

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

THE STANDARD BEARER



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Collapsed-wreckage of the Cypress freeway in
Oakland, CA, October 17, 1989

*“And great earthquakes shall be in
divers places . . .” (Luke 21:11).*

See *“The Beginning of Birth-Pangs”* — page 53

Contents

November 1, 1989

Meditation — Rev. Jason L. Kortering LOOKING AT THE THINGS UNSEEN	51
Editorial — Prof. David J. Engelsma THE BEGINNING OF BIRTH-PANGS	53
LETTERS	55
Guest Article — Rev. Steven R. Houck A REFORMED LOOK AT THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT (2)	56
Church and State — Mr. James Lanting SUPREME COURT BALKS AT OVERRULING ROE V. WADE	58
From Holy Writ — Rev. George C. Lubbers EXPOSITION OF PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30 (1)	60
All Around Us — Prof. Robert D. Decker ORAL ROBERTS IN TROUBLE	62
CHRISTIANS IN RUSSIA	63
THOUGHTS WORTH PONDERING	63
When Thou Sittest in Thine House — Mrs. Mary Beth Lubbers THE REFORMED FAMILY: WIFE (1)	64
Day of Shadows — Rev. John A. Heys THE MAN OF SIN FORESHADOWED (3)	65
Search the Scriptures — Rev. Gise J. VanBaren PHILIPPIANS: AN INTRODUCTION	68
BOOK REVIEWS	69
NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES — Mr. Benjamin Wigger	71
REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST — Mr. Jon J. Huiskens	72

In This Issue . . .

"The family is in crisis today — Reformed families even, families of believers." And, though it perhaps cannot be said that a crisis exists in *Protestant Reformed* families today, the writer of those lines did not mean to exclude anyone. For the truth is that the families which belong to our own small denomination of churches are by no means immune from the kind of stress in the home which works havoc elsewhere. Rebellious children, marital strife, even divorce. Ask any minister whether or not problems of this kind, *family* problems, do not require more and more of his attention, more and more pastoral counseling.

There are scriptural principles which bear on the matter of relationships, of duties and responsibilities in our homes. We do well to be reminded of them. It was with that in mind that we thought to introduce a new rubric, for this volume year, dealing with the Reformed Family.

We've chosen as our title "When Thou Sittest in Thine House . . ." Not original, as a title, with us . . . but it serves well. The anticipated content of the department goes beyond the responsibilities of parents in the instruction of their children. But, in light of the context, Deuteronomy 6:7 emphasizes that the spiritual is as it were the very heart of our life, and that the Lord our God is Lord in our homes. That's basic.

At any rate, the quote above was lifted from Rev. Kenneth Koole's first contribution to this rubric, which will appear in the December 1 issue. The current issue carries that of Mrs. Mary Beth Lubbers, who will attend mainly to the wife and mother in the home, while Rev. Koole does the same with the husband/father.

It was Mrs. Lubbers' expressed hope that the articles will be "Scriptural, God-glorifying, and instructive," and that they will also be found to be "interesting and compelling to read." Seems to us that they've made a good beginning.

-D.D.

THE STANDARD BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August. Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc. Second Class Postage Paid at Grand Rapids, Mich.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Standard Bearer, P.O. Box 6064, Grand Rapids, MI 49516.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor-in-chief: Prof. David J. Engelsma
Managing Editor: Prof. Robert D. Decker
Editors' Assistant: Mr. Don Doezeema

DEPARTMENT EDITORS

Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Prof. Robert Decker, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Rev. Russell Dykstra, Rev. Barry Gritters, Rev. Cornelius Hanks, Prof. Herman Hanks, Rev. Ronald Hanks, Rev. John Heys, Rev. Jason Kortering, Rev. George Lubbers, Rev. James Slopeema, Rev. Charles Terpstra, Rev. Gise VanBaren, Mr. Benjamin Wigger.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 - 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426

EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Question Box Department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy deadlines are the first and the fifteenth of the month. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgement is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

BUSINESS OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 6064
Grand Rapids, MI 49516

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
c/o Protestant Reformed Church
B. Van Herk
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

PH: (616) 243-3712

SUBSCRIPTION POLICY

Subscription price: \$12.00 per year in the U.S., \$15.00 elsewhere. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the subscription to continue without the formality of a renewal order, and he will be billed for renewal. If you have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of delayed delivery. Include your Zip Code.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$3.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$3.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is the 1st and the 15th of the month, previous to publication on the 15th or the 1st respectively.

BOUND VOLUMES

The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound copies of the current volume; such orders are filled as soon as possible after completion of a volume. A limited number of past volumes may be obtained through the Business Office.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

Meditation
Rev. Jason Kortering

Looking at the Things Unseen

"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:16-18).

Amazing, isn't it, that we can actually look at the things unseen. What a privilege that is. What a difference that makes in our lives.

You say that is nonsense? How can a person look at something he cannot see! Listen: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). The approach we take as we consider this passage is that of faith. By faith we can see the things which cannot be seen with the natural eye.

The inspired apostle draws a contrast between things seen and not seen. The things which are seen are obvious to us. We come into contact with them every day. The sleepy-eyed child greets the day with a hesitating yawn.

Rev. Kortering is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Grandville, Michigan.

A whirl of activity assaults our senses as we approach the bustling city. The heavens are graced in beauty as the sun sets in the evening. There are so many things to "see" if we only take the time.

The text, however, forces us to limit the things which are seen to afflictions. In verse 16 we read, "though our outward man perish." In verse 7 Paul mentions, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." That is, the treasure of the gift to preach the gospel is limited by the human body. In the second epistle he gives us some indication what he means by this reference as he applies it to himself. In II Corinthians 12:7ff. he refers to the thorn in the flesh which was given to him, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. We do not know what specifically that thorn was, but it was a great burden to him, for he prayed three times that it might be taken away from him. He concluded that he could be a better missionary without that thorn. The answer from God was, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

The figure of speech used in these words graphically depicts the breakdown of the body, the outward man perishing. We are reminded of the words of God to Adam, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return." Always this applies to the increase of years. The hand begins to shake, the eyes grow dim, the heart weakens, and soon we are cut off

and fly away. Many times, however, the brutal forces of disease and death make their long furrows upon children and youth. We have amongst us the evidences of "birth defects," of handicapped children and adults, the injured and maimed by disease or accident. Who can understand the soul scarred by emotional hurt and injury?

In addition, Paul also speaks of "our light affliction" in verse 17. Here the emphasis falls upon suffering for Jesus' sake. This too was mentioned in verses 8-12: "we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed . . . persecuted but not forsaken . . . always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." More detail of this is given in II Corinthians 11:21 - 28 where he speaks of his being beaten five times, stoned once, three times suffered shipwrecks, and having encountered perils in waters, robbers, in city and country, and endured extreme cold and nakedness. We also know something about suffering evil for doing good. Some of us know the pain of a broken marriage, a spouse that left without cause. Some children turn against faithful parents. Officebearers have admonished in the love of God, yet members turn their backs. Many a Christian mother has felt the scorn of a stranger for having a large family.

All these things are "seen."

By contrast, the things that are not seen are described as "eternal" (vs. 18). These things come

to us by revelation. God has given to us His holy Word, which by the gospel is preached unto us. By the work of the Holy Spirit, the truths of His Word are written in our hearts. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven" (John 3:3). By such a re-birth, we do see the things that cannot be seen with earthly eyes. We rejoice in the knowledge of God in all His adorable glory. We marvel at the love of God revealed to us at Calvary. The open tomb witnesses for us of our living Savior. We do not have a possible savior; we have Jesus, Who saves His people from their sins. The keeping of the law is our thankful response for so great a salvation. Obedience is our chief delight.

With such eyes of faith we look, not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen.

No, this does not mean that we ignore the reality of our afflictions. We seek medical and psychiatric help when we need it. But we realize that our deepest strength in every trial of life lies in our God, in His promises, and in His Spirit.

The idea of looking is to stare, to gaze so intently that we admit that what we see is of great value and will influence us in our life. Such attention is not given to the troubles themselves, but to the way of deliverance. The verb is to scope. Much like the auto mechanic who hooks up the wires to analyze what is wrong with a rough engine, we scope our souls to determine our spiritual condition. The "manual" is the Word of God.

The spiritual insight which is derived from such careful examination gives us understanding of the true nature of afflictions. We learn that God has absolute control over our lives. Nothing comes by chance, but everything by the will of our Heavenly

Father. The Bible assures us that He loves us. The cross is the ultimate display. In His love He sends afflictions as chastisement and correction for sins in our lives, or as a means to polish our faith and thereby display the glory of God through us. In every situation, He assures us that His grace is sufficient to accomplish this purpose.

It is important, then, that we look at the things unseen. Most of us are inclined to spend all our time looking at the things that are seen. We talk about our hard life, our physical limitations, our hurts, and our broken lives. Many physicians, psychiatrists, marriage counselors, and lawyers capitalize on this and make a fortune. As children of God we make use of their skills, but know that unless we are right with God in the depth of our hearts, their help is vain. What a great need we have for a Christian and, even more precisely, a Reformed perspective in these areas of help. You may have experienced the additional blessing when your doctor, psychiatrist, marriage counselor, or lawyer could also minister to you as a fellow believer — when he was one who could direct you as well to the things unseen. This also reminds us of the glorious task of the pastor, the elders, and deacons of the church. Even this is not limited to those in the special office. It is our great privilege to help one another bear our burdens by directing our attention to the things unseen. How precious for us as husbands and wives, parents and children, fellow believers to pick up God's Word and direct our inner being to focus on the promises and direction of God.

When we do this, three things take place.

