, there is no more unhappy place to be than to be in the ministry when you don't belong there. Pastors and elders, bring the need of our churches and the possibility of preparing for the ministry to the attention of young men in your flocks, especially of young men who, in your opinion, may have the gifts and talents for such study!

As To Evolution At Dordt College (1)

Now that we have the data about this matter from both Prof. Hodgson and Dordt College's Board of Trustees, we can proceed to discuss the issue further. Meanwhile, I want to assure both Prof. Hodgson and Dr. Hulst, the president of Dordt College, that they are welcome to respond to what I write if they desire; and I will try to publish such responses promptly.

Before I enter upon a detailed discussion of this matter, I want to make a few introductory remarks.

In the first place, I hold no grudge against either Prof. Hodgson or Dordt College. Prof. Hodgson I did not even know at all before this matter arose; and I still do not know him, except from the record of the Hillsdale debate which was sent to me by a reader who had been following my critique of Calvin College Professor Van Till's book, *The Fourth Day*, and from the very brief

correspondence we have had. And as far as Dordt College is concerned, I have had very little contact with it in recent years. From the start I was aware that from my Protestant Reformed stance I did not and could not see eye to eye with Dordt. I was aware, for example, that one of its earliest science professors held to the period theory with respect to creation. I was also aware — and I discussed this face-to-face with Dordt's former president, the Rev. Bernard Haan, some years ago — that we could not agree with the elaborate statement of Dordt's philosophy of education which was then in the process of preparation (*Scripturally-Oriented Higher Education*) because of (among other things) "common grace." On the other hand, I had always considered Dordt in the past to be somewhat more "conservative" (for want of a better term) than, say, Calvin College. And frankly, I was somewhat shocked when the matter of Prof. Hodgson's position was brought to my attention.

In the second place, what is my concern then? My concern is, first of all, for our Protestant Reformed young people who attend colleges such as Dordt or Calvin, or, for that matter any college which purports to be Reformed or even, more generally, Christian. I want them to have both feet planted firmly on the

ground and their eyes wide open when they go away to college and begin to run into the teaching of evolution. And I want their parents, too, to be aware of the kind of teachings to which their sons and daughters are exposed in college. And I want our people generally to be instructed concerning the erroneous positions with respect to creation and evolution which are prevalent, so that we may continue to maintain the Reformed and Scriptural truth of creation in our own churches and schools. For some reason this matter of creation versus evolution keeps on coming up in Reformed circles. There was considerable debate about it in the mid-1960s when I lectured on this subject in the Grand Rapids area and when my little book *"In The Beginning God . . ."*, now out of print, was first published. Some twenty years later it is again an issue, as is plain from the discussion kindled by Dr. Van Till's *The Fourth Day*.

In the third place, let us bear in mind that while the issue is indeed creation versus evolution, and while these two are mutually exclusive, an issue of faith versus unbelief, the debate does not assume this form. No one in a Christian college wants to say, "I flatly deny creation, and I hold to the theory of evolution." In that case the matter would be soon settled, whether that be at Calvin or

at Dordt or anywhere else. That is not even the form of the issue with respect to Dr. Van Till's teachings. He certainly tries to leave the impression that in some sense he holds to both creation and evolution. But that is also the form of the issue in the case of Dordt College's Prof. Hodgson. If Dr. Hodgson had said flatly, "I hold to evolution and not to creation," I trust there would be no problem: Dordt would dismiss him. But Dr. Hodgson claims to be a so-called "progressive creationist" or "old earth creationist." This complicates matters. The issue becomes partly this: is this "progressive creationist" position compatible with the Reformed and Scriptural doctrine of creation? And it becomes partly this: is this "progressive creationist" position a shield, a shelter, for some form of evolutionist position, or, in other words, for an attempted compromise?

My own answer to these questions is, first of all, that "progressive creationism" is *not* compatible with the Reformed and Scriptural doctrine of creation. Secondly, I believe that Prof. Hodgson attempts a compromise with evolutionism.

Dordt College seems to have assumed an investigatory stance with respect to Dr. Hodgson's teachings.

Let us pursue the matter further. □

HCH

Walking In The Light

Herman C. Hanko

Moral Aspects of Medical Technology (19)

Herman C. Hanko is professor of Church History and New Testament at the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Genetic Engineering

In our last article we began to call attention to some of the truths of Scripture which have to be considered as we approach this whole question from a Biblical point of view. We mentioned three items: 1) That just because science is able to do something, this does not mean

that *per se* what science does is morally permissible. Man must rule science, not science man. 2) That the whole theory lying behind genetic experimentation and engineering is evolutionistic and humanistic. 3) That genetic engineering deals with the basic processes of life; and,

because man is created by God with both body and soul, such tampering with life's most basic processes will result in untold harm to the soul.

There are other points which need to be made in our consideration of this subject.

In the first place, it must be remembered that it is argued that genetic engineering is to be used to the "good" of man, i.e., for his improvement. We have quoted a couple of ethicists already who have called attention to this fundamental danger in the whole approach. Allen Verhey quoted C.S. Lewis as saying, "What we call Man's power of nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over others with Nature as its instrument." Joseph Fletcher, as we noticed in an earlier article, insists not only that the majority must decide what is good, but that this decision must be enforced legally. If, e.g., it is deemed good by the majority that all babies are now to be conceived *in vitro* so that they can be checked for genetic weaknesses or diseases, this will be considered good, and this "good" will be enforced by law.

One can readily see the picture. Babies born with defects and transmittable diseases are not "good" by the definition of the majority. Such children are a burden on their families and on society. Their presence in society brings the risk that they will pass on these diseases to others. The hope of mankind is to rid the world of illness and bring health to all. So, in order to avoid these evils, each child must be conceived *in vitro* so that any possibility of this happening may be destroyed. If the conceived child can undergo corrective surgery while it is still only a single cell, wonderful. If not, it can be destroyed. Fletcher argues passionately for this and accuses the old-fashioned Biblical moralists with being a drag on society.

But who determines what is really good? The answer is that the majority do. The trouble is that the majority in this world are ungodly people who have not the fear of the Lord in their hearts. So the wicked will be determining what is "good" for all, including God's people.

And from a more practical point of view, not even the majority of wicked men will determine this, but the scientists will be the final arbitrators. They know what can be done; they alone can perform these medical "miracles;" they know better than anyone else what the long range consequences are; they are the ones who will finally have the power to determine for all what is really good. But any definition of good according to the Word of God is not even considered. So a cadre of scientists, a priesthood of elite manipulators of life will be in absolute control. It will be an unbelievably horrible time for God's people when this happens.

In the second place, and in close connection with what we have said above, the believer must understand fully that good must be determined in the light of God's Word. I would not be able to count how many God-fearing families have received of the Lord a Down's syndrome child or a child with other severe defects who have not said, "The presence of this child in our family has been truly good." They are not merely uttering pious phrases in a desperate attempt to come to terms with what has happened. They mean this with all their hearts, so much so that they consider such a child to be a special gift of the Lord Who, in special grace towards them, gave them a treasure which few others possess. I know they mean what they say. I have heard them say it with shining eyes. And I have stood at the side of parents who lost such a child when the child had been with them for fifteen or twenty years and who bore a grief greater than the grief of the loss of a "normal" child. These things are *good*; not by any worldly criteria, but by the criteria of the Scriptures.

The same thing must be said of death. The goal of the genetic engineers is, among other things, to stop the aging process and to overcome disease and death. We know that this will never happen. Scripture speaks of disease and death as part of the curse which has come upon this creation. It is God's Word of fury against sin. Genetic engineering cannot reach out and cut away so as to silence this voice of God. History has

proved that. One disease is conquered only in order that it may make room for another, yet more dreadful disease. Polio and tuberculosis have been conquered, but have moved aside to make room for cancer. Ordinary syphilis has become susceptible to antibiotic treatment, but the result is strains much more difficult to destroy and AIDS which threatens to become a plague like the bubonic plague of the Middle Ages. In some countries the life-span of a man may be 80 or 85 years. But if one considers all mankind throughout the world, it is still true what Moses wrote that we tarry here in the world threescore years and ten, and perhaps fourscore years if our strength is great. But even then these years are filled with trouble and sorrow. All this is true because the root cause is sin. And sin cannot be eradicated from a corrupt and depraved nature by genetic engineering.

But the child of God sees all these things in quite a different light. He can still sing with the Psalmist, "Affliction hath been for my profit. . . ." God increases spiritual blessings through suffering, sickness and disease for those who are washed in the blood of Christ. It is a great mystery, a great mercy, but the Scriptures make it all abundantly clear. And when death comes, death is the door from this life to heaven. What then makes death so terrible? "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Is death so bad for the one who waits upon Jehovah? What pastor has not sat in awe at the bedside or in the living room of humble saints of God who express the deepest fervent wish to go to be with Christ?