First, we can understand why the inspired apostle speaks of our afflictions as *light*. Paul calls his

thorn in the flesh, his imprisonments and whippings, light afflictions. How can this be? He places them on a mental scale, a balance scale, and places on one side of the scale our present afflictions and on the other side the promises of God. By such a mental process, he declares that the things which are seen are temporal, they are but for a moment, while the things that are not seen are eternal. Our afflictions may last an entire life time, but what is that compared to an eternity with God!

Second, the afflictions which we experience are useful: they "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." This is important for us to understand. Our afflictions bring great pain in our bodies and they bring hurt to our souls. If all of this misery is for no reason, we despair. Then we rightly cry in bitter complaint before God, Why me? What have I done to deserve this? When we know that God has a good purpose in our afflictions, then those afflictions have meaning and we bear them quietly. How do these afflictions work the eternal weight of glory? They jerk us loose from our attachment to this world and force us to get our priorities straight. We are humbled in our dependency, and we turn to God for direction and strength. The more we are pressed down to the earth, the more our souls long for heaven.

Thirdly, we are spiritually and inwardly renewed by this experience. No, we do not faint. One faints by feeling sorry for himself, by living in the past, by having a sickly dependence on others. Rather, "the inner man is renewed day by day." When we are drawn close to God, we draw from Him spiritual energy. We accept our circumstances. We look at ourselves and realize we may be weak, but we still have a purpose and, with God's help, we

can do what God wants us to do with the ability He gives to us. Such renewal places us in a relationship of trust in God. We turn from our weakness to His strength.

Proof of this can be seen in the parents who lose a child in death. They lose interest in their

other children and grieve over their loss. Soon, however, they pick up the pieces of their broken life and direct their energy to the family that needs them. The same is true for the severely injured patient in the hospital. He goes home to face a different life.

Change is real. We learn to accept this of the Lord.

But, we go on. We look not at the things which are seen and which are only too obvious; but we look at the things not seen.

When we see the unseen, we see God's smile upon us.

And we long for home. □

Editorial

The Beginning of Birth-Pangs

You will not learn the truth about the San Francisco earthquake of October 17, 1989 from the news media, from the scientists, or from most of the religious press.

The news media will inform you about the destruction and death. The scientists will indicate the strength of the temblor and discuss its location on a fault in the earth's crust. The religious press, if it notices the disaster at all, will call you to contribute to relief-funds and will extol the church-groups that extend a helping hand to the devastated communities.

But none of them will tell the truth about the catastrophe. You may be especially sure that most of the religious press, including the evangelical press, will not tell the truth about the earthquake. A press that falls all over itself to assure the world that it does not regard AIDS as divine punishment of homosexuality will not witness to the truth of the earthquake as expressing any disfavor of God. When Jesus Christ is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that

know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and when the world of ungodly men and women are calling for the mountains to fall on them, to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, the religious press (including much of the evangelical press) will be saying, "We do not believe that this represents any wrath of God upon you."

God visited the San Francisco area of the United States in His wrath. The earthquake was a judgment of the Holy God upon a world that is fast filling up its cup of iniquity. It was a "pre-shock" of the great earthquake that is coming, by which God will shake the heaven and the earth, so that the cities of the nations fall and the present creation is removed (Heb. 12:27; Rev. 16:18ff.).

This is the truth about the San Francisco earthquake.

The Word of God, Holy Scripture, tells the truth about the earthquake. When they asked Him, "what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Jesus answered, "... there shall be ... earthquakes ... All these are the

beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24:3ff.). That the earthquakes with the other calamities are judgment upon a wicked world, the parallel passage in Luke 21 makes plain: "upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth . . ." (vss. 25, 26).

This makes the earthquake far more awful than will be allowed by even the grimmest of reports by the media. It was the voice of the angry God, punishing sinners in revolt against Him and cursing the earth on man's account — the realm of the apostate kingdom. God has a lovely voice in the gospel of the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus the Messiah. He has another voice for those who refuse to hear Him in the gospel and law of Holy Scripture. This other voice is terrible and terrifying.

They will hear this other voice again.

It was specially fitting that this judgment fell on San Francisco.

It would have had the same meaning no matter what city it

struck. But San Francisco is a "Sodom" in the United States — an especially bold and shameless Sodom. Not only is the perversion of homosexuality rampant among the citizens of that city, but also the civil authorities approve this unseemly behavior and exert themselves to make this gross lawlessness legitimate. On November 7, 1989 voters in San Francisco will vote on a proposed law that will allow homosexual "couples" to register their relationship with the county clerk. Thus, these "couples" will get civil sanction of their vile relationship, as well as the various social, health, and financial benefits enjoyed heretofore by married couples. The referendum is likely to approve the law.

These legal actions of San Francisco are rebellion against the will of God as revealed both in creation and in Scripture. Nature itself makes plain that the marriage relationship is exclusively a male and a female. Romans 1:18ff. condemns homosexuality as uncleanness; a dishonoring of the bodies of the homosexuals; vile affections; unnatural; working that which is unseemly; and, in the practice, the product of a reprobate mind. San Francisco's proposed law is an open, advanced, and ominous attack on God's ordinances of marriage, the family, and the fundamental differentiation of humanity as male and female.

By making unnatural perversion law, the world steps up the tempo of its revolution. By the earthquake, their Sovereign steps up the tempo of His judgments.

San Francisco will not listen to the lovely voice of God in the gospel and law of the Bible. San Francisco must hear the terrifying voice of God in pestilence (which includes AIDS) and earthquake.

The world will not listen. If they did, they would repent, to give God glory. If they listened, truly listened to the voice of God in the earthquake, they would not only spend millions to discover sure warnings of impending earthquakes, but they would also take to heart the certain promise of a final, fearful earthquake that will shake everyone of them into judgment before God: "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven" (Heb. 12:26). They would then not only take precautions against the physical damages of the small earthquakes, but they would also prepare for the great earthquake that is coming by taking refuge through faith in the blood of Jesus, the only real "earthquake-shelter." Oh, the foolish world! They refuse Him that speaks!

Only the church hears. Hearing the lovely voice of the gospel, the church also hears the awesome voice in the earthquake. And she trembles! She is moved by the rippling of the earth at the approach of the judging God. She *must* tremble! Although her trembling is not terror, for Jesus has delivered her from the coming wrath (1 Thess. 1:10 — where "the wrath to come" is not future wrath, but wrath already being poured out on the world), it is awe before the great and holy God. Who of us cannot but fear Him in this His work?

The church is shaken up to examine her own life in the world, that it be not only eating, drinking, building houses, and marrying, much less drunkenness, unchastity, and oppression. She trembles with renewed zeal to be holy as her God is holy, keeping His law. What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy behavior and godliness?

Above all she trembles in anticipation of the coming of her Savior, her Lord, her Husband,

Jesus Christ. Of this coming does the earthquake speak to her, according to Jesus' own interpretation. "There shall be . . . earthquakes," Jesus told the disciples, in premonition of His coming, as "the beginning of sorrows." "Sorrows" is literally "birth-pangs." As the expectant mother travails to give birth, the earth groaned and heaved in a mighty birth-pang, to bring forth the coming of Jesus and a new world.

In that world, righteousness will dwell.

What was for the world the cause of dismay, perplexity, and the failing of their hearts for fear is for us a hopeful sign. The Triune God is coming, is on the way, in Jesus Christ, to judge the world with righteousness.

Believer, and child of believer, look up! Lift up your heads!

Your Bridegroom comes!

Your redemption draws near!

Your God has spoken! □ -DJE

Wait On The Lord

(Ps. 27:14)

"Wait on the Lord,"
Don't try to run ahead;
Thy God is ever near Thee,
By Him thou shalt be led.

"Wait on the Lord,"
Thy prayer will answered be —
But in the Lord's own time,
And how 'tis best for thee.

"Wait on the Lord,"
His promises are true;
The One who feeds the sparrows
Will also care for you.

"Wait on the Lord,"
This is our God's command;
And He will guide us onward
With His Almighty Hand.

Annetta Jansen
Dorr, Michigan □

Letters

More on Home-Schooling

I have some thoughts to express and questions to ask regarding your editorial in the September 15 *Standard Bearer*. The third question parents are asked at baptism is whether they promise to instruct and bring up their child in the aforesaid doctrine or help or cause them to be instructed therein. If parents choose the *first* option in fulfilling their baptism vows, should they be made to feel guilty about "turning their backs" on the P.R. schools? Perhaps instead, parents should prayerfully consider whether they are able and are called to teach their children themselves, *before* considering the second option of delegating this responsibility in part to others. Just because they *may* use help, does not mean they *must*.

You have leveled a very serious charge of "lawbreaker" against Michigan parents who do not have their children taught by certified teachers. You based this charge on this summer's Court of Appeals ruling. There are at least three facts you failed to recognize. 1) This case has been appealed and, since it is still in legal process, should not be considered settled and binding. 2) In 1979, a Michigan court (government authority) found non-certified teaching parents *not guilty* of breaking the law (State of Michigan vs. Nobels, 1979). 3) There were Michigan certification requirements on the books long before our P.R. schools were

begun (388.553, Sec. 3, 1921). Our schools for years used non-certified teachers. Reading histories of these schools, I notice that our fathers are not called lawbreakers, but they are applauded as stepping forward in faith. Finally, the fact that there are thousands of homeschoolers in Michigan, and only one current court case, indicates that the certification law is vague, and the problem is not decisively resolved. As Mr. J. Lanting contends (June 1, 1989 *S.B.*), "Reformed Christians should aggressively assert all the rights and liberties we still enjoy as citizens." The Constitution, the highest law of this country, allows the free exercise of religion. The court system is there to insure free exercise of religion. The court system is there to insure that individual rights are maintained, and it has invalidated laws it found to be unlawful. Is it not honorable to use existing legal channels to defeat unscriptural laws? In addition, the state legislature is deliberating on homeschooling bills; so, at best, your judgment is premature and should be withdrawn.

Ruth Nobel
Dorr, MI ☐

The Contact Committee EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCHES OF SINGAPORE

August 7, 1989

Committee for Contact with
Other Churches
c/o Prof. Herman Hanko,
Secretary
4665 Juleon Dr. S.W.
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
U.S.A.

Beloved Brethren,

It was a sad moment for us when we heard the news about Prof. Hoeksema's death. On behalf of the churches here, we would like to express our deepest Christian sympathy to you and your churches in the death of Prof. Hoeksema. We remember his dedication and faithfulness in training our two ministers, Pastors Lau and Mahtani. We share your loss with you.

Our human nature causes us to mourn the loss of a good man, but we know that this child of God has gone to dwell in the house of our Lord forever, where it is far better.

May our Lord comfort you in this time.

In Christian love,
w.s. Lim Kok Eng, Secretary
Pastor Lau, Advisor
Pastor Mahtani, Advisor
Deacon Jimmy Teo,
Chairman
Bro. Stephen Tan, Treasurer
Bro. Ho Soo Hyim,
Member ☐

Yes keep me, keep me — for
myself

I cannot, cannot keep;
Keep me by day, keep me by night
O Thou who does not sleep.

—S.B. Oct. 1, 1927

Guest Article

Rev. Steven R. Houck

A Reformed Look at the New Age Movement (2)

In our last article we noted the basic beliefs of the New Age Movement. In this article we will consider their practices and also begin an evaluation both of their beliefs and of their practices.

All the practices of the New Age Movement are based upon their fundamental beliefs. Since man is really God and therefore has infinite potential, he has only to look within himself for the answers to all of his problems. Therefore many of the practices of the New Age Movement emphasize mystical experiences, particularly various forms of Eastern meditation. One must put out of his consciousness the normal things of life that distract him from seeing his true reality. He must bring about a state of consciousness that is identified with "the One."

Shirley MacLaine describes a mystical experience she had in a hot tub this way, "My whole body seemed to float. Slowly, slowly I became the water . . . I felt the inner connection of my breathing with the pulse of the energy around me. In fact, I was the air, the water, the darkness, the walls, the bubbles, the candle, the wet rocks under the water, and even the sound of the rushing river outside."

Another practice of the New Age Movement is called, "Imagining." One must imagine the reality he wants, and by that imagination he will actually create that reality. For instance, if a person has cancer he can cure himself by means of imagining. First he must imagine himself full of cancer cells. Then he must picture his immune system attacking and destroying those cells. He must see his white blood cells eating up the cancer cells until they are all gone. That image of no cancer will then become the reality and he will be free of cancer.

The New Age Movement emphasizes the power of positive thinking and the power of the mind over matter. They practice what is called "psychokinesis" which is the moving or influencing of matter through the power of the mind. This is a popular activity at their parties. They claim that they are able to bend silverware merely by thinking it. They also claim that they can walk on hot coals without burning their feet. They profess to practice such things as telepathy (the transfer of thoughts from one mind to another) and clairvoyance (the seeing of objects or events at a distance).

Besides looking to one's own mind and consciousness for the answer to man's basic problem, the New Age Movement looks outside to others. One of the

most widespread practices of this movement is something called "channeling." This is nothing more than the old-fashioned seance in a new and "more acceptable" form. They believe that there are a host of spirit beings — the spirits of the dead, evolved animal spirits, beings from outer space — who inhabit a spiritual realm. These beings have either reached the point of enlightenment or are very close to it and they share information concerning enlightenment with those seeking enlightenment. For this they use a channel who gives himself over to the spirit so that the spirit controls his mind and mouth and thus speaks through him. This is so popular among New Age people that there are a host of known channelers who are making millions of dollars doing this. There are over a thousand channelers in Los Angeles alone. Even the spirits they channel are popular. They have names like: Lazarus, Mafu, Seth, Saint Germain, Ramtha. Some even claim to channel Jesus. Many of the books which are used by the New Age Movement and which promote the philosophy of the movement are said to be written by these channeled spirits.

The New Age Movement resorts to other forms of spiritism too. Many of them go to the native American Indian medicine man or participate in Indian

Rev. Houck is a home-missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

rituals and ceremonies in order to get information from the spirit world. Some of them are involved in nature-based religion in which there is the worship of the earth and female gods. They speak of mother earth and of mother goddesses such as Diana, Isis, Demeter, and others. Some are involved in Wicca or witchcraft with its emphasis upon the female. It is estimated that there are fifty thousand witches in the United States.

If you were to go into the home of a New Age practitioner you would discover that there are two objects which are especially important to them. The first of these is the crystal. You will find crystal jewelry around their necks and on their arms and fingers. They put crystals in their purses, in their toilet tanks, and even tie them to the carburetors of their cars. They display them on coffee tables and they grind them up and make from them an energizing elixir which they drink. To understand this you must remember that they believe that God is a force or energy. They want to be in harmony with that world force. They want to vibrate in tune with the universe. Since they believe that rock crystal has the same energy pattern as God, they believe that by surrounding themselves with these crystals their energy will be in harmony with God. Thus they use crystals for psychic healing, contact with spirits, and the development of a higher consciousness of the "One."

The other object which is found among the New Age people is the pyramid. They believe that the pyramid, like the crystal, has super-powerful paranormal properties. It is an age-old belief that the specific angles of the pyramid emit magnetic energy that can be harnessed to control events.

Perhaps you have heard of "holistic health." This too is an extension of the basic philosophy of the New Age Movement. Because all is one, the body too must be in tune with the energy of nature and with God. This tuning can be accomplished by using the natural powers of the body itself. While the name holistic is supposed to emphasize the concept of dealing with the whole person, the real emphasis is on the spiritual energy in the body and the use of that energy to heal. It is another form of spiritism. Thus medical practices are used which have their origin in witches, witch doctors, medicine men, sorcerers, wizards, and magicians. Besides using such accepted methods as diet and life style and attitude changes, they use acupuncture, biofeedback, chiropractic therapy, reflexology, iridology (diagnosis by looking at the iris), relaxation, meditation, trance channeling, psychic surgery, hypnosis, and more.

This brief look at the beliefs and practices of the New Age Movement already makes it clear that there is something very wrong with this movement. Let us therefore examine these beliefs and practices in the light of the Holy Scriptures.

Even though some try to harmonize aspects of the New Age Movement with Christianity, the basic beliefs and practices of the movement are contrary to the Faith of the Holy Scriptures. The god of the New Age Movement is not the God of Christianity. The Christ of the New Age Movement is not the Christ of the Bible. The mankind of the New Age Movement is not the mankind described in the Scriptures. The salvation of the New Age Movement is not the salvation of the true God.

The fundamental error of the New Age Movement is what the

apostle refers to in Romans 1:23, 25: "... (They) changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things . . . and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator . . ."

They have taken the incorruptible God and made him man, birds, beasts, and creeping things. They have made the creation, God. Instead of worshiping the true God, they worship creation. At bottom, the New Age Movement is nothing but idolatry.

First of all, God is not an impersonal force, energy, or consciousness. God is a personal God. This can be very easily demonstrated by going to the name of God. His name is Jehovah, which means, "I Am." God told His name to Moses at the burning bush: "And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Ex. 3:14).

Notice that in this verse God is said to talk to Moses. In fact, at the very beginning of the Bible God is said to speak. He said, "Let there be light." That in itself demonstrates that God is a personal God. Only a person can speak. But, even beyond that, God's name, Jehovah, is a personal name. He is the great "I Am." God is the "I" who eternally is. Only a person can say "I." Every time the Bible calls God by the name, Jehovah, it declares that He is personal.

We ought to be horrified that anyone would even suggest that God is not a personal God. We have fellowship with God, worship and serve Him, love and enjoy Him, only because He is a personal God. That is what makes God the beautiful, glorious God that He is.

In the second place, all is not one. Certainly all is not God. This world, even though it is an organic unity, is made up of many distinct and separate creatures, and those creatures are distinct and separate from God. This is implied in the first verse of the Bible. In Genesis 1:1 we read, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." In the beginning — before the creation of the world — there was only God. That makes Him distinct from all His creatures. Then God made two things — the heaven and the earth — which are distinct and separate. He also made many different creatures to inhabit both heaven and earth, as is indicated by the six days of creation.

If we are to understand properly the relationship of God and His creation we must take note of two things: God is both transcendent and immanent.

That God is immanent means that He is not far away from His creation, but very near. He is everywhere in creation. He is intimately involved in all the affairs of this world. He providentially upholds and governs all things — even the small and seemingly insignificant. The apostle says, "... He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; ... For in him we live, and move, and have our being ..." (Acts 17:25, 28). We read, "... Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11). In this sense God is not far from anyone.

Yet God is not the world. That God is transcendent means that He is in Himself infinitely exalted above the world. He is absolutely different from the world. He is so high above this world that nothing can even be compared to Him. He is the infinite God. All else is finite. This is demonstrated

by the fact that God's name is "Most High" (Ps. 47:2). The Psalmist says, "The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens" (Ps. 113:4).

God is immanent in this world. But He is immanent as the transcendent God. He is near to every one of us. But He is near as the infinite God. He is Creator, Governor, and Redeemer. But He is Creator, Governor, and Redeemer as the Holy God. These are fundamentals of the Reformed Faith.