Yes, we have certain responsibilities to maintain our health, to do what we can to cure our diseases. Scripture does not forbid us to seek help when illness strikes. And it can even be argued from certain points of view that we have an obligation to do this. But health and life in this world are not ends in themselves and must not be made such. The Christian must not be so enamoured

of the conquests and triumphs of medical science that he forgets that his chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, and that his one and only comfort in all of life is that he belongs to Jesus.

In the third place, we must never forget that our own aims and purposes of life are not the betterment of mankind and social progress. Perhaps sometimes we are deceived into thinking that we have certain obligations and responsibilities towards the advance of the human race. This is not so. That we are to seek the good of all men is surely our calling. But here we come to that elusive word "good" again. What does it mean to seek the "good" of our fellow men? Surely it ought to be clear to anyone who has even the slightest acquaintance with the Scriptures that this "good" is a man's salvation from sin. We are called by God to seek the salvation of our fellow men insofar as in us lies and in the place in life in which

our God has put us. When we seek that man's salvation we seek his good in the only sense of the word that really counts. Yet we know too that it is not God's purpose to save either this present world nor all men in it. The elect remain as a hut in a garden of cucumbers. But the elect are pilgrims and strangers in the earth who look for their home in heaven with Christ. They know with an absolute and unshakeable certainty that the wicked and this present world shall presently be destroyed. They spend their years here as pilgrims and strangers. They have a city which hath foundations. To do anything less is to become a promoter of that devilishly deceiving social gospel which has gotten a stranglehold on so much of the church world.

Finally, if all these things are kept in mind and if the child of God lives out of these principles, then the answers to the specific questions of genetic engineering can be found. Generally speaking, of course, we cannot have any objection to efforts

which are put forth to alleviate disease and cure sickness insofar as that is possible. And if genetic engineering is capable of doing that in a given individual, it is one of the means God gives His people to alleviate their suffering here below. But any kind of tampering with the basic processes of life is to be sharply and uncompromisingly reprobated. I suppose that the line may not in the future be always so easy to draw. But one who lives out of faith will know what the Lord wills for him.

Of one thing I am sure. We have not seen the end of this by any means. The problems will grow more difficult, the temptations more severe. But genetic engineering as it now seems possible will be a mighty tool in the hands of Antichrist to bring about his ungodly utopia in which God's people will not only have no place, but in which they will be persecuted for their faith. It is incumbent upon us to prepare now for the evil day which shall surely come. □

All Around Us

Gise J. Van Baren

"Christian" Rock "Euthanasia — It's Here" "Calvinist orthodoxy?"

Gise J. Van Baren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

"Christian" Rock

The young people of the church are often attracted to "rock music". If these seek not the worldly sort, at least they would clamor for the "Christian" variation of this. The paper, *World*, August 31, 1987, reports on the decisions of the Assemblies of God churches:

Christian rock singers whose performances are viewed as out of tune with

the gospel were the target of criticism in this month's national convention of the Assemblies of God here . . .

"The church of Jesus Christ has come under special attack from Satan through the entertainment media and has been provoked to emulate the world in its degraded art forms," said the resolution.

The originator of the resolution, Rev. Joseph Pyott of Linnwood, Wash., who works as a traveling evangelist, told RNS he was dismayed a year and a half ago

when "a so-called Christian rock group, *Strayer*," gave a concert in this area.

"They dress like devils and wear Spandex costumes. Many church young people went, and I heard about it. I thought their performance was inappropriate and contradicted everything the gospel stands for," he said.

Christian rock artist Amy Grant also drew Pyott's disapproval. "Her performances are very suggestive sexually, and she makes no bones about the fact that you can combine a little bit of sex and Christianity and that's okay in her viewpoint. I think that's wrong."

Such performers "may use the right words, but in my opinion their performance and their dress contradict the things they say," Pyott said.

"If you put the name Jesus on whiskey, it would still make you drunk. Putting the label 'Jesus' on rock music doesn't change the essential nature of it. They take something that is basically unacceptable to Christians and relabel it, but it is still just as bad as before," said the evangelist.

One ought to note the seriousness of the inroads of sin also within the realm of music. Though often this kind of music appeals to the Christian youth, that does not make it good or right. We ought also to take to heart the many warnings given concerning the devilishness of such music.

"Euthanasia — It's Here"

The same issue of the *World* reports on a case of euthanasia — approved by the New Jersey Supreme Court. This, and similar cases, makes one aware that the horror of abortion is not the end of man's action to end lives that are unwanted. Increasingly, there is the pressure to end the lives of those who are judged to be of little or no value to society. The reporter presented this:

On June 24, the New Jersey Supreme Court added a new offense to the list of crimes for which a person can be sentenced to death: Being brain-damaged and too healthy to die.

In a 6-1 decision, the court upheld a lower-court ruling that authorized the starvation and dehydration death of Nancy Ellen Jobes, 32, who suffered an anesthesia accident during surgery seven years ago. Jobes's family, described in news accounts as caring and suffering, postponed the request to stop Jobes's food and fluids until after a \$900,000 set-

tlement had been made in the malpractice suit against the anesthesiologist at the hospital where her injuries occurred.

In arguments related to her "right to die," Jobes's ability to live — with only the same level of care as that provided to 31 other patients in the nursing home — was never an issue. The question was not "Could she live?" but rather, "Should she live?"

Those opposing her right to continued food and fluids described her as "ugly," "a monstrosity," and "not human."

Neurologist David Carlin said, "She died a long time ago . . . She should have a funeral." Another neurologist, Henry Liss, said, "She's not living, she's not a human entity."

Lincoln Park Nursing Home, where Jobes has been a patient for six years, strongly opposed the request. Home officials observed, "She is not terminally ill . . . She responds to touch and sound stimuli . . . follows movements of a person with her eyes . . . reacts to pain . . . There is no competent evidence that Nancy would want to terminate her life."

Two neurologists, Maurice Victor, co-author of a leading neurology textbook, and Allan Ropper, associate professor at Harvard Medical School, testified about her awareness and responsiveness. Ropper reported: Jobes can see and hear; she responds to commands; her movements are purposeful and volitional; she fatigues and can feel pain.

But the lower court discounted the neurologists' testimony as biased and implied that the observations of nursing-home employees — those who cared for Jobes on a day-to-day basis — were illusions. The court didn't term as biased the testimony of witnesses who described Jobes as ugly, monstrous, and less than human.

Jobes's husband, who according to court records did not visit her for a year, may now preside over her death — a lingering, painful death that could take from six to 15 days. Such a death, if imposed for any other "criminal" offense, would most assuredly be deemed "cruel and unusual punishment."

Will there be a public outcry? Or will her death be viewed as a small, isolated, and unfortunate incident?

It may be wise to recall the words of the producer of *Shoah*, a documentary about Nazi atrocities: "It was not the first act that led to the last act, but the first silence that led to the last silence."

One must be horrified by a case which is by no means an isolated instance of euthanasia. There is indeed, as another article stated, "economic pressures for cost containment" which focuses "increasing-

ly on persons with the most disability and may encourage non-treatment for broader categories of disability than just those who are in a presumed irreversible coma." One can predict that even as abortion has become commonplace in this country, euthanasia will soon be publicly accepted, too.

"Calvinist orthodoxy?"

The guest editor of *The Banner*, Aug. 24, 1987, treats the question, "Who is Saved?" One short paragraph in this interesting editorial struck my attention — for it presents strikingly the "double-track theology" (or contradiction) that one finds in Christian Reformed theology. There appears to be no alternative to this in view of their official position for the "free offer of the gospel". Dr. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. writes:

A Painful Scheme. No, God must decide who will be saved, and God must save them. In Calvinist orthodoxy God wants to save everybody (1 Tim. 2:4). And God can save everybody: God arranges for the death of Christ to radiate sufficient power for the salvation of all. God also orders the gospel preached to all. But, at the end of the day, God abandons some. God wants everybody saved but never intends to save all. God wants everybody saved but doesn't plan on it. The reprobate are heartbreakingly, finally, disastrously lost. God could save them, but he doesn't. And nobody knows why."

The above, of course, presents a contradiction within God. "God wants everybody saved, but never intends to save all." But, if God wants all to be saved, because He is God, these would be saved. And if He never intends to save all, it must be (for He is God) because He does not want all to be saved.

And is this truly "Calvinist orthodoxy"? Calvin himself would not agree, at least not in the passage of 1 Tim. 2:4 to which Plantinga refers. Calvin insists that God Who "would have all men to be saved", desires to save not all men head-for-head, but

rather would save all kinds of men: princes, kings, and people of other nations (cf. Calvin's commentary on I Timothy).

The danger of universalism coming out of Plantinga's presentation of "Calvinist orthodoxy" can be seen in the article in the same magazine by Dr. Richard Mouw on "The Waning of Hell":

... We don't talk about hell as much as we used to. We don't hear it much from our pulpits. It does not seem to play much of a role in our personal piety.

Is this bad? It is hard for me to judge without my first being clear about some other issues. I must make it clear at the outset — I do not endorse the universalistic teaching that all people will be saved in the end. Not that I am absolutely certain that universalism is false! I don't know for sure. And this is significant for me, because I would very much like universalism to be true . . .

How can a Reformed man, one who maintains Scripture and the Reformed confessions, not be *absolutely certain* that universalism is false? Could it be that if it is true that God *wants* all men to be saved, one could conclude that just possibly universalism must follow? Perhaps these men ought to consider again what is truly Calvinist orthodoxy! □

Address, Annual Meeting

Steven R. Key

The Standard Bearer And Our Youth

(An Address Delivered At The Annual Meeting Of The R.F.P.A., September, 1987)

The subject I have chosen to consider with you this evening is "The Standard Bearer and Our Future;" or, if you wish, "The Standard Bearer and Our Youth," for the youth are our future. You can gather from my choice of topics, that I consider *The Standard Bearer* to occupy an important place and to be in a position to play a significant role in the future well-being of our Protestant Reformed Churches in particular.

In our consideration of this subject, we first ought to consider the place that *The Standard Bearer* occupies in our spiritual heritage. For it is there that we will see the important place that it occupies also with respect to the future. I will follow this order:

- I. The place it occupies in our heritage
- II. The significant role it is in position to play in our future
- III. How it may best serve to the edification of our churches

I. *The Standard Bearer* occupies an important place in our heritage, as is evident from the fact that it is older than the organization of the Protestant Reformed Churches. It arose in the midst of controversy, as an avenue of expressing the truth, when all other avenues were closed to the Reverends Danhof and Hoeksema. The year was 1924. The controversy concerned the theory of common grace, which theory had been adopted by the denomination in which those two men had their membership and ministerial credentials. In opposition to that error,

those men sought freedom of theological expression for the defense of the truth of God's Word. And so, in October of 1924, *The Standard Bearer* was born. When it became evident that these men, along with the Reverend George Ophoff, would not be silent, but would defend their stand no matter what the consequences, the determination to cast them out of the Christian Reformed Church became final, and birth was given to the Protestant Reformed Churches. As might be expected, in the early years of *The Standard Bearer* there was much attention given to the common grace controversy. The attempt was made to expose from every possible perspective the errors in the theory of common grace. But also the truth of God's sovereign, particular grace was set forth positively. Given the heat of the controversy, it is no wonder that *The Standard Bearer* received a reputation, partly justified, partly not. To some, I dare say especially the older members in the Reformed churches, who from within or without have

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witnessed the controversies in our Protestant Reformed Churches, that reputation has continued. Even though *The Standard Bearer* is not a church paper, the connection cannot be avoided. And so the reputation *The Standard Bearer* has received and carried over the years is that of being controversial, critical, and quick to point the finger.

That our publication is controversial at times, we do not deny. Nor do we, nor may we, apologize for that. Whenever there is a confrontation between the truth and the lie, there is controversy. And the calling and promise of every Reformed minister of the gospel is, as you read in the Formula of Subscription, "diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine, without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same, by our public preaching or writing." The only apology that is in order is that, because we are sinful men, we sometimes fail in our calling to "be gentle unto all men, patient, In meekness instructing those who oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (II Tim. 2:24, 25).

But when we consider the important place *The Standard Bearer* plays in our heritage, I would have you notice that the intended emphasis of the magazine was from the very beginning positive. In the very first issue, the Reverend Henry Danhof explained the reason for the publication of the new periodical. In that article, which is in Dutch, he writes, "A need is felt for leadership in ecclesiastical questions, points of doctrine, prevalent speculations, and the practical application in life of the principles out of which people live." And then further on, he writes, "We aim not at a particular class or group. Our purpose is to live a more conscious, fervent, deeper, richer, all-encompassing, positive Christ-like life for our Lord, now, in this present wicked world."

From the outset, therefore, our fathers intended *The Standard Bearer* to serve as a tool for the strengthening of the church on this earth and, as things developed, particularly for the strengthening of our own Protestant Reformed Churches.

That is indicated even in the name of the paper, *The Standard Bearer*. The standard refers to a banner or flag which is carried before the troops who are entering into battle. It stands as an encouragement to the men who are members of that army; but it also testifies to those who are not. So our *Standard Bearer* carries before us the standard of the truth of God's Word, particularly as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity. Therein lies its tremendous value also.

The feature of this periodical that must be considered of greatest importance in our heritage is the development of the truth and exposition of the Scriptures over the years. Particularly the development of the doctrine of the covenant has been of utmost importance in the edification and strength of our churches over the years. The truth of that beautiful relationship of gracious love and fellowship which God has established with His people in Christ, was developed especially by Reverend Hoeksema in the pages of *The Standard Bearer*. Through the understanding of that wonderful truth, all doctrine becomes a matter of importance for our own experience and spiritual life! That positive development, coupled with the outstanding exegesis and exposition of the Scriptures found in the pages of our periodical over the years by men such as Hoeksema, Ophoff, Vos, Lubbers, and many others, has given us a rich heritage in writing. Our heritage stands on the truth of the Word of God. Our strength is not personal strength. It is not the strength of men. The weaknesses found in the pages of *The Standard Bearer* through the years have been personal weaknesses. Our strength is the Word of God and the truth of that Word. The standard of that Word divides! That is true. It gives encouragement to those who follow that Word, but it also serves as a testimony against those who do not. That has been the precious heritage of our *Standard Bearer*, in brief.

II. When you consider that original purpose of *The Standard Bearer*, especially as stated by the

Reverend Danhof, you can see that it is in a position to play a significant role also in our future.

You understand, of course, when I speak of *The Standard Bearer* and our future, I do so in a very limited way. I am not a fortune teller. God only knows the future of *The Standard Bearer* and of our churches. That future is determined from all eternity in His counsel. And that future is hid. For that very reason I speak not of the role that *The Standard Bearer* will play, but of the significant role it is in position to play with regard to our future.

You understand, also, that when I speak of *The Standard Bearer* and our future, I am not speaking of something abstract. When speaking of that subject, the question is: Shall we and the staff of *The Standard Bearer* remain faithful to the purpose for which it was originally published? And then, because there is such a close relationship between *The Standard Bearer* and our Protestant Reformed Churches, you also have to ask the question, "Shall we as churches remain faithful to the truth of God's Word?" The question is not, "Shall there be change?" There is always change. There is also room for change. There is always room for improvement, also in *The Standard Bearer*. But the question is, "In the midst of change, shall we remain faithful to the purpose unto which we are called?"

Although not exclusively, this question deals directly with the relationship between our *Standard Bearer* and our youth. For the future will be realized in our young people and children and, should the Lord tarry by our timetable, in our children's children. Now, I ask you, when you consider those words I have quoted from the late Reverend Danhof, has there ever been a day when there were more ecclesiastical questions and speculations confronting our youth than today? Have there ever been more points of doctrine under attack than today? Has there ever been a greater need for "the practical application in life of the principles out of which people live"?

I submit to you that our publication has an even greater calling to-

day than it did in its origin! For if our purpose in the publication of *The Standard Bearer* is going to play a role and to make a contribution toward that aim stated in the very first issue, "to live a more conscious, fervent, deeper, richer, all-encompassing, positive Christ-like life for our Lord, now, in this present wicked world," then you and I had better realize, brethren, that this world continues to increase in its wickedness! The Lord will certainly preserve His truth and His church in the world, even unto the very end. That is His promise. But the world continues to develop in sin. The devil rages in his attacks upon the church! And because the Lord has given us much, perhaps Satan concentrates his attacks primarily upon our own churches and our own young people. Sometimes it seems that way. And, therefore, especially our youth cry for leadership. *The Standard Bearer* is in the position to play a significant role in providing such leadership, especially in the midst of our own churches.

Of course, we understand that the preservation of us as churches depends entirely upon the grace of our God, Who alone can make us faithful unto the end. And we understand that *The Standard Bearer* is not even in the chief position for such leadership with respect to our youth. But as the Reformed Free Publishing Association, we must consider the role of *The Standard Bearer*. And then we must see that if our magazine is to continue to be a factor in the preservation and development of our churches and the church of Jesus Christ universal, then that original purpose must live within us with even greater fervency than in 1924! Direction must be given to all our readers, including our youth. And that direction must be toward the Scriptures, where the young man, according to Psalm 119:9, taking heed, shall cleanse his way.

Martin Luther was acutely conscious of the need for the Scriptures

and the study of the Scriptures. In his preface to the Wittenberg edition of his German writings, he wrote:

"... all other writing is to lead the way into and point toward the Scriptures, as John the Baptist did toward Christ, saying, 'He must increase, but I must decrease' [John 3:30], in order that each person may drink of the fresh spring himself, as all those fathers who wanted to accomplish something good had to do" (*Luther's Works*, v. 34, p. 284). That is what we must desire for our youth. If our *Standard Bearer* is to provide the needed direction for our young people, it must guide them to the Word of God. But then also, *The Standard Bearer* must have the readership also of the youth.