The Lord willing, in the final article of this series we will continue to evaluate the New Age Movement in the light of the Scriptures and also suggest ways in which we can avoid the wicked errors of this movement. □

Church and State

Mr. James Lanting

Supreme Court Balks at Overruling Roe V. Wade

"It thus appears that the mansion of constitutionalized abortion law, constructed overnight in Roe v. Wade, must be disassembled door-jam by door-jam, and never entirely brought down, no matter how wrong it might be." Justice Scalia, Webster v. Reproductive Health Services (concurring opinion).

Mr. Lanting, a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church, is a practicing attorney.

Contrary to the theological "finding" of the Missouri Legislature [that life begins at conception], a woman's constitutionally protected liberty encompasses the right to act on her own belief that — to paraphrase St. Thomas Aquinas — until a seed has acquired the powers of sensation and movement, the life of a human being has not yet begun. Justice Stevens, Webster v. Reproductive Health Services (dissent).

A Nation Divided. This past summer the Supreme Court released its long awaited opinion in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, perhaps the most controversial case confronting the Court in recent decades. At issue was the constitutionality of certain abortion restrictions adopted by the Missouri State legislature.

The July ruling followed months of intense speculation whether the Court might jettison its 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision which had fashioned a novel con-

stitutional right to unrestricted abortions during the first 24 weeks (first two trimesters) of a woman's pregnancy. Although a bitterly divided Court (5-4) upheld the Missouri abortion restrictions, the plurality refused to overrule *Roe v. Wade*, choosing instead to "modify and narrow" its 1973 ruling.

Although pro-life advocates are ecstatic about the *Webster* decision, a careful analysis of the decision shows that the practical effects are extremely limited. Moreover, the *Webster* ruling is perhaps notable only for what it does *not* say about the core issues in the raucous abortion debate.

When life begins. The preamble to the Missouri abortion restrictions contained a "finding" that "the life of each human being begins at conception." The lower Court of Appeals had determined that this declaration "was simply an impermissible state adoption of a theory of when life begins to justify its abortion regulations." The Supreme Court disagreed and held that this "finding" was only a preamble or introduction to the Missouri abortion regulations, an "abstract proposition" merely expressing a value judgment favoring childbirth over abortion. And because this abstract principle did not restrict abortions in any concrete, specific way, the plurality of the Court held that "we therefore need not pass on the constitutionality of the Act's preamble."

The deliberate avoidance of this fundamental issue in the abortion debate prompted the conservative Justice Scalia (in a concurring opinion) to accuse the plurality of being "indecisive" and "irresponsible." And Justice Blackmun in his dissent bitterly charged the plurality with "cowardice and illegitimacy" in

ducking this foundational question.

Tax-supported abortion. The Court also ruled on Missouri's prohibition of tax-supported abortions. The lower Court of Appeals had struck down Missouri's ban on the use of public facilities and public employees for nontherapeutic abortions. The *Webster* Court disagreed, holding that a state need not commit *any* resources to performing abortions. The Court discounted the lower court's ruling that preventing access to a public facility narrows or forecloses the availability of abortion to indigent women. Missouri's decision, the Court held, to use public facilities to encourage childbirth over abortion, places no governmental obstacle in the path of a woman who chooses to terminate her pregnancy elsewhere.

Second-trimester abortion restrictions. Finally, the Missouri statute provided that before a physician aborted an unborn child of 20 weeks or more, he must perform certain tests to determine whether the fetus was "viable." This patently conflicted with *Roe v. Wade*, since *Roe v. Wade* limited state involvements in second-trimester abortions.

The Supreme Court found that Missouri's viability test requirement were reasonably designed to insure that abortions are not performed where the fetus is "viable." Moreover, the Court held, the doubt cast on the Missouri statute is not so much a flaw in the statute as it is a reflection that *Roe's* "rigid trimester analysis" has proved to be "unsound in principle and unworkable in practice." Accordingly, the *Roe* trimester framework was abandoned.

Is *Roe* still law? Since the plurality in *Webster* discarded the key elements of the *Roe* framework — trimesters and viability — as being unsound, the question

remains as to what is left of *Roe* after its essential framework has been eviscerated. The plurality of the Court insisted that *Roe* is still law, albeit "modified and narrowed."

The conservative Justice Scalia and the liberal dissenting Justices vehemently disagreed claiming that the plurality opinion "finessed" *Roe* in a "deceptive" manner. In his bitter dissent, pro-abortion Justice Blackmun wrote:

*"Never in my memory has a plurality gone about its business in such a deceptive fashion. With feigned restraint, the plurality announces that its analysis leaves *Roe* 'undisturbed,' albeit 'modified and narrowed.' But this disclaimer is totally meaningless. The plurality opinion is filled with winks, and nods, and knowing glances to those who would do away with *Roe* explicitly"*

The future of *Roe v. Wade*. Whether *Roe* has been only "narrowed" or implicitly overruled by *Webster* is an issue that will be debated for some time. What is clear, however, is that the *Webster* plurality refused to confront the two great issues posed by *Roe*: (1) when does human life begin, and (2) does the Constitution contain an "unenumerated" woman's right to an abortion-on-demand.

But if *Roe* is still intact, its future is bleak. The Supreme Court has recently selected three more abortion cases for consideration later this term. The new cases (from Illinois, Minnesota, and Ohio) all deal with state laws creating obstacles to access to abortion in the *first* trimester. Each case gives the Court the potential opportunity to confront and strike down the fundamental core of *Roe v. Wade*.

The *Webster* decision reveals that even the majority cannot decide whether the core issues in the abortion debate are legal, political, moral, or religious (see Justice Stevens' quote above). Ac-

cordingly, it is unlikely that the Court will ever find that life begins at conception and that a fetus is a legal "person" under the 14th Amendment's due process clause.

It is more likely that a plurality of the Court will decide next year that the abortion debate is a "political" question outside of its

jurisdiction — a question to be decided through the democratic process by each state legislature. But this, of course, only avoids the issue and shifts the battleground from the nation's capital to the state capitals. And it is some consolation, perhaps, that the total number of abortions

may decrease when some states outlaw them.

Thus, it may be unrealistic to hope that the Supreme Court next year will definitively rule that "personhood" begins with conception. Short of that, however, the holocaust against the unborn will undoubtedly continue. □

From Holy Writ
Rev. George Lubbers

Exposition of Philippians 1:27-30 (1)

"Only let your conversation be as cometh the Gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel."

Paul the apostle is deeply concerned for the spiritual well-being of the saints in the church at Philippi. He loves this church very dearly. They are very much in his mind and heart, as he assures them in chapter 1:1-8. He thinks of this church as the first-fruits of his labors in Macedonia. He had preached the Word there on successive sabbath days by the riverside. Here the Lord had opened the heart of Lydia, a seller of purple, so that she gave heed to the things which Paul preached. And she believed, with her household, and they all were baptized into the Name of the triune God. They had seen Paul's labors and his suffering for Jesus.

For he had been cruelly and unjustly scourged and cast into prison.

Paul rejoices that these saints had been partakers with him in the preaching of the gospel of Christ (chapter 1:7, 8). He thinks of them and prays for them in the assurance that God, who began this good work in them, will finish it even unto the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (vs. 6). Having said this he immediately tells them that they are not yet perfected in the love of Christ as they surely will be in the future glories when they shall forever be with the Lord.

Paul knows that not all was as it should have been among saints. There was strife and disunity and lack of love even among those who had *labored with him in the Gospel*. This situation does not dim Paul's ardent love and affection for them. In heart-stirring language he pours out his love for them as he addresses them as my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown. Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved!

Yes, here is the heart of the great apostle, tenderly but firmly admonishing these fellow co-laborers to be of the *same mind* in the Lord. (See also chapter 2:1-6.) They must display the same mind which motivated Christ Jesus to suffer and die for us on the accursed tree, obedient unto the end.

Such is the deepest motif for Paul's affectionate exhortation. The fact is that Paul's intercessory prayer for these saints is constantly what he says in verse 9: "and this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

What a mighty prayer to God for the daily increase in abounding love for these saints!

In view of these sentiments from Paul's heart we can well understand the clarion call echoed in verse 27: "Only let

Rev. Lubbers is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ." It is a call to battle colors in the great conflict which they must wage by faith for the truth of the Gospel. This calls for an inner unity and spiritual harmony of exalted purpose.

Let us try to see this a little more in depth. It will call for some study of the terms in the text in the light of the Scriptures.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

(Phil. 1:27)

Perhaps we do well to examine the meaning of the concept gospel here. Paul repeatedly speaks of the great importance of this Gospel of Christ (verse 5). From the first day when Paul preached by the riverside (Acts 16:13-15) till now, some years later, they had fellowship with Paul and Timothy in this Gospel-ministry. They had stood with Paul even when he was a prisoner, both in Caesarea for two years, and now for well nigh the same length of time as a prisoner of Christ at Rome (Acts 23:26 ff. and Acts 28:30, 31). How much the Gospel means to him (particularly the preaching of the glad-tidings) we notice in the words of Paul in verses 12-18, where Paul is encouraged that all his long incarceration as messenger in bonds for Christ only became the occasion that the Gospel made progress and inroads into the very heart of the Roman government, as he preached in his own house in chains. Yes, Paul, the preacher, is truly in bonds; but the word of God is not bound. When there were preachers who preached from selfish and self-exalting interests, Paul was not burdened, because Christ is being preached. That is Paul's great and central burden — that the Gospel of the Cross be heralded forth, that this Jesus, who was crucified and killed by men, was raised up victorious as the Prince of life!