III. How may *The Standard Bearer* best serve to the edification of our churches, and in particular the youth of the churches? In answer to that question we may say, first of all, that edification is possible only where there are readers. And when we speak about our youth, I have reason to believe that those who read our periodical are very few indeed. When I make this statement — call it an accusation, if you will — I do not mean to imply that any lack of readership among the youth is entirely or even mostly the fault of *The Standard Bearer* or its staff. Where there is spiritual weakness among the youth, there certainly will not be much desire for reading a publication such as *The Standard Bearer*. Therefore, far more enters into the question of increasing readership among our youth than the presentation and form and contents of our publication. More important, certainly, is the preaching of the Word in the churches, catechetical instruction, personal contact between pastors and youth, contact between elders and the youth and between godly parents and the youth. There must be spiritual development first. There must be instruction and the demonstration by word and example of the joy of our own salvation and of our own love for the truth of the gospel and of our love for the seed of God's covenant, before we can expect *The Standard Bearer* to play an increased role in the spiritual development of our youth. And even

here, while speaking about our youth, we must call attention to the very important role our publication plays, even if indirectly. For the strength of youth comes most often by way of the strength of parents and the strength of the churches. As you read in Proverbs 20:7: "The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him."

But given increased readership among our youth, I would like to state the following suggestions for the way *The Standard Bearer* may best serve to the edification particularly of our youth. I have already stated that it must guide them to the Word of God. But then, we might say, it already does that. That is generally true. But what we must do, if we are to provide necessary direction, is to guide them to the Word as that Word of God applies to the specific problems and pressures and temptations that they face as young people. Many of our youth are confronted with pressures and temptations that they do not know how to say no to, nor why. The reason and rationale for fleeing certain temptations they do not perceive. They need direction, spiritual leadership. They need to be instructed in the way the truth which God has given us to maintain and develop applies to their lives as youth in God's kingdom. They need theological instruction not only, but theological direction, direction that can only be given as we become aware of the areas of problems which confront our young people today. Of extreme importance, therefore, is a rubric such as "The Strength of Youth."

But I would like to suggest one other area for consideration. Realizing that I have limited the application to youth, which is a very small but important segment of the readership of *The Standard Bearer*, I would also suggest that one page of each issue be given to the children. The purpose for that suggestion is this: Should our children be given a page of their own, with simple theological instruction and lessons in church history and the like, this would not only serve for their edification, but it would get them into the habit of us-

ing *The Standard Bearer*. And as they grew up, that healthy habit would be continued as they graduated to a rubric such as "The Strength of Youth." Then, along with the *Beacon Lights*, our periodical also could serve to the edification of entire families of God's covenant, directly and pertinently.

A rich heritage we have in our *Standard Bearer*. A great and difficult calling stands before us: to support and to pray for and to promote the means of this publication. May God bless the labors of all those who contribute to the publication of *The Standard Bearer*, that His name may be glorified in the salvation of His Church. □

Annual Secretary's Report

James Van Overloop

At the close of volume year #63, the board reports on the activities of the past year. God has again been faithful, as is evidenced by the continued publication of the *Standard Bearer*.

Our new business manager will be Mr. Donald Doezeema. He has consented to take on the responsibilities, in the near future. Mr. Vander Wal will assist during this transition period. The board again thanks Mr. Vander Wal for his many, many years of dedicated and careful labor. We look forward to working with Mr. Doezeema in the coming years.

Our mailing equipment, which we purchased last year, has not worked out to our expectation. We are now in the process of trying to return this equipment for a full refund. This has met with difficulty and frustration and we have sought legal advice. But this does not mean that we wish to continue with our old equipment. Mr. Doezeema has a personal computer with software for addressing labels. He will be using this along with a label affixing machine that the board is purchasing, to do our mailing. We hope that by next year we can report that things are working wonderfully.

An important but often forgotten item that the board takes care of annually is the filing of an annual Michigan non-profit report. We have done so again this past year.

Our Finance Committee has gone through our storage garage and organized all the loose copies of past issues. These are available to anyone who desires them. Requests for loose issues should be directed to John Cleveland, David Kamps, or James Koole.

The long anticipated index of past *Standard Bearers* has been printed and distributed. We once again thank the committee for working on this very worthwhile project. The board had advanced the committee \$1,000 for the purpose of working capital. For repayment the board decided to buy 25 indexes at the normal sale price of \$32.75, and to distribute these to those who decided too late to purchase an index. This purchase totaled \$819.25. The committee has paid us the balance of \$180.75. Our supply of indexes is already being depleted. Those interested in an index should contact the business manager.

The board also has a committee working with the Permanent Committee for the Publication of Protestant Reformed Literature to in-

vestigate the need, feasibility, and cost of building or purchasing a storage facility. They have nothing to report at this time. Presently we pay \$52.00 a month for our storage needs. The Permanent Committee pays \$151.05 per month.

An outlay of money was approved for a new cover design for our *Standard Bearer*. Maybe sometime soon we will see what the staff has approved.

We thank our retiring board members John De Vries, Jon Engelsma, and John Kalsbeek Jr. for their labors in the past three years. The labor is without material reward, but we labor in the knowledge that our cause is to distribute our paper for the purpose of giving God all the praise, honor, and glory.

Finally, but not the least, we thank the writing staff of the *Standard Bearer*. Without the efforts of our editor and department authors, our work would be in vain. Thank you, men, for your continuing effort.

We as a board ask that you continue to remember us in our labors as your board. Remember the cause of the *Standard Bearer* in this coming year. □

Yours in Christ,
Jim Van Overloop, Secretary

Convocation Address

Robert D. Decker

Committing The Truth To Faithful Men

A convocation is an assembly called together by official summons to perform a specific task. The assembly in this instance is the professors and students of our seminary. God, we believe, has summoned us through our churches. God has called us together to perform a specific task. The professors have a divinely ordained task to perform and so do the students God in His mercy has given to our seminary and churches. The text upon which we base our address this evening speaks of both the task of the professors and the students. It reads: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:2). What the Lord says through the apostle Paul to Timothy He says to the professors: and the things that you have heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men. The faithful men who are able to teach others are the students whose task it is to prepare themselves to do just that.

The apostle Paul is nearing the end of his life. He is concerned that his spiritual son, Timothy, a young minister, remember what he had been taught: the gospel of God's sovereign grace in Christ Jesus. The truth of the gospel must be preserved by Timothy. And that truth must be committed to faithful men. These faithful men are future ministers of the gospel. They must be faithful and they must be able to teach others. All of this is highly necessary because in this way, by means of the preaching of the Word, the Son of God gathers, defends, and preserves the church, the elect out of every nation. God is pleased to save His church by means of faithful men who are able to teach others. Hence, it is essential that the truth be committed to these men.

To whom must the truth be committed? The text answers: "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." These are *faithful* men. They are men full of faith. Men who are therefore trustworthy and reliable. Faithful men are men upon whom the churches can depend. They are men whom the churches believe to be men of faith and men who possess the ability to teach others. They are men upon whom the church can depend to do the work of the ministry faithfully.

Certain essential spiritual gifts characterize this kind of man. These are gifts from God apart from which a man cannot be considered to be faithful. The first of these is spirituality or genuine piety. A faithful man is a child of God. It is true there are hypocrites in the ministry, and God even uses false prophets

such as Balaam to bless His people. Two things, however, may be said about this. These never last. Sooner or later but inevitably they are exposed and leave or are put out of the ministry. These are not the rule but the exceptions to the rule. Ministers must be spiritual, pious, godly men. They must be men saved by grace through faith, God's gift. Men in whose hearts burns the love of God in Jesus Christ, men who love God and God's people, His church and cause. Ministers must be men who have, as one writer put it, "a fascination with the Bible." They must be men who live exemplary Christian lives.

A faithful man must possess the gift of humility. There is no room for pride in the ministry! Pride, the Bible says, goes before a fall. That is true also in the ministry! Self-seeking pride, selfishness, the seeking of the praise of men, all these are abominable sins among God's people, and especially among ministers. If one wants the praise of men, honor, fame, he must not seek the ministry of the gospel. Faithful men are humble men. As the apostles, they are slaves of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, of His church. They know the truth of what J.J. Van Oosterzee said: "The flock does not exist for the pastor, but the pastor for the flock." Faithful men give their lives in the service of God's church! Thus faithful men are men of prayer. They know that all they have and are is of God. They know that they cannot preach one sermon or perform one pastoral task apart from God's grace! They pray without ceasing for God's grace and

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Holy Spirit to enable them to be faithful men who are able to teach others.

Faithful men are men of sympathetic understanding. Jesus, our great, merciful high priest, is touched with the feeling of our infirmities and He was tempted in all points as we, yet without sin. This is why we can pray and find mercy and grace to help us in our need. The servants of Christ must know God's people, know their needs, their struggles, joys, afflictions, and sorrows. And faithful men must feel with God's people. They must understand God's people so as to bring God's Word to their needs. They must weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

Faithful men who are spiritual men, humble, and sympathetic, are men of spiritual courage or boldness. The apostle admonished the Church at Ephesus to pray for all the saints, and for me, that I might have boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel. This must be the prayer of every faithful minister. A minister needs boldness to preach and teach the truth of the gospel which declares that we are sinners who can do no good at all and that our salvation is all by the grace of the sovereign God in Christ to His own glory. To preach this takes courage, boldness. Ministers stand in the front line of the battle of faith. This is why Paul tells Timothy in verse 3 of II Timothy 2 to endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ.

Faithful men must be able to teach others. They must have that ability, and this too must come from God. A minister needs the ability to study. A faithful man must be able to teach others by means of preaching. He needs the ability, therefore, to read and understand the Holy Scriptures, to think, to organize his thoughts clearly and logically. The minister needs a broad background in history, philosophy, literature, the original languages of the Bible. He needs to know the history of the church, the doctrine of Holy Scripture as set forth in the creeds. All this and more he must make his own. And then he needs to explain the Word of God to God's people. This takes hours and hours of hard,

prayerful work. To produce a good sermon takes about twenty hours per sermon, at least for a beginning preacher. This constitutes forty hours per week plus the other aspects of the work. The bulk of a faithful minister's time ought to be spent in his study.

The faithful minister also needs the gift for public speaking. His chief task is to preach the Word twice per Lord's Day and he needs to teach the children and youth of the church in catechism. The minister must have the God-given ability to do this. We teach courses in the seminary on how to construct a sermon and deliver it. We also teach the students how to teach catechism. But a man needs those gifts from God. The seminary courses only help him develop those gifts and use them properly.

What must be committed to these faithful men? The text answers: "the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men." What Timothy heard from the apostle was the Word of God. Paul taught him Christ from the Scriptures. He instructed him in the faith. Timothy heard the truth of the inspired, infallible Scriptures. Timothy heard that truth not just with his ears, but he heard it in the sense that he learned that truth. He acquired a spiritual knowledge of the truth, the knowledge of a true, living faith. And Timothy learned those things among many witnesses. Literally these witnesses were martyrs. They were not mere spectators or observers, but witnesses who testified to the truth of what Paul taught Timothy. And these martyrs were many. There was Timothy's grandmother, Lois; his mother, Eunice; Paul's co-workers, and the saints in general. And above all there was the witness of the Holy Spirit of Christ who testified in Timothy's heart and worked faith in him. From a child Timothy knew the Holy Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation.

This is what we too have heard, learned among many witnesses. We have much more than Timothy. God

has given to us the entire canon of the infallibly inspired Scriptures. We have learned the truths of Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirits that these things are true. We have learned these things among martyr-witnesses. There is the testimony of the martyrs whose souls are under the altar and who cry: how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? (Rev. 6) They have testified to the truth of the gospel and sealed that testimony with their own blood. There is the witness of the fathers of the church who expounded the truth of Scripture over against various heresies and who under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth formulated the great creeds of the church. There is the witness of the Reformation fathers: Luther, Calvin, and others. There is the witness of the English divines and our Dutch fathers and out of that witness came our precious Three Forms of Unity as well as the Westminster Creeds and other Confessions. And yes, make no mistake about it, we have the witness of our Protestant Reformed fathers. Through these we have been given by God rich, profound, brilliant, even, I dare say, unique insights into the truth. Think of it. God's unilateral, unconditional covenant of friendship and fellowship with the elect in Jesus Christ. God's sovereign, saving grace by which alone the elect are redeemed in Christ. Preaching as the means by which the voice of Christ is heard and by which power the elect are brought to repentance and faith while the reprobate are hardened and condemned in the way of their own rebellion and sin. The absolute antithesis: God versus the devil, faith versus unbelief, Christ versus Belial, the church versus the world, good versus evil, light versus darkness. What a rich, wonderful heritage of the knowledge of truth God has given to us. Now is no time for compromise either in doctrine or practice, and now is no time for bickering, fighting over non-essentials. That sacred trust of truth needs to be taught others in the churches. Without shame that truth needs to

be proclaimed in the mission fields wherever God in His good pleasure sends us.

If that is to happen, this truth must be committed to faithful men. The verb *commit* means: to place down, deposit, intrust one's charge. Notice this is an imperative. This is not something we may or may not do, or have choice in the matter. It is God's command to us to intrust the truth to faithful men.

This has serious implications for both the faculty and the students of our seminary. For the faculty this determines the proper method of teaching. What we have learned is a discernible body of truth out of Holy Scripture as interpreted by the Reformed confessions. This truth is not subject to various interpretations or applications, nor is it merely to be discussed or debated. It is not up for grabs. Much less is this truth to be contradicted or denied. It must be faithfully intrusted to the charge of faithful men who shall thus be able to teach others. This is utterly crucial, for at least two fundamental

principles, restored by the Reformation of the sixteenth century are involved. There is the formal principle: *sola Scriptura* — infallible scripture is the soul authority for faith and life. Closely related is the principle of the perspicuity of Scripture. Scripture is not an enigma. It is not hidden, obscure, able to be understood only by highly educated experts in the fields of hermeneutics and exegesis. Scripture is uncomplicated, simple, clear, and easy to understand. When one stand before Holy Scripture he either wrests Scripture to his own destruction in unbelief or he believes it with a childlike faith, and that is by grace alone.

For the students this means you may question, debate, and discuss, probe; in fact you must feel free to do this. But we are free to do this only within the bounds of Scripture as interpreted by the confessions. What is committed to you must be learned and understood. What you are learning is under the ministry of the Word, and it must be mixed with faith. That precious truth, the Re-

formed faith as given to our churches, must become the burning conviction of your hearts by the grace of the Holy Spirit. When it becomes that, you will be faithful men who are able to teach others.

This is the seminary's calling and place in the midst of the churches. It is an indispensable place for the life and well being of the churches. It is a sacred trust God has given, a holy calling, and a task utterly impossible. None is worthy to commit the truth to faithful men, none is worthy to receive it and teach it to others, and none is capable to do it, either. Brothers and sisters in the Lord, this means we need your love, concern, support, and above all we need your constant prayers. We need the prayers of the congregations on the Lord's Day. In this way God gives us His grace to do the work for the gathering of the church to the glory of His ever-blessed name. □

The Fear Of The Lord Is The Beginning Of Knowledge

In His Fear

Arie den Hartog

As another season of school and church activities have started, it is well for us to remember the profound truth set forth by the inspired King Solomon in the book of Proverbs; "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction," Proverbs 1:7. Great opportunities are once again before us: to increase in knowledge and understanding. In our modern-day world one needs a good education. More and more

almost every available occupation requires this. Even after a man has started his career, it is necessary to get further training and retraining. The world is moving at a very fast pace. Change happens very rapidly. It is possible to spend half a life time studying for a career only to find out afterward that it has become obsolete. Many today are getting more and more advanced degrees, also among the members of the church. As we increase in education and

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learning, usually vistas of opportunity are open to us. The well-educated often get better jobs and have great power to gain wealth and influence in the world. The highly educated man is respected in society and listened to by many. Education can be a great good for the Christian. It is a great good when the Christian uses his learning for the glory of God and in the service of the church of Jesus Christ.

There is another kind of learning: of knowledge and wisdom. This is the knowledge and wisdom of the truth of the Word of God, of the doctrines of Scripture. We live in a highly educated society with many men and women of great learning. Sad to say, however, among those there are few who are steeped in the knowledge of the Word of God. Ours is an age of superficiality and dullness as far as the knowledge of the deep mysteries of the Word of God. Men are satisfied with little knowledge of God. God's people are destroyed for lack of knowledge and understanding. Few in our day are thoroughly equipped with the knowledge of the Scriptures that are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," II Timothy 3:16. False doctrine and apostasy abounds in the churches. Few are able to defend the truth of the Word of God against the subtle attacks of Satan and his heretics.

Knowledge, we said, is good; or rather it can be good for the Christian when it is used rightly. We live in the age of knowledge, sometimes referred to as the age of the explosion of knowledge. The great knowledge of man has enabled him to do great things. Think of the wonders of modern day technology, computers, space programs and modern medicine. But for the ungodly man knowledge puffs up. It makes him wise in his own conceit. The knowledge of the natural man only increases his ungodliness. Through his knowledge he more and more imagines that he is the lord and master

of his own life. Through his knowledge he becomes rich and powerful, but in it all he forgets God. Through his knowledge he imagines that he has the answer for all things. He devises great theories to "explain" the origin of the world while he rejects the truth of the Creator God and the clear testimony of His creation that is found in His Word, the Bible. Through his knowledge man imagines that he can control the universe, direct the course of history and control the destiny of man. But in all of this, while professing himself to be wise, man becomes a fool. The fool has said in his heart: "There is no God." As Christians, we see also in the great increase of the knowledge of the natural man the rise of the power of antichrist. We see the fulfillment of the prophecies of Scripture.