So much is this gospel-preaching Paul's great joy and responsibility that for him to live is Christ and to die is gain. Yes, this Gospel is always victorious, and Christ is glorified in Paul's body, whether Paul is to be set free by Nero at Rome or whether he will be condemned to die. He hopes to come and see these beloved Philippians; but what is far more important is that, whether he comes to them or whether he cannot come, he may hear that they continue to stand in one spiritual purpose in the united defense of the Gospel of Christ.

What really is this Gospel of Christ? That is an all-important question which calls for a clear-cut exegetical answer.

It is a Gospel which preaches Christ crucified and made a curse for the sins of all His people. He fulfilled all righteousness as the free-gift of God (Rom. 5:15-17). Yes, it is the tidings that, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; and that this Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, and complete redemption (I Cor. 1:30, 31). This makes Paul and every saved sinner say, "For I through law died unto law, that I might live unto God" (Gal. 2:19). Or, as Paul writes in Romans 7:4, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead unto law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God"! Such is the glad-tidings which Christ preached when He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Such is the Gospel which was preached, clear and strong, when God opened the heart of Lydia to give heed to the Gospel-tidings (Acts 16:14, 15).

However, there is more to this preaching of the Gospel of the

kingdom of heaven. It is that, in our lives, we shall take this word of the Cross to heart. Jesus says, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me . . . For whosoever would save his life (soul) shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matt. 16:24, 25).

Such a walk is worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

We ought to notice that the term "conversation" which is the KJV's rendering of the Greek *politeuesthe*, refers to the proper walk of citizens of the kingdom of Christ. Paul says in Philippians 3:20, "for our citizenship (conversation) is in heaven; whence we also wait for a Savior: who shall change (fashion anew) the body of humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself." Such is the grand concept of the citizenship which is ours, as those who are poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3). For do not ever forget that that blood of Jesus is such that it brought the Gentile believers near who were once far off. Now they are no more foreigners and strangers, who are alienated from the *commonwealth* of Israel (Eph. 2:12).

Yes, we are first-class citizens of the commonwealth of Israel. Christ came in the fulness of time and preached peace to those who were near and to those who were far off. Therefore Lydia too had her heart opened by the Lord. When Paul, therefore, desires only that he may hear that these Philippians walk properly as citizens who, in one accord with all the saints, wage holy, spiritual warfare with all who oppose the Gospel, this is a proper desire, the expected thing!

In this great conflict these combatants in the church at

Philippi are dealing with mighty and cruel foes, unbelievers of the Gospel, and haters of God and of his Christ. It is a relentless foe.

In this conflict they are required to do two things. First of all, they are *to stand*. Secondly, they must do battle with the foe as becometh citizens of the kingdom of heaven. They are to be poor in spirit, pure of heart, peacemakers, and those who are willing to suffer for the sake of Christ, not loving their souls unto death (Matt. 5:3ff. and Rev. 12:11). For it is as Paul writes to the Ephesian church, "for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). In this conflict the saints at Philippi must not forget who their enemy is; they must not forget that they are to be, as it were, a united army under the Captain of the hosts of Israel. They must be as fellow-athletes in this life-and-death struggle with Satan and all his hellish hosts! Having taken position in

the secret place of the Almighty, they must stand, they must be strong and not give a hair-breadth! We are reminded here of the beautiful words which Paul penned to the church in Corinth at the close of his great first Epistle, chapter 16:10: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all things be done in love."

Such must also be our watchword in the militant church in the world. Jesus gives us the battle-directive when He says, "that ye stand fast in one spirit and in one mind, *striving together* for the faith of the gospel."

There is some question as to the proper interpretation of this "faith of the gospel." Some interpret it as meaning to stand by means of faith. Faith then is the subjective assurance of a saving faith, as described in Questions 20, 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism. It is, then, that living tie by which we have been ingrafted into Christ and receive all His benefits. For we are saved by grace through faith, which is solely a gift of God (Eph. 2:8-10). To be sure, if "for the faith of the

gospel" is to be understood in this sense, then we should translate it that we stand through faith! This gives good biblical sense. Our difficulty with this rendering is that the Apostle would have written the Greek preposition (*dia*), by means of faith, by the agency of faith, and not the simple dative of interest. Yes, the battling is only waged when we take up the sword of the Spirit in faith, the faith which conquers the world (I John 5:4). "For whosoever is begotten of God overcometh the world (cosmos); and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." We have but to read such a passage as Hebrews 11:33, 34, where the writer briefly rehearses the mighty victories of such saints as Gideon, Barak, Samuel, Jephtha, David, and Samuel," who through faith subdued kingdoms, etc.

However, our text seems to call for a different interpretation of standing together for the faith of the Gospel. But this will need to wait till our next installment, with further exegetical observations. □

All Around Us
Prof. Robert Decker

Oral Roberts in Trouble Christians in Russia Thoughts Worth Pondering

Prof. Decker is professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Oral Roberts in Trouble

The *National & International Religion Report* (September 25, 1989) informs us that:

Barring "a miracle," Oral Roberts will close the towering City of Faith medical complex Jan. 1 and shut

down the Oral Roberts University's 147-student medical school next May. The hospital's emergency room was closed Sept. 14. Roberts also said his home and the adjacent one of his son Richard (together valued at over \$1 million), along with other ministry homes near the ORU cam-

pus and an 832 graduate housing compound, will be sold to help pay \$25 million in debts. The cutbacks are expected to cost 600 people their jobs but could save the 4,300 student ORU and other ministry divisions, sources said. It was clearly a blow to the 71-year-old faith healer, who said God told him to build a 777-bed hospital and research center. The \$150 million complex was completed in 1981 without a mortgage, but the state would allow only 294 beds in the hospital (its highest average occupancy was 148 in 1984). Roberts blamed a sharp decline in donations (from nearly \$5 million monthly to just over \$2 million) on a "spirit of skepticism" created by media coverage of TV preacher scandals. His own fund-raising practices, conflict over promises he made to recipients of medical school scholarships, and his and Richard's lifestyles, including ownership of multiple luxury homes, figured in that coverage. Shortly before the Roberts announcement, newspapers across the country carried testimony of former PTL executive James Taggart in the Jim Bakker trial. Taggart told of Bakker returning from a trip to Tulsa and complaining that "he lived shabbily compared to Oral Roberts, the (Rex) Humbards, and other ministers."

What a far cry all this is from the Son of Man (Whom these men claim to be serving) Who had not where to lay His head! Jesus also told us that if we would follow Him we will have to deny ourselves and take up our crosses. One cannot help but think of the description of the false teachers found in II Peter 2:3: "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you" Certainly "by reason of" these men "the way of truth is evil spoken of" (II Peter 2:2). □

Christians in Russia

The Protestant Review (June 1989) reports that under the policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (reconstruction) God's people in Russia are ap-

parently experiencing far less persecution than under previous regimes. We are told that:

- Christians may now receive Bibles and other Christian literature from outside Russia. Parcels actually arrive at their destinations.

- Children are no longer hindered from attending church services.

- Christians are allowed to visit friends from the West; Western Christians are allowed to stay with friends in the USSR.

- Moves are under way to prevent "excesses of authority," such as imprisoning people for their Christian faith.

The same issue of *The Protestant Review* reports that Christians in other communist lands (Romania, for example) are still being persecuted. Some are cruelly beaten, others are imprisoned for the faith, and all Christians are forbidden to witness to the Truth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Surely we ought to remember God's suffering people in our daily prayers. Surely too we ought to thank God for the freedoms we enjoy here in North America. □

Thoughts Worth Pondering

Edwin P. Elliot has this Editorial Note in *Christian Observer* (September 29, 1989) which we do well to ponder:

Life is harsh. Marriages fail, and murder on the streets of the nation's capital has been reduced to a newspaper statistic printed between the weather and the ball scores. This world's optimists must look somewhere other than the Washington Times or NBC Nightly News for consolation.

Christians alone find stability and security in a world of broken promises and sudden justice. We have comfort both for this world and the next. Remember how Paul wrote: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore

glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (I Cor. 6:19,20)."

We are not ants shipped with the plastic farm through the mail for the pleasure of some curious child. We are the blood-bought possession of Heaven. We are owned by the Lord of the Universe and He takes a personal interest in us. Jesus Himself said: "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not a hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:17-19).

Now that we are into the catechism and society season we do well to take to heart what the Rev. Hans Overduin writes concerning memory work in *The Messenger* (September 1989).

Is memory work still important? Indeed it is! And as this new season of education begins and memory work is required, let us as children and young people, teachers and parents, be enthusiastic about the memory work that is given. Memory work is work, yet it should not be a boring chore, but a delightful challenge. As parents we should help our children with their memory work. It is a good idea to learn the Sunday School text and Psalter selection together as a family. As parents we should also show interest in what our young people have to learn for Catechism class. Perhaps we could re-learn with them what they have to learn for the first time. It is good to digest together the materials to be learned. Teachers who give memory work should be examples too in learning the memory work. Then too, seeing the continued importance of memory work, it surely would not be out of order to encourage each other as adults together in the memorization of various Scriptural passages and confessional statements, psalms and hymns. □

When Thou Sittest in Thine House

Mrs. Mary Beth Lubbers

The Reformed Family: Wife (1)

*"Even as Sara obeyed
Abraham, calling him
lord . . ." (1 Peter 3:6).*

Wife.

Strife.

Not many words rhyme with wife; this is one of the ugly ones which does. With divorce in America at an all-time high (one out of four marriages ends in divorce), many today would also agree that this word most aptly describes their marriages. Irreconcilable differences. Enmity in the home. War in the bedroom. Strife.

And what more can one expect when a daughter of Eve marries a son of Adam? When a rebel weds herself to a tyrant?

The marriage form most often used in the Protestant Reformed churches, and as found in the back of *The Psalter*, states it correctly when it begins with the sobering words, "Whereas married persons are generally, by reason of sin, subject to many troubles and afflictions . . ."