There is a "danger" in the increase of knowledge. This danger is that man by nature has a proneness to depart from the living God and from the fear of God. The lie of the devil comes to manifestation as man increases in knowledge. He more and more imagines that there is no God, and that he is god himself. He imagines that religion is silly, only for the ignorant and foolish. He imagines that he himself is "enlightened." There is for the natural man according to his imagination no such thing as absolute morality. He can live according to what is right in his own eyes and what is pleasing to him. There is no God of judgment. Therefore man can live as immorally as he pleases. He will of course through his "great wisdom" seek to devise ways to escape the awful consequences of sin and immorality. All the expertise of modern medicine must be marshalled to find a cure for AIDS, a cure which will at the same time allow man to live in the pleasure of the lust of sin. This is the philosophy of the world's education. The Christian must be on guard for this, and be thoroughly equipped with the Word of God to stand against this philosophy. As the Christian increases in knowledge, he needs to be careful of his own sinful nature, lest pride arise in him, and he, too, through pride exalt himself before God and forget the Lord. Much of our advanced education

must be acquired in the world's schools, colleges, and universities. There is a great danger in this. Are we ready and equipped to stand against the world's philosophy that totally dominates and controls all the instruction given at these places of instruction? The devil works very hard at the schools and universities of our land. Can we stand against him and all of his subtle lies?

Therefore we need to remember again and again that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. The fear of the Lord is the great principle, the root and foundation of all true knowledge. The Lord is the creator of the universe and all that it contains. All human learning is essentially the study of God's creation and the order He has made in it. Only the Spirit-filled Christian has the enlightened understanding to know this. God is great and glorious. He is sovereign and holy. His greatness and wisdom are displayed in all of His creation. Therefore, as the Christian increases in his knowledge and understanding of the world which God has made, he must grow in fear and awe before the greatness of God. All increase of knowledge and understanding must be accompanied by increase in fear and reverence before God. We must pray for this. The more we study the wonders of God's creation, the more in the spirit of true humility we see our own smallness and dependence upon God. With fear and trembling we serve before Him, realizing that in ourselves we can do nothing. God is holy. He is the judge of all men. He alone is the absolute standard of what is good and evil, what is right and true. Never in our great learning must we imagine that we can ourselves determine what is right and true. Never must we imagine that through learning we become "enlightened" in the way that the world imagines, so that the law of God becomes less serious to us, and we can devise a "morality" which is more according to our pleasure and pride. God always remains infinitely greater in knowledge and wisdom than man. In all our learning we need to pray constantly for "child-like" faith to know our complete dependence upon God as the source of all knowledge and wisdom.

Earlier we intimated that there is a different kind of knowledge than that which we learn in the secular schools and universities. It is not of course true that there are two kinds of knowledge. All knowledge is one. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of all knowledge. Centrally God has revealed the true knowledge in His Holy Word, the Bible, and in the face of His Son Jesus Christ. The more we grow in knowledge the more we need to search out God's revelation in the Bible. It is a tragic irony that in the age when so many "Christians" are so well educated, there is so little knowledge of the Word of God as it is revealed in the Scriptures. As the members of the church are busy with keeping up with advancing their secular education, they often neglect the study of the Word of God. Somehow they imagine that they no longer have as

great a need for the preaching of the Word. So it happens that even sometimes members of our own churches move away to attend schools far too distant from our churches to be able to attend worship services and to take an active part in the life of the church. This is a great evil that will have sad consequences. In the midst of our increasing complex society, where knowledge is increasing so rapidly, there is an urgent need for the knowledge of the Word of God. The more the world's knowledge increases, the more the vain philosophies of the world will abound. As Christians, we need the truth and wisdom of God to discern the times in which we live and to stand against the tides of worldly and devilish philosophy. The urgency of this should drive us to attend Bible studies with our fellow

saints and to spend much time in personal study of the word of God.

All our knowledge and wisdom will be good for us only if we use it rightly. As Christians we are servants of the Lord. To whom much is given much is required. The simple Christian with no advanced degree is greater than the highly educated, if the former knows more of the Scriptures, and faithfully and humbly serves the Lord. God has not given us the opportunity to get an advanced education merely so that we might make ourselves rich and famous in the eyes of the world. How shall we serve the Lord with all that He has given to us? This a fearful question that must be prayerfully and earnestly considered. Pious platitudes alone about living to the glory of God are not sufficient. This must be real and evident in our lives. Is it? □

Bible Study Guide

Jason L. Kortering

Deuteronomy: Exhorted Unto Obedience (1)

The first five books of the Bible are joined together into what is called the Pentateuch (five books). The thread of history runs through each one and joins them together into a bond of unity. Genesis marks the beginnings of creation, the patriarchs, and the nation of Israel. Exodus follows this nation out of Egypt to Sinai, where they receive the laws of God, the spiritual basis for the theocracy, God's rule among them. Leviticus gives additional details of the laws God gave at Sinai, uniting them especially to the blood of atonement, the lamb the type of Jesus Christ. Numbers gives an account of the departure from Sinai and the wanderings in the wilder-

ness for forty years, a period of history that demonstrates man's unworthiness to enter Canaan except through the blood of the covenant. Now we come to Deuteronomy, a final rehearsal of the laws already given, only now to the new question that was about to enter Canaan. It closes with the death of Moses at the very edge of Canaan.

THE NAME

As was the case with the other books of the Pentateuch, the name given to this fifth book in our King James Version is derived from the Septuagint, which was also taken over by the Latin Vulgate, *Deuteronomium*, "second law". The Hebrew text begins with *elleh had-daevarim*, "These are the words".

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Later the Jews called this book, *Mishneh hattorah*, Hebrew words taken from Deuteronomy 17:18, "copy of the law".

This seeming technical reference to the name of the book does bring up the important question as to how we are to view this book which is called *Deuteronomy*, literally the second law. On the surface it would seem that God adds to the laws which He gave at Sinai and here in this book we have, as it were, volume two of the book of the law. This however is not correct. The reference to chapter 17:18 is valid only if we interpret these words to mean copy or repetition of the laws previously given by Moses. In *Deuteronomy*, we do not have new laws given, but a recapitulation and summary as well as application of them to the people as they are about to enter the holy land.

THE AUTHOR

Moses was the author of the book. As is the case in many of the books of the Bible, higher criticism tries to drive a wedge between the first four books of the Pentateuch and this fifth one. They do this for the flimsy reason that they claim that the effect of the exhortation given in this book did not take place until the reign of Hezekiah and Josiah. Hence it must have been written about the seventh century before Christ. This of course discredits the inspiration of this book by the Holy Spirit by casting aside references within the book itself to Moses as author, 1:1; 31:9; 31:24-26. Being part of the unit, the Pentateuch, the language, style, and content reflect a common author. We appreciate the evaluation by Unger in his *Introductory guide to the Old Testament*, page 208.

The hortatory nature of Deuteronomy, its code of conquest, its character as a military law book of a pilgrim people about to enter Canaan and the general scope and spirit of the writing are eminently appropriate for the Mosaic age as we know it, and most inappropriate for any other age. Not only does the work most explicitly and emphatically claim to be Mosaic in authorship, but the words are Moses' direct words. He is mentioned about forty times in the book, in most instances as the authoritative author of the subject matter. The first person predominates. The language unequivocally purports to come directly

from Moses. If it were not written until the seventh century B.C., in the time of Manasseh or Josiah, as the critics contend, it is a most subtle case of misrepresentation and an undeniable literary forgery scarcely worthy of canonical Scripture and, in the writer's opinion, utterly incompatible with the revealed truth of the inspiration of Scripture.

THE PURPOSE

There is a difference concerning the form of presentation between this book and the preaching books of the Pentateuch. Here Moses is the spokesman for God. God is not speaking directly to His people. In this sense it takes on a hortatory form, an exhortation to observe the laws which Jehovah God has given to them.

But why is this necessary? Is not God's direct speech of greater significance than that of Moses? This is not the point; there is no question here of authority. Rather, the point is that of application. Here too, Moses is presented in his final act as the Old Testament mediator, a type of Christ. The laws of God, thundered at Sinai, cannot save. They can only condemn. Hence we noticed in the book of Leviticus that the blood of atonement constitutes the heart of that law. The moral law comes dressed in the ceremonies of the old dispensation. The people cannot keep the law (proven in the book of Numbers). Hence, salvation and hope is in Jesus Christ, of which Moses is the type. All above twenty years of age and older died in the wilderness. A new generation arose and are about to enter the land of Canaan. Here Moses summarizes for them the law, and exhorts them to apply that law to their hearts and lives. This too, must be done, not out of compulsion, but gratitude. The threats of judgment cannot save; only the sweet aroma of the blood of the lamb covers sins. Such a covering causes joy of heart, and what better way to show that thankfulness to God than to take His law in their hearts. This is the spiritual idea of *Deuteronomy*.

In this sense we can relate this to our Heidelberg Catechism. Interestingly, the law is mentioned in the first part, the knowledge of our sins, yet it is not expounded there. We receive the treatment of the law in

the third part of the catechism. We follow in this catechism the example set forth here by the Spirit Who guided Moses to write this book. E.J. Young, quotes Keil in his *An introduction to the Old Testament*. The content of *Deuteronomy* is to be regarded as "a hortatory description, explanation, and enforcement of the most essential contents of the covenant revelation and the covenant laws, with emphatic prominence given to the spiritual principle of the law and its fulfillment, and with a further development of the ecclesiastical, judicial, political, and civil organization, which was intended as a permanent foundation for the life and well-being of the people in the land of Canaan."

Ultimately, we join Israel of old, as they enter into the land of Canaan, thanking God that the keeping of the law brings great delight. Just as Moses had to yield to the real Mediator, he could not bring them within the land, for he had struck the rock; so Israel and we cannot enter into that land, but by following our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him, the law and its demands are met, and in Him the law is written within our hearts. Little wonder then, that our Savior quoted from this book in answer to the tempter, Deut. 8:3; 6:16; 6:13; and 10:20 quoted in Matt. 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13. It is the essence of our spiritual calling.

Finally, we can also observe that this final book of the Pentateuch is prophetic. Moses must step aside for the real Mediator. A farewell address is recorded which contains promises for the future which reach all the way to our Lord Jesus Christ. Besides this, the law constitutes the

*Take the time
to read and
study the
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foundation for the prophets. Our Lord Jesus summarized the law in the well-known words of Matt. 22, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Note the law and the prophets go together. The word which the prophets were about to bring to Israel were sounded forth upon the foundation of the law. Law and gospel are inseparably connected.

A BRIEF OUTLINE

The book of Deuteronomy falls into four parts: They deal with the first discourse of Moses (1:1-4:43), the second discourse of Moses (4:44-26:19), the third discourse of Moses

(27:1-30:20), and the last words of Moses and the record of his death (31:1-34:12).

1. The introduction (1:1-5). Moses is identified as the spokesman who brings these words to the people. They are still on the wilderness side of the Jordan, about to enter (1:1). What is a normal eleven-day journey took them forty years to accomplish (1:2, 3). Moses now sets forth the laws which God gave them. Sihon and Og have been slain and they are about to enter the land (1:4, 5).

2. Moses' first discourse to the people (1:6-4:43). He reviews before the people the journey they took from Sinai to Kadesh Barnea, and reminds them how God instructed them to make this journey (1:6-8), how judges were placed over them because of their great number (1:9-18) when they came to Kadesh.

Moses instructed them to possess the land, but the people insisted upon first searching out the land and this resulted in the people refusing to go up. Instead they murmured. Moses reminded them of Jehovah's faithfulness in Egypt, but this was to no avail. God was wroth with them and declared that only Joshua and Caleb would enter the land. All the rest would die in the wilderness. Upon repenting, they insisted that they would go up to fight in the land of Canaan, but God warned them that He would not go with them. The Amorites chased them as if they were bees. They wept, but God did not hear them; they stayed at Kadesh for many days, heavy of heart (1:19-46). □

Decency And Order

Ronald L. Cammenga

For The Maintenance Of Good Order

For the maintenance of good order in the church of Christ it is necessary that there should be: offices; assemblies; supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies; and Christian discipline; of which the following articles treat in due order. Church Order, Article 1.

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THE CHURCH ORDER'S VIEW OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

The *Church Order* is based on a specific view of the proper form of church government. There are especially four prevalent forms of church government.

There is, first of all, the Hierarchical or Episcopal form of Church government. This is the form of church government in the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church, and the Episcopal churches. According to this view of church government, the rule of the church is placed in the hands of the clergy, who are arranged in order, according to an ever increasing degree of

authority. In the Roman Catholic system the ranks of the clergy culminate in the pope, who is considered to be the infallible vicegerent of Christ on earth. Arranged under the pope, the clergy are divided into two orders: "Major Orders," including cardinals, bishops, priests, deacons, and sub-deacons; and "Minor Orders," including acolytes, exorcists, readers, and ushers.

Secondly, there is the Erastian form of church government. This form of church government is also known as the Collegial or State-Church system of church government. This system is named after its first proponent, Thomas Erastus

(1524-1583), a Swiss physician and follower of the Reformer Zwingli. Erastus held that sinning Christians should be punished by the state, rather than by the church barring them from the sacraments and ultimately excommunicating them. He also held that the state should be entrusted with the government of the church. This view of the government of the church was largely embraced by Martin Luther, and was also adopted by the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, which led to the establishment in the Netherlands of the State-Church.

Thirdly, there is the Congregational or Independent form of church government. According to this system the ruling power in the church has been given by Christ *to the people*. All the affairs of the local congregation are transacted by majority vote of the sum total of the membership, with no appeal beyond the local congregation possible. Even matters of discipline, the receiving and dismissing of members, is subject to the majority vote of the congregation. It is simply the principle of democracy carried over from the political realm into the church. This is the form of church government practiced by the Congregational churches, as well as by most Baptist and Fundamentalist churches.

Finally, there is the Reformed or Presbyterian form of church government. This is the view of church government that lies at the basis of the *Church Order*. This was the view of church government that Calvin was instrumental in restoring to the church at the time of the Reformation. This is the view that the proper government of the church consists of certain offices established by Christ in every congregation and the faithful exercise of these offices. This is the view of proper church government embraced by Reformed and Presbyterian churches around the world.

OUTSTANDING ELEMENTS OF REFORMED CHURCH GOVERNMENT

There are several outstanding elements of Reformed church government. The first is certainly that Christ is the Head and King of the church, ruling the church by His Word, Holy Scripture, and by His

Spirit. This first article points to this when it calls the church "the church of Christ." Christ's rule includes that He shows it to be His will that each congregation be governed by principles which He has laid down in His Word.

A second outstanding principle of Reformed church government is that Christ governs each true congregation through certain men whom it pleases Him to place in the offices He has established in the church. The officebearers receive their authority, not first of all from the membership of the congregation which elects them. But officebearers receive their authority from and are first of all responsible to Jesus Christ, the Head of the church.

Reformed church government is also based on the principle of the autonomy of the local congregation. By this is meant that each local congregation is self-governing. The Reformed faith rejects every form of hierarchy. Each local congregation is an individual and complete manifestation of the body of Christ, equipped with all the requirements of being a church. The offices and the authority of the offices reside in the local congregation. It belongs to the autonomy of the local congregation that the officebearers are chosen out of and by the membership of the congregation. Officebearers are never imposed upon the local congregation. But each congregation chooses its own officebearers.

Reformed churches maintain that in each congregation Christ has instituted the three offices of minister (teaching elder), elder (ruling elder), and deacon. These are the only three special offices in the New Testament church, reflecting the three-fold office of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King. Among these offices, although there is difference of work, is equality of rank.

It is also an important principle of Reformed church government that each local congregation is called to manifest the unity of the church by federating with other true churches of Jesus Christ. Such union is not optional, since it is the calling of the local congregation to express the

unity of the body of Christ also in institutional form. This union comes to expression in a federation of churches at a classical and synodical level.

MAIN DIVISIONS OF THE CHURCH ORDER

The articles of the *Church Order* can be divided into several main sections.

The first of these sections extends from Articles 2-28. In this section the offices in the church are treated. The *Church Order* considers not only the authority entrusted to the officebearers, but also the work and service on behalf of the church to which the officebearers are called.

Articles 29-52 treat the subject of ecclesiastical assemblies. These are the official assemblies in the life of the church. These assemblies include Consistory, Classis, Provincial Synods, and General Synod.

Articles 53-70 deal with the ordinances for public worship. The reference is to the "supervision of doctrine, sacraments, and ceremonies . . ." mentioned in Article 1. The supervision of public worship, the heart of which is the preaching of the pure doctrine and the administration of the sacraments, is essential to the maintaining of good order in the church.

Christian discipline is treated in Articles 71-83. These articles treat the necessity for Christian discipline in the church, as well as the various steps involved in censure and excommunication. Treated also is the discipline of officebearers, including suspension and deposition from office.

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The last three articles of the *Church Order* form the conclusion. Article 84 deals specifically with the subject of the autonomy of the local congregation: no congregation shall be permitted to lord it over another congregation. Article 85 deals with our relationship to foreign Reformed churches. And Article 86 deals with the possibility of amending the *Church Order*.

With regard to this division of the *Church Order* into four main parts, the first two parts concern primarily the *subjects* of church government: the officebearers in the local congregation and the broader assemblies. The last two parts concern primarily the *objects* of church government: the doctrine and sacraments of the church, and the lives of the individual members themselves.