When one is young, still starry-eyed about the romance of marriage, these words may seem somewhat somber. Yet, experience, as well as Scripture itself, supports the truth of these opening words. Ours is a marriage form whose premise is basic. It should not be shelved.

Mrs. Lubbers is a wife and mother in the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, IL.

Even as more and more of our young people take to writing their own wedding words, they should be encouraged to use this tried and tested marriage ordinance. For its preamble records the source of all strife, and, recognizing that, provides the only possibility for a proper, long-lasting, even happy, married life.

Marriage is good and honorable, though the Apostle Paul declared, "For I would that all men were even as I myself" 1 Cor. 7:7. It is a God-ordained creation institution. Therefore, marriage is pleasing to God, even as Christ honored it with His presence in Cana. And it will not do for us to say, "Well, to avoid this inherent conflict, I'll not get married." Rather, we must submit to God's divine intention for us as wives.

This divine mandate is first recorded in the Book of Genesis. ". . . and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:16b). No matter how craftily men and women attack and pervert these first few chapters of Genesis, it is impossible to deny the fact that the man was created dominant, with headship; the woman, helpmeet, subservient to the man. No woman, even though she be Scripturally illiterate, can misunderstand these clearly defined principles.

First of all, it is clear from the original creation itself, i.e., the

man was created first, the woman taken from him.

Secondly, it is apparent from the fact that Adam named his wife. In the Old Testament times, the giving of names had lasting significance. It also presupposed a certain control over that person or thing, even as it does yet today. When a man names his business, this indicates that he is the head of his business; when a man christens his boat, it implies that he has control over his boat; when a husband and wife name their children, it indicates that they have authority over their children. How does this apply to the creation hierarchy? Jehovah, the omnipotent One over Whom there is none higher, named Himself, I AM THAT I AM (Ex. 3:14). Undoubtedly, although Genesis does not explicitly state it, Jehovah also named Adam; therefore, He had dominion over Adam, and Adam was responsible to Him. Adam, moreover, named the animals, over whom he had dominion. Adam also, strikingly enough, named Eve. Adam gave Eve her generic name, "Woman" (Genesis 2:23), as well as her personal name, "Eve" (Genesis 3:20).

Finally, it is clear in the curse placed upon each of them: Adam's judgment being his painful toil, as head, to provide for his household; Eve's judgment falling on what was uniquely hers as a woman and as a "suitable helper" for her husband, pains in

child-bearing. All the sorrow and anguish which tarnishes the joy and blessing of conceiving, bearing, and rearing children became hers. As if this were not enough, her (and our) desire would be to her husband, and he would rule over her.

And the curse is as real today, at the close of the modern twentieth century, as it was in those haunting first annals of history.

In short, the wife is and must be a servant. Abraham's beautiful and God-fearing wife Sarah acknowledged this, calling her husband "lord."

To serve her husband, willingly, is the wife's primary calling. She must serve all his needs: spiritual, emotional, and physical. This is, all by itself, full-time work. Added to this, her will must be subject to that of her husband. She must be silent. She must be obedient. Although she may chafe under them, there is simply no escaping these divine mandates. Scripture is replete with them. (See especially Eph. 5:22 and 33; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:11.)

The Bible does not speak of a partnership of equals in marriage. It is not as though Adam is king of creation and Eve, the queen. When Sarah called Abraham "lord," she did not understand by

her address of him that she was a "lordess." Rather, we must see in the marriage relationship the perfect mirror that reflects Christ, the bridegroom, ruling the church, His bride, in love, with the roles and duties of each clearly delineated. And the roles and duties of husband and wife are not the same.

Serving the needs of her husband (and children, too) becomes burdensome and taxing for the godly wife. Remaining silent, when the situation seems to call for a good old lashing out, seems restrictive. Conducting oneself piously and obediently, when a decisive "I won't" seems in order, appears a bit outdated. The curse which came upon Eve for disobeying God is not easy, nor pleasant, for us women. But there will be no true happiness in marriage unless, and until, these Biblical principles are in place.

As a Reformed, Christian female, I think I was very well trained to become a mother. The church and the home prepared me well for my duties as mother. But, I was much less prepared for becoming a wife, even though I was surrounded by many good role models. Being a wife was not something one talked about, lest the talk become too intimate. However, the rite of marriage itself, the minister solemnly pro-

nouncing a young woman a "wife," will not magically make her a good one. We live today in a marital morass; and in our own small church circles, too, marital problems are rife. Even divorce, once rarely discussed, has become troublesome. Today, more than ever before, it is urgent that we as wives and mothers help our own daughters and all young women to be good wives, both by our careful example and by concrete Biblical instruction (Titus 2:4, 5). This, as well as prescriptive preaching, will prepare them for their difficult, yet rewarding, roles as wives.

It is instructive to note that after the fall, when God's highest created work, His image-bearers, stood broken and humbled, it was then Adam named his wife. And it is her lovely name which gives hope to all of her sin-stained daughters. "And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living" (Gen. 3:20).

And so, there is another word, a better word, which rhymes with wife, to give the true-born daughters of Sarah renewed zeal and ardor for their God-given tasks.

Wife.

Life. □

Day of Shadows
Rev. John Heys

The Man of Sin Foreshadowed (3)

Rev. Heys is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

When the sovereign God of our salvation told the devil that He would put enmity between him and his seed and the woman

and her seed, He did not mean that He was going to make the devil hate Adam and Eve and their covenant seed. There was

no need or reason for that. The devil already hated them. He hated them the moment that he learned that God had created them in His own image, and saw them walking in love to God. And the seed of the serpent, every one of them, comes into this world spiritually dead; and that means that they hate God and all those who love Him. God does not need to put enmity in them against Himself and His covenant people.

What God promises in that mother promise is that His elect children will be delivered from their love of sin into which they fell. He will in His grace make them hate Satan and all who walk in the sin which he brought upon the human race. Of course, because we are born with a sinful nature, and often fail to manifest our love of God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the world can love us and even want to marry us and live with us.

But the point we want to make here is that the negative side always implies the positive side; and to get the whole picture we have to see both sides. Hating the devil and all his depraved followers means that we love God and all His covenant children. And when we walk in sin, we manifest the hatred against God of our old nature, which came into the world through Satan, and the folly of our first parents, Adam and Eve.

We do well to take note of the fact that the mother promise is the promise of the almighty, unchangeable God. He declares in it what HE is going to do, not what we might do. The all-wise God is no fool. He is no liar. Nor is He for one split second slightly curbed or temporarily changed in His sovereign, eternal decree. He told Adam that he would die the day he ate of the forbidden fruit. The moment he would begin to hate God, he would lose com-

pletely the spiritual life where-with he was created. Adam and Eve did hate God for denying them the right to get to the glory that the devil told them they could get by eating that forbidden fruit.

It was no little sin that they committed, even though it was not a direct breaking of the commandments in the second table of the law. Eve did not seek Adam's good, and she encouraged him to do that which would make him lose his spiritual life. And Adam was willing to help Eve walk in sin and take her own spiritual life away. They basically did break the first table of the law, in fact very clearly they broke the first commandment. They did have another God before Jehovah. Did Satan not tell them that by eating of that fruit they would "be as gods, knowing good and evil"? They wanted to be gods and to have the right to do as they pleased. Even though eating seemed to them not only harmless but advisable, they brought death upon themselves with everlasting punishment in the lake of fire! God said that they would die spiritually the day that they sinned. And even if you want to maintain that this death was a physical death, the process of death came upon them that day. Adam lived for nine hundred and thirty years; but death began to take hold of him the very day that he tried to become a god. From the moment that they ate of that forbidden fruit they were on the way to hell. Only God's grace kept them alive so that in time God's Son might come in our flesh and save us from both the spiritual and physical death.

The almighty and most merciful God told the devil that He would make some of the human race love Him, and that they would be completely delivered from their devilish hatred of their

God. Satan, who hated God, was not going to accept this decree of God and make, or try to make, men turn back to their God. He had died spiritually himself; and being spiritually dead he could only rejoice in man's depravity and hatred of God. As we saw, in these articles of The Day of Shadows, Satan got Cain to kill Abel and got Lamech not only to kill but to take two wives for his carnal pleasure. In a relatively short time Satan got the seed of the serpent to be so devilish that, for the protection of His church, God had to send that worldwide flood. Only eight souls were saved. And this only moved Satan to work more feverishly after the flood, so that he got them to try to build that tower of Babel for the antichristian one-world kingdom. He got one of the seed of the woman, Noah, to get drunk and encourage immorality, so that Ham's flesh was pleased to see sin back again in this world. And today the devil is working hard to try to restore that one-world kingdom and destroy the church of God. Did he not even try to get Jesus to bow down before him? Did he not deceitfully promise Him that which he could not realize? Indeed he was trying to destroy the church by bringing its King into hell!

But always, in every attempt of Satan, God strengthened in His reborn children their love toward Him. And the victory always is that of the church. Always it is Christ's victory. For He is The Seed of the Woman not only, but He is the Son of God in our flesh.

When God then shattered Satan's work by confusing man's speech and by dividing the human race into different races and nations with different tongues, the victory was that of the seed of the woman, not of the seed of the serpent. And though, according to God's

counsel, Satan will be able in the days of the coming man of sin to unite the whole world as one wicked, antichristian kingdom, man's number is 666, and only the seed of the woman will reach the blessed 700, the perfection of covenant life of man with God in the new holy creation that is coming.

As pointed out above, a negative thing always implies a positive opposite. Confusing man's speech at the tower of Babel took away from Satan that which he was seeking. But there is this wonderful positive side that God, by bringing into being different races, nations, and tongues, brings a blessing to His church. In fact this creation of different languages makes that church become the body of Christ. Consider that if Satan had succeeded in building that tower and in realizing a one-world devilish kingdom, wherein the seed of the woman would all be destroyed (as the coming man of sin will try to do) Christ would never have been born, and could not have died for our sins. And a countless number of elect that were eternally chosen would not have been born; and the body of Christ would be hopeless.

Consider also the fact that the church as the body of Christ has not only many members, but different kinds of members, even as our bodies have eyes, ears, hands, fingers, feet and toes, lungs and heart, and many other kinds of members. In broad lines we read of this when in Scripture we read of God gathering His people out of every nation, tongue, and tribe. These people are different not simply in their speech, but their speech is different exactly because their way of thinking, what they will, and the way they do things, is so different. Although Satan moved men to build the tower of Babel to realize the kingdom of the

man of sin with one language, life style, and way of thinking, God had all this planned so that His church would be realized with its different kinds of members who all have the same spiritual life, but who serve that body of Christ in their own divinely designed way. God frustrated the devil in what he strove to do. But God used him so that Christ's church might be realized as the glorious body that it is going to be with members from different colors, races, backgrounds, and talents.

Consider once how much more beautiful than a solo the singing of a well-trained choir is. Not that solos are not beautiful (but, even then, soloists like to have the accompaniment of the organ or piano). But that shadow of the man of sin there at the tower of Babel, and God's bringing that devilish kingdom to naught, does say something wonderful to us. The way for that Hallelujah chorus that will be singing God's praises in the new Jerusalem was in God's wisdom and grace being prepared. Things did not momentarily slip out of God's control and then return to Him by means of the confounding of the speech of man. No, the all-wise and sovereign God decrees everything that happens, so that the kingdom of Christ will be here and His wisdom, power, and love may shine forth forever in Christ's kingdom.

Let us take hold of that comforting truth that all things work together for good to those that love God. His promises are always fulfilled to the last and smallest detail. Satan is a tool in God's hand. And although this evil spirit is still striving to destroy God's church, and will in God's time realize the one-world kingdom of the man of sin (in contrast to whom Nimrod was but a child of sin) he will to no degree hurt the church as far as

the heavenly glory which is promised it is concerned. Unwillingly and unknowingly, until it has happened, Satan will serve the cause of God's kingdom. Even as he got Judas and the unbelieving Jews to kill Christ, and performed that which realized the basis for our salvation, so he is being used by God to get things ready for Christ to return to realize His kingdom on the new earth.

Yes, the building of that tower of Babel foreshadowed the coming antichrist in what he will do. But do not overlook the fact that our God's halting of that antichristian deed in Nimrod's day foreshadows His coming work when He will send His Son back to crush the head of Satan and of all the seed of the serpent, and bring into being that kingdom of endless glory in the one-world Christian kingdom of Christ.

The shadow cast by God's work of bringing to an end that one-world kingdom of Nimrod reveals to us what most assuredly will arrive in the near future. Satan's whole devilish kingdom will be destroyed and all its citizens will be cast into the lake of fire. Christ most assuredly will come and realize a new creation and His glorious kingdom in it. Sing it: "His saints shall not fail, But over the earth Their pow'r shall prevail." And then: "To God give the glory And praise Him for aye." □

Search the Scriptures

Rev. Gise VanBaren

Philippians: An Introduction

We will be studying, D.V., the short epistle to the Philippians in following articles. In preparation for that study, we should obtain certain background information. For this particular study, read Acts 16:6-40 and Acts 20:6. The questions at the end of the article will treat especially these passages.

The Apostle Paul with Timothy and Silas went to Philippi on his second missionary journey about A.D. 52. Philippi had not been their intended destination. First, Paul and Silas visited those churches established in the first missionary journey. After leaving the area of Galatia, Paul and Silas with Timothy sought to enter the province of Asia and later Bithynia (Acts 16:6, 7). In both instances they were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to do so. God, of course, will have His Word preached both when and where He wills. As a consequence of the forbidding of the Spirit (they could go neither to the right nor the left), these men were forced to travel west to Troas which was on the coast of the Aegean Sea.

At Troas Paul had the vision of the Macedonian man who "prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." As a result, these missionaries of Christ took shipping and went

immediately to Neapolis, the seaport for Philippi. From there, they traveled directly to the important city of Philippi. This special, Divine direction indicates the importance of this work beginning in Europe. It also shows the intent of God that the gospel be spread over all the world — and generally from east to west.

One could profitably find additional information on the city itself either in a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia. Briefly, it could be noted that this was already a very old city at the time of Paul's arrival. This ancient city had been seized by Philip of Macedonia and renamed after himself in the year 358 B.C. The city passed into the hands of the Romans in 168 B.C. The Romans honored the city by making its people to be Roman citizens with the benefit of exemption from taxation and special privileges before Roman law. It is claimed that the Jews had been driven from those cities which were uniquely Roman — which would explain too the fact that only a few remaining women, Jews, were worshiping at the river bank when Paul visited them.

Philippi was located in an area which had been an important mining center for gold. It had strategic importance in the defense of this area. This city was the first in Europe to have the church established in it.

Paul with his assistants went outside the city on the Sabbath to a river bank where "prayer was wont to be made." The few Jewish women of the city had gathered there. There was no Jewish synagogue in the city. Since a minimum of ten Jewish men were required to establish a synagogue, one can assume that there were probably none in the city. Paul and his associates gather to worship with the few women of the city at the river bank. The custom of gathering at such a place is mentioned in Psalm 137:1, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion."

The account in Acts presents what appears to be somewhat meager results on Paul's mission labors. We read of the conversion of Lydia ("whose heart God opened"), the probable conversion of the girl delivered from an evil spirit, and the conversion of the Philippian jailor with his household. These were the first members of the church at Philippi.

Paul visited this church several times in his later mission journeys. One visit is mentioned in Acts 20:6. Some surmise at least two other visits made by Paul.

Paul's letter to the church was written years later while he was in prison at Rome (cf. 4:22). It is one of the four "prison epistles" (Ephesians, Philemon, and Colos-

Rev. VanBaren is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

sians). These were written in the years A.D. 62 or 63. Paul's interest in and love for that congregation is clearly evident, especially in the first chapter. He thanked God "upon every remembrance" of them (vs. 3); he greatly "longed after you all" (vs. 8); he expresses his prayer that their "love may abound yet more and more . . ." (vs. 9). It is a moving letter to a dearly loved congregation of Jesus Christ.

The letter is surely of a different nature than that written to Corinth (especially I Corinthians). In that church there were all sorts of heresies and evil activities which are severely rebuked by the apostle. This letter, though it does contain a few words of rebuke, is more of a pastoral and personal sort. One can, for instance, go through the book and mark the words "love" (four times) and "joy" (six times) which are found in it. It has a happy tone indeed.

The book itself is not as structured as some of Paul's epistles. There is rather significant (and deep) doctrine — especially in the second chapter. There we read some very remarkable things about the incarnation and the humiliation of Christ. Yet much of the book is very personal and practical.

A Brief Outline

- A. Opening greetings.
 1. Paul's salutation (1:1-2).
 2. Paul's thanksgiving and prayer (1:3-11).
- B. Expression of Paul's own thoughts of God's work with him as prisoner (1:12-26).
- C. The humble walk.
 1. Encouragement to faithfulness in the face of adversity (1:27-30).
 2. Christ's humiliation and its example for us (2:1-18).
- D. Personal instructions:
 1. Reasons for sending Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30).
 2. Paul's example to the Philippians (3:1-21).
 3. Various exhortations to the church (4:1-9).
- E. Concluding statements:
 1. Thanks to Philippi for their assistance (4:10-20).
 2. Salutations and final benediction (4:21-23).

Questions for discussion:

1. Trace Paul's second missionary journey (see a map).
2. Why did Paul go first to the Jew and then to the Gentile?
3. Who was Lydia? What was her occupation? Comment on this. How does Acts state that she

believed? What is the importance and significance of this? Does not this conflict with what we read in Rev. 3:20?

4. What do the Canons of Dordt have to say about the work of conversion and the origin of faith (Heads III-IV)? Is this in agreement with what we read of Lydia?

5. Does Lydia's prominence in Acts indicate anything about women serving in office in the church? Can a woman be prominent and important in church without occupying the offices?

6. In Acts 16:37-40, Paul makes good use of his Roman citizenship. Is it proper to try to avoid punishment for one's faith in this way? Why did Paul bring up his citizenship *after* he was beaten? Can you find an instance of Paul's *avoidance* of a beating by mentioning his citizenship?

7. Comment upon the method used in mission work at Philippi. Does this give guidelines for mission work today?

8. This is one of the four "prison epistles." In perusing the letter, is there any evidence in the writing of the effect of that imprisonment for Paul?

9. What might account for the different situations in Corinth and in Philippi? □

Book Reviews

THE MORE GLORIOUS COVENANT, by Gerrit Vos, Men's Society, Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI 49426, 1986, 312pp. (Reviewed by the Rev. Norman L. Jones, Jr.)

The byline of G. Vos was a regular feature of *The Standard*

Bearer for many years. That publication, now in its 64th year, has exemplified the highest standards of Reformed journalism, and the presence of G. Vos' *Meditations* did much to enhance the publication's reputation.

Now, through the efforts of the Men's Society of the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church, where the late Rev. Mr. Vos served as pastor for 21 years, his meditations are being made available to a wider Christian audience. This, the third volume of

collected essays by Rev. Vos, consists of 45 selected meditations from the Epistles and the Book of Revelation.