KINDS OF ARTICLES IN THE CHURCH ORDER

A three-fold distinction can be found in the kinds of articles in the *Church Order*.

There are those articles which are based directly on the teaching of the

Scriptures and the principles of church government laid down in the Scriptures. These articles are fundamental and concern things essential to the proper government of the church. Because these are taken directly from the teaching of the Word of God, they bind the conscience. Examples of this kind of article would be Article 2, which deals with the number of offices in the church; Article 16, which describes the nature of the office of the ministry; Article 56, which deals with the administration of the sacrament of baptism; and Article 71, which deals with the necessity of Christian discipline.

There are also those articles which, although not directly derived from Scripture, may be deduced from Scriptural teachings. These fall into the category mentioned in the Westminster Confession Of Faith of those things which "... by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture ..." Like the first kind of articles, these ar-

ticles also deal with what are fundamentally principle matters. Examples of this kind of article would be Articles 7-10, which deal with the calling of ministers of the gospel; Article 19, which deals with the support of seminary students; and Articles 44-52, which deal with classical and synodical meetings.

There are also those articles which are purely circumstantial and deal with the practical life of the churches. These articles concern minor matters such as time, place, frequency, and number. As need arises and circumstances change, these articles may freely be amended by the churches. Examples of this kind of article would be Article 41, which stipulates the frequency of the meetings of the classis; Article 50, which stipulates that the general synod shall ordinarily meet once every two years; and Article 63, which deals with the frequency of the administration of the Lord's Supper. □

Book Reviews

Romans, The Gospel Of God, by D. Martyn-Lloyd Jones; Zondervan Publishing House, 1985; 394 pp. (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

From 1955 to 1968 Martyn Lloyd-Jones went through the entire epistle of Romans in his mid-week services at Westminster Chapel in London. This volume covers chapter 1 of the sermons he preached. (Six volumes, treating chapters 3-8, are already in print.)

For those who enjoy reading Lloyd-Jones' sermons, this will be a

welcome and enjoyable purchase. It is full of fine devotional reading and deals in Lloyd-Jones' own interesting way with the beginning of this important Biblical book. We highly recommend it to our readers.

There are really only two criticisms we have of this work. One deals with the tendency of Lloyd-Jones towards subjectivism, or, if you will, Pentecostalism — although the latter term does not quite apply. In what Lloyd-Jones calls the "doctrine of guidance" he is too subjective in a fundamental respect and does not connect the work of the guidance of the Spirit to the objective standard of Scripture. An exam-

ple of this may be found on pp. 199ff., where he is treating vss. 10-13 of Rom. 1.

The other criticism I have is the somewhat unbalanced treatment of the material in chapter 1. As any reader of Lloyd-Jones knows, he can introduce into his discussion of a passage much extraneous material which has no direct bearing on the Scriptural passage in hand. This is true of this book as well. E.g., 7 chapters are devoted to the first 2 vss., 23 chapters to the first 17 vss., but only 6 chapters to vss. 18 to the end.

Nevertheless, the book is sound reading and eminently enjoyable. □

Human Rights And Human Dignity, by John Warwick Montgomery; Zondervan Publishing Co., 1986; 317 pp., \$8.95 (paper). (Reviewed by Prof. H. Hanko.)

John Warwick Montgomery is a forceful and incisive writer — as anyone who has read anything from his pen well knows. It was with a measure of eager anticipation, therefore, that I picked up this book on human rights. I was, however, disappointed. Montgomery has not forgotten how to write: that was not the problem. But the approach he takes on the question of human rights was less than satisfactory.

Montgomery correctly takes the secularists and humanists to task for their position on human rights and shows how a secular and humanistic

basis for human rights can never succeed. He also correctly turns to Scripture and argues that only on the basis of an absolute standard of right and wrong can any proper discussion of human rights take place. But his appeal to revelation is far too broad and general to be of any help. His appeal does not go beyond statements concerning God as a transcendent Creator, and he can then speak of human rights only in terms of a humanity with essential dignity and worth. The problem with this approach is that sin, guilt, atonement, and sovereign predestination do not enter into the question.

Montgomery might argue that these questions are irrelevant. I claim they are not. If Scripture is to form any basis for a discussion of human rights, one cannot appeal only to God the Creator, for Scripture is the record of the revelation of God in Christ as the God Who saves His people. □

News From Our Churches

Ben Wigger

October 15, 1987

First Church in Grand Rapids has formed a new trio consisting of Rev. B. Gritters, Rev. K. Hanko, and Rev. K. Koole. The congregation was to meet Monday, Sept. 28, to select one to receive a call as a second missionary to Jamaica.

Prof. R. Decker has declined the call extended to him by our congregation in Holland, Michigan.

Rev. R. Miersma preached his "farewell" sermon at Holland the evening of August 30. His sermon was based on I Cor. 15:58: "Persevering in the Lord's Work". He stressed three points in that sermon: Being unmovable, Abounding in the Lord's Word, and Knowing the Fruit.

We also want to extend our sincere congratulations to Rev. Tom Miersma and his wife, Jan, in Edmonton, Alberta, who after seventeen years of married life together

were blessed with the birth of a son, Christopher Calvin. And we also want to add our congratulations to Rev. and Mrs. Dale Kuiper, presently of Isabel, S.D. on the birth recently of a daughter.

While Rev. Bruinsma, our missionary to Jamaica, and his family were on furlough recently in this country, Mrs. Bruinsma went to St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Rapids as an outpatient to have her tonsils removed. She recuperated well, but her doctor insisted that she remain for observation in Grand Rapids for at least two weeks. Therefore, Rev. Bruinsma returned to Jamaica alone, and his family returned a week later.

As some of you may know by now, this will be Professor Hoeksema's last year as Editor-in-Chief of *The Standard Bearer*. It seems however, that it will take two men to replace him. The Lord willing, at the

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end of this volume year, Rev. D. Engelsma will take over as Editor-in-Chief and Prof. R. Decker will begin his duties as Managing Editor, a position which was up to now held by our Editor as well.

On September 6, the Covenant Evangelical Church was organized as the second congregation of our sister church in Singapore. The Rev. J. Mahtani will serve as their pastor. This group presently consists of nineteen adults, ten families, and nine children.

The Hope Prot. Ref. Christian School in Walker, Michigan opened its doors this fall for the 41st time. They have now completed forty years as a Christian School. This is a significant milestone in the age of any institution, person, or relationship. In the Bible we are told of many events associated with the number forty or the span of forty years. As many of us send our children to school this year, no matter which year it is, may we experience the nearness and guidance of our faithful, covenant God.

We are also happy to relay to our readers the fact that, as of August 12, our Protestant Reformed Christian School in Lynden, Washington, is completely paid for.

The consistory of First Church in Grand Rapids received a request from the Grand Rapids School of the Bible and Music recently, asking for permission to use a photo of First Church as a cover for a soon-to-be-published commentary on the book of Acts, being written by one of their faculty members, entitled *The Church in Crisis*. First Church was chosen because the architecture of the building has variety and interest of line, not because they are a church in crisis. The request was granted.

It seems like only yesterday that many of our churches were dealing with different solutions to a hot summer. There was a talk of fans and or air conditioning. Now one of our churches, Doon, in Iowa, is replacing electric wall heaters and installing a new central furnace. It just serves as a reminder that summer's heat will always give way to winter's cold. God is unchangeable, He upholds all things, the seasons of the year as well.

The congregation in Grandville, Mich. sponsored their first annual fall lecture on September 15. They had for their speaker Rev. R. Van Overloop. He spoke on the Covenant Family. He spoke first about Husbands, then Wives, and then Parenting. Rev. Van Overloop handled his topic very well. Those who attended were not disappointed. Refreshments and a time of Christian fellowship were provided after the lecture.

The congregation in Lacombe, Alberta, recently had Rev. den Hartog preach there on classical appointment. While there, he presented a slide program on Singapore. He then packed his bags and slide projector and headed for Pella, Iowa, where he gave the same presentation to all interested, on the night before Classis West met.

The Hope Heralds gave a concert on Sunday, Sept. 13 at Hope Church. They repeated that concert on Sept. 22 at Kalamazoo to help Kalamazoo begin its fall society season. □

EXPRESSION OF JOY

The Congregation of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Edmonton, wishes to express their joy and happiness in announcing God's

gracious blessing of a son to our pastor, Rev. Thomas Miersma and his wife, Janice Miersma. Christopher Calvin Miersma was born on the nineteenth of August. Also, Rev. Miersma and his wife celebrated their seventeenth wedding anniversary on the twenty-second of August.

We humbly thank our faithful Father for keeping them in His care and pray that He might graciously guide them as they lead their child in His fear.

"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together." (Psalm 34:3).

NOTICE!!!

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, Walker, MI, is in need of an Administrator/Teacher for the 1988-89 school year. Please contact Gordon Terpstra, (616) 453-1364. His mailing address is: 600 Kenowa Ave., S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504.

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