It is somewhat difficult to categorize the Vos style of writing. It is sort of a cross between C.H. Spurgeon's poetic brilliance and John Calvin's theological toughness.

Vos was a master of the old Dutch school of preaching, that is, making theology an art form by a powerful use of literary imagery. His writing is a constant challenge to one's sanctified imagination and it tends to be mind-gripping, a quality often lacking in most religious prose today. From a full, reflective mind Vos proceeds to drive the truth of God into his reader's heart.

Vos is a hard-core Calvinist, in the Protestant Reformed tradition, who takes the doctrines of sovereign, covenantal grace very seriously. They were to him life itself. He therefore focuses on Christ as the sinner's only hope and comfort. And by the way of necessary contrast, he sprinkles his essays with blistering condemnations of Pelagianism, Arminianism, and Perfectionism in all their forms.

Vos is not ashamed to meditate on God's reprobation of the wicked, a theme not often encountered in so-called Reformed ministry today. In discussing Romans 9:18-20, for example, he observes, "Terrible truth, you say? Yes, but it is the truth nevertheless. It is the same truth that is trampled under foot by the church of our day. Where do you find a church today that dares to confess the hardening by God of the reprobate? All through the ages the Lord had it written down, and, later printed in a million Bibles." (p. 31)

This reviewer recommends this book to ministers who need a more lively, imaginative, direct manner of speaking and

preaching, who need to show how Reformed theology and artistic expression can work together to keep our audiences interested in God's truth. Further, *The More Glorious Covenant* would serve well for family devotions for adults, and for private devotional reading. A suggestion for the publisher if future volumes of Vos' meditations are contemplated: Please include at least a Scripture reference index, and perhaps even a topical index for handy reference purposes. Vos' writings burst with choice thoughts and they could use some general categorization.

This review appeared in the December 9, 1988 issue of Christian Observer, a Presbyterian magazine published in Manassas, VA whose frequent references to the activities of the Protestant Reformed Churches we appreciate. The Rev. Norman Jones is a minister in the Reformed Church in the United States and a long-time, friendly observer of the PRC. The review is published with permission. -Ed. □

J. GRESHAM MACHEN: A BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR, by Ned B. Stonehouse. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987. pp. 1-520 \$12.95. (cloth). (Reviewed by Prof. R.D. Decker)

The Banner of Truth is to be commended for reprinting this fine biography of Machen written by his colleague and successor in the New Testament department at Westminster Seminary. While there are other biographies (e.g., a briefer, perhaps more popular one, by Henry Coray) this is the standard.

Machen certainly ranks as one of the greatest evangelical, Reformed theologians of the twentieth century. Born in 1881, he was delivered up to glory at the relatively young age of 55 in January of 1937. Machen, a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, was the leading figure in the battle against liberalism

and higher criticism of the Bible at that school and in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. He was one of the founding professors of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and also a leading figure in the formation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

Much can be learned from a reading of this book which is much more than a recounting of the life of this servant of God. Insights abound into the struggles for the truth of the gospel within Presbyterianism in the early twentieth century. These struggles were not at all unlike the battle being fought for the truth within the Reformed churches of our own day.

The account of the last weeks of his life give us insights into the kind of man J. Gresham Machen was by God's grace. After a very busy first semester at Westminster during the 1936-'37 school year, Machen, though weary, insisted on keeping a promise to speak and preach in several churches in North Dakota during the Christmas recess. While there he developed pneumonia, and at 7:30 p.m., January 1, 1937 the Lord took his servant to glory. When the night before the Rev. Samuel Allen, pastor of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Bismarck, N.D., visited Machen in the hospital, Machen said to him, "Sam, isn't the Reformed Faith grand?" During one of his conscious periods the next day he dictated this telegram to Prof. John Murray: "I'm so thankful for active obedience of Christ. No hope without it." These were Machen's last words.

May God raise up more men of his calibre and conviction to follow his worthy example in "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints." □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

CONGREGATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

"Having a Heart for God" was the theme chosen by the Evangelism Committee of the South Holland P.R.C. in South Holland, IL for their Reformed Conference which was held September 22 and 23.

The first speech was scheduled for Friday night. Prof. David Engelsma spoke on "Having a Heart for God Himself." Following this speech the group of approximately 150 people was divided into nine different groups which met in various rooms in the church and the school. Friday night's discussion was on the practical aspects of knowing God and enjoying His fellowship.

Bright and early Saturday morning, people once again began gathering in the church basement for breakfast. The Young People's Society made Belgian waffles and sausage for the group, with donations going to the Young People's Convention.

At 9:15 all gathered in the auditorium for devotions. Afterwards Rev. Charles Terpstra presented the second speech on "Having a Heart for God Among His Saints."

Once again the group was divided up into nine different groups, which then discussed practical aspects of Christian fellowship. By the time the groups broke up, it was time for lunch.

By 1:30 the group was once more back in the auditorium for their final speech, "Having a Heart for God in Missions," by Rev. Ron Van Overloop.

The afternoon discussion groups then considered practical aspects of the believer's role in the work of evangelism. Then the groups reassembled for closing prayer.

According to those who were there, the Evangelism Committee did an excellent job from start to finish. The speakers also did a wonderful job in presenting their topics. The entire conference was an enriching experience, and those in attendance would encourage everyone to attend any such conference in the future.

On October 9, the congregation of the Lynden P.R.C. in Lynden, WA sponsored a Canadian Thanksgiving Day Service at the Lutheran Church in Aldergrove, B.C., Canada.

The Consistory of Lynden also appointed a Publicity Committee for their new church building

project. Their mandate is to keep the congregation informed on the progress the various committees are making on their new church building.

A couple of items caught my attention in a recent bulletin from the Doon P.R.C. in Doon, IA. First, Doon is conducting a Bible Study at Dordt College. This group meets on Monday nights in the library. They are considering especially the work of the Holy Spirit. And second, evidently someone has taken the spoons from the Northwest Iowa P.R. Christian School in Doon, because there's a note that the school spoons are still missing, and to please return them.

Doon's consistory also adopted a change for the end of their worship service. The congregation will remain standing in the pews during the time that the consistory shakes hands with the minister.

The First P.R.C. in Grand Rapids, MI held their annual Fall Fellowship Dinner in mid-September. The committee planned a potluck dinner for the whole congregation. Each family was asked to bring either a favorite main dish, salad, or dessert.

DENOMINATIONAL ACTIVITIES

On October 1, a Mass Meeting to open officially the young peo-

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

ple's society season was held at the Byron Center P.R.C. in Byron Center, MI. All young people in the area were urged to attend.

On September 26 Prof. David Engelsma spoke on the topic "Is good self-esteem important for a Christian, and how is it developed?" for the Fall Men's and Ladies' Society League Meeting held at the Hudsonville P.R.C. in Hudsonville, MI.

Mr. Jerry Kuiper, administrator

of Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI, was the featured speaker for the annual fall league meeting of the Mr. & Mrs. Adult Bible Societies. He spoke October 3 at the Faith P.R.C. in Jenison, MI on the subject, "Prot. Ref. Education — Tradition or Conviction?"

MINISTERIAL CALLS

Rev. R. Dykstra has received the call from the congregation of Hope P.R.C. in Isabel, S.D.

Rev. C. Haak has declined the call he had received from the Hope P.R.C. in Redlands, CA.

And, finally, a closing thought lifted from "Across the Aisle," from First Church in Grand Rapids, MI and related to the spoon item above.

"When asked why he was eating with his spoon, a little lad answered: 'Because my knife is slippery and my fork leaks.'" □

Report of Classis East

September 13, 1989
& October 11, 1989

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 13, 1989 with a continued session on Wednesday, October 11, 1989. All the churches, with the exception of Norristown, were represented by two delegates. Rev. J. Slopsema served as chairman of these sessions.

The majority of classis' time was spent in considering three appeals: two regarding censure and one regarding a decision taken by a consistory. All the appeals were treated in closed session which precludes further reporting on the outcome.

Classis West asked for help to fill the pulpit of Peace, Lynwood, Illinois. Classis East granted the request to supply this pulpit for one Sunday a month from October-March. The following schedule was adopted for PEACE: October 15 - Bruinsma; November 5 - Key; December 17 -

Kortering; January 14 - Slopsema; February 25 - Kamps; March 18 - Van Baren.

Norristown also asked for continued supply during Rev. K. Hanco's absence. The following schedule was adopted for NORRISTOWN: October 29, November 5 - Joostens; November 19, 26 - Flikkema; December 10, 17 - Gritters; January 14, 27 - Woudenberg; February 11, 18 - Koole; February 25, March 4 - Bruinsma; March 18, 25 - Slopsema.

Rev. J. Kortering and Rev. G. Van Baren were chosen as additional alternates for church visitation.

Expenses for the two sessions amounted to \$2715.00.

Classis will meet next on Wednesday, January 10, 1990 at the Hope Protestant Reformed Church.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk □

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church extends its sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Mark Hoeksema and family in the death of his father, PROF. HOMER HOEKSEMA. May they be comforted and sustained by God's grace. "Thou shalt guide me by Thy counsel and afterwards receive me to glory." (Psalm 73:24)

Rev. J. Kortering, President
J. VanderKolk, Clerk
(Grandville, MI)

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Jr. Mr. & Mrs. Society of Hope Protestant Reformed Church extends its Christian sympathy to Mr. & Mrs. Bruce Klamer, whose infant daughter, COURTNEY JO was taken to her eternal rest.

May they be comforted in the truth expressed in Psalm 100:3, "Know ye that the Lord, He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves: we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture."

Prof. Herman Hanco, Pres.
Brenda DeVries, Sec.
(Grand Rapids, MI